

**United Nations Environmental Program  
Archive of E-Articles  
2008**

**January 2, 2008**

THE RECORD (New Jersey)

Saving souls and the planet  
Wednesday, January 2, 2008

By BARBARA WILLIAMS  
STAFF WRITER

A growing number of North Jersey's religious leaders are shading their sermons in green.

Taking care to keep politics out of their save-the-earth messages, they're preaching practical everyday changes in lifestyle. The basic tenet remains that God gave man dominion over the Earth, as the Bible says. But now clergy members are likening that dominion to a farmer's stewardship of the land -- controlling, but also nurturing it and giving it time to replenish.

The Rev. Kevin Downey, pastor of St. Mary's Church in Pompton Lakes, proposes that taking care of the environment and following God's word aren't two mutually exclusive subjects.

"This life here on Earth is a gift," Downey said. "But with that gift comes a huge responsibility to take care of the Earth. I've talked about that and will continue to strive to put it in more homilies."

**FAST FACTS**

"Green" activities by churches:

- Conducting energy audits.
- Stepping up recycling efforts.
- Using compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Letter-writing campaign to advocate for lower diesel emissions.
- "Toxic-tours" for youth to witness effects of environmental racism.
- Installing solar panels.

St. Mary's is working with GreenFaith, a New Brunswick-based interfaith group that teams with religious organizations in getting them to use energy from renewable sources. The Catholic

church hopes to create a Sustainable Sanctuary program -- a center of religious-environmental activism.

Church organizers are already stepping up recycling, investigating "green" cleaning supplies, scheduling an energy audit, and using compact fluorescent light bulbs. They also are lining up "toxic tours" to let parish youth see firsthand how industrial dumping hurts the environment and those who live near dump sites.

St. Mary's may also follow in the footsteps of other houses of worship such as Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Paramus and Christ Episcopal Church in Teaneck, which installed solar panels on church buildings more than a year ago. The Teaneck church receives a rebate on the energy it conserves, said church senior warden Aubrey Thompson.

"I don't know exactly how much we're saving, but it is just a part of what we're doing -- we're also thinking about upgrading our electrical system," Thompson said. "We are stewards of the Earth, and it is our duty to take care of it."

This same message is coming from North Jersey rabbis and priests, ministers and imams. They are not basing entire sermons on "going green," but rather weaving it into standard subjects such as gratitude. And some clergy are not just talking about it -- they are getting creative in their presentations.

At B'nai Keeshet, a reconstructionist synagogue in Montclair, recycling bins are in every room in the building. Next to them, Rabbi Elliott Tepperman put up cards with quotes from the Bible about being stewards of the Earth.

Synagogue leaders there have started buying supplies in bulk, instead of items like individual wrapped juice boxes. They use ceramic mugs for coffee instead of Styrofoam cups and use only organic lawn-care measures -- no chemical pesticides.

"The momentum is definitely picking up, but we did have some resistance to the recycling efforts," said Kevin Fried, a spokesman for Tepperman. "But we feel very strongly about protecting God's creation and we're having speakers come to talk to the congregation about it."

More than 150 churches are involved with GreenFaith, including 25 that have installed solar panels. After the Christ Evangelical Lutheran church in Paramus installed panels about 18 months ago, it received about 25 calls from neighbors and institutions asking about them, said Pastor Kent Klophaus.

"We didn't do this for financial reasons but rather as part of our proclamation to the world around us," Klophaus said. "We take care of the Earth as part of the relationship we have with God -- our gratitude for all he has given us."

But not every religious institution is laying down the "green" carpet. The Rev. Fletcher Harper, the Episcopalian priest who runs GreenFaith, said a number of churches are shying away from getting involved with the environmental movement.

"Some church leaders feel environmentalism is a politically divisive issue and they don't want to alienate any parishioners," Harper said.

Even more polarizing is the fight to stop environmental racism, one of the organization's more ambitious goals. Harper said there is "environmental degradation in neighborhoods of people of color," and religious leaders and congregants need to be made aware of the damage that does to the health of people living near the sites. He wants them to become advocates for strong cleanup measures.

"These are social, moral and cultural issues. The natural world is the biggest revelation we have of God's creative power and it's our responsibility to take care of it," Harper said.

Not everyone believes the two ideologies mesh, however. Downey said one parishioner chided him for believing all that "liberal made-up stuff about global warming." But the Franciscan priest said he responded by pointing out that "even if you don't believe in global warming, there's nothing wrong with reducing costs."

"This isn't about politics, it's about a lifestyle," Downey said. "We take so much for granted -- yet we live in this incredible world that needs our care."

Dagi Murphy, a warden at St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Oakland, said religious leaders are putting the "emphasis on energy and conserving it, not necessarily global warming." His church is trying to educate parishioners on how to save money at home while making small changes in the buildings such as always turning off lights when rooms aren't in use, and converting to an instantaneous water heater, which doesn't keep constant hot water.

"You don't have to change your whole way of life," Murphy said. "There are little things you can do every day to conserve energy -- if we don't, we'll run out."

And are these clergy practicing what they preach?

Downey said he washes his dishes now every day once he learned how much energy and water goes into running a dishwasher. He said he believes in leading by example.

"It's just me and one other priest," he said. "We only have a couple of cups and plates -- it just isn't right to run the dishwasher every day for that."

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## January 7, 2008

'Green' church moves heaven, earth closer

By Craig Wilson, USA TODAY

SHELBURNE, Vt. — All Souls Interfaith Gathering has a reputation for being all-inclusive.

The small congregation, founded in 1999, recognizes just about every faith you can think of. No one is turned away. And that includes Mother Earth.

ASIG prides itself on being one of the greenest churches in one of the greenest of states, and nothing proves that more than its spanking new sanctuary building, which opened in October.

It's a model for ecological correctness: locally harvested wood, bamboo flooring, compact fluorescent lights and a furnace that will heat the facility using grass, corn or wood pellets. The congregation expects to go through 30 to 35 tons of wood pellets this first winter in the new building.

Even the air conditioning is provided by using water from an artesian well.

"I'd like to think we're cutting-edge," says the Rev. Mary Abele, who heads the congregation that numbers 70 but is growing every week. "I suspect some come now because of our environmental practices."

ASIG also took advantage of its prime location. The new sanctuary's west-facing windows capture perhaps one of the most stunning views you'll ever see — rolling farm land, Lake Champlain and the snow-capped Adirondack Mountains beyond.

If you weren't a tree hugger before — or a believer — you'd be hard pressed not to be one after taking in this view. "You sit here and the sun is setting, and ooh," sighs Laurie Caswell Burke, ASIG's environmental coordinator.

When the building opened, Abele told the Burlington Free Press that the views are "an inspiration to help us understand who we are in connection with the environment and the divine."

It's a theme that runs through everything ASIG does. Even the new parking lots, cut into the property's forest, were put where they were to preserve as many mature trees as possible.

"The building needed to blend with the surrounding site rather than stand out. (We needed to) play the building down, make it inviting, make it calm, play on the beauty of the site and surroundings, let the building be the shelter from which one can appreciate the whole," says Marty Sienkiewicz of SAS Architects in Burlington, who designed the project with congregation members.

"They came to us with a wish and more of a dream," says Sienkiewicz, who met with church members more than a dozen times. "If they had not had such a strong influence, it would have turned out very differently, but we're quite pleased with it."

It's all part of a trend in the religious world in which more worshipers are looking to save the environment as part of their spiritual journey.

Dozens of ecumenical groups are tackling everything from global warming to "eco-palms" for Palm Sunday services. The National Religious Partnership for the Environment, for instance, says it represents 100 million Americans, an alliance of major faiths combining religion and ecology.

"I see the environment as a portal to connect with the divine," Abele says. Why now? "I think it had to get to the crisis level, and that's where we are."

Abele and her flock leave no stone unturned. Literally.

An outdoor circle of stones, built by congregation members in 2003, is "a place to connect with the Earth's energy." Members are encouraged to walk the Sacred Earth Wheel often. Nearby is a labyrinth that members also traverse.

In addition, the church has Flower Communion (congregants are encouraged to bring flowers to share at a May service) and a Gathering of Waters ceremony (water from springs, brooks and rivers are blended in a communal bowl).

Don Stevens of the Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi even used feathers from a red-tail hawk to wave sage and tobacco smoke over members at the opening service in October. The "smudging" ceremony is an American Indian purification ritual to drive away evil spirits.

This winter, the church's adult and children's programs will focus on environmental messages. The "green" theme has always been taught at an early age here. ASIG's children's program this winter is titled "The Sacred Environment — The Earth and Me."

Hoping children will "fall in love with the earth they live on, we're teaching creation stories from the ancient myths to the big-bang theory," Caswell Burke says. "I think we're ahead of our time. The earth is woven into every service. There's a connection between the environmental and the spiritual."

Each month a community member is invited by ASIG to talk about his or her passion for the planet. A beekeeper has spoken to the children, and Christopher Davis, who manages the 1,000 acres around ASIG, spoke over the weekend about the congregation's new "green building, how it works day to day."

"Once we started with the concept, (the environment) drove so many parts of the project," Davis says. "It's a philosophy. It was always, 'Let's use what we have. Let's reuse and incorporate.' "

Abele, in a homily on Veterans Day, drove the point home.

While honoring the veterans, she asked her congregation if it was too much "to honor what they're fighting to preserve. ... It means nothing if we allow our air and our environment to deteriorate."

As for the sanctuary, Abele can't quite explain the spirit the new building houses. "It's beyond what I expected," she says. "I'm not sure what's happening, but it's all good."

Find this article at:

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2008-01-06-green-church\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2008-01-06-green-church_N.htm)

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## **January 11, 2008**

Religious orders bring clout to war on bottled water

By LAURA LLOYD

If you want to get the lowdown on bottled water, listen to what the "Green Franciscan Sister" has to say. She is Sr. Janet Corcoran, vice president of mission service at Marian Medical Center in Santa Maria, Calif., and she is just one of the Catholic voices spreading the gospel that bottled water, however convenient to tote around, is environmentally, economically and politically wrong. She shares her viewpoints, among other places, in the form of "Environmental Tips from the Green Franciscan Sister" in a hospital publication. Corcoran feels strongly that "Sister Mother Earth" needs all the help she can get, especially when it comes to water.

"It's a matter of getting people to think more consciously about what they are doing," she said.

Concerns about bottled water are bubbling up in Catholic organizations, adding clout to a growing number of cities and secular organizations worried about the issue -- with women religious strongly in the lead. Numerous women's religious orders are banning bottled water at their motherhouses, retreat houses and conference centers, and some are substituting refillable water bottles for the throw-away kind at sponsored events.

Among major incentives to get involved is the negative environmental impact of discarded plastic bottles, the oil required to make them, and the limited access to safe drinking water in developing countries -- a problem even before big corporations got involved. (See accompanying story.) Here is one sobering statistic: The United Nations estimates that more than 1 billion people worldwide currently lack access to safe drinking water and that by 2025 two-thirds of the world's population will not have access to drinking water. When water is privatized and corporatized, the problem grows worse, advocates say.

Says Glenmary Fr. John S. Rausch, who writes, teaches and organizes in Appalachia: "Toting bottled water has a cachet of sophistication. But if people cared about the earth, they might not be flaunting their water bottles. We are destroying the sacramental system" of the wide availability of clean, free water when companies privatize water and sell it for a profit.

The Franciscan Federation, which includes nuns, priests and monks, has been engaged with the issue for the past three years, said Sr. Sharon Dillon, who recently ended her tenure as executive

director of the Franciscan Federation and became director of the Franciscan Mission Service. She noted that the federation has a special tie to environmental issues because of the emphasis on nature in the spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi.

The federation has collaborated with Protestant churches in making interfaith statements at the World Water Forum. The Franciscans have also published articles highlighting the negatives of bottled water and hosted information workshops. Sometimes the activism takes the form of polite but pointed confrontations with beverage executives at shareholder meetings as well. Details of the Franciscan Federation's water campaign are on their Web site: [www.franfed.org/water](http://www.franfed.org/water).

Among other signs of progress, the St. Louis-based Catholic Health Association provides water bottles that are meant to be refilled with local water at meetings and conventions. National Catholic Rural Life has been spreading the word among its members. The Sisters of Mercy, constructed their Mercy Center in St. Louis, which includes administrative offices and housing for retired sisters, as a green building that prohibits bottled water, among its other environmental initiatives, said Stephanie Heiland, director of communications. The National Coalition of American Nuns, a progressive organization representing 1,200 women religious, went on record more than a year ago with a resolution urging members to abstain from bottled water in most circumstances.

At the 115-year-old motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dubuque, Iowa, a recently renovated geothermal building is a bottled water free campus, with educational information available and bottled water removed from vending machines, said Sr. Mira Mosle, director of communications. The order's 175th-year jubilee, now underway, includes "a focus on water," and people are encouraged to sign pledge cards stating their commitment to abstain from bottled water, she said.

Discarded plastic water bottles are among the refuse under the stands at the Gold Cup Hydroplane races on the Detroit River.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester, N.Y., are working with the Sierra Club to reduce use of bottled water and are distributing the club's informational brochure. Benedictine Sr. Pat Lupo, program director for Lake Erie-Allegheny Earth Force, said the organization is providing only refillable water bottles this year for its fundraiser, Bike Around the Bay.

The war on bottled water hasn't engaged all Catholic groups, however, not by a long shot. Catholic schools and colleges, with some exceptions, are generally leaving bottled water on their refreshment tables, and Rausch said few dioceses are conveying much concern to parishes.

For those Catholics who are involved, the issue, not surprisingly, has a spiritual slant. Church groups may talk not just about the numbers of bottles choking landfills, but about the sacredness of water and the need to be stewards of the earth. For instance, Suzanne Golas, with the Congregations of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, has found her place as a water warrior at the United Nations. There, she has a ministry called "Waterspirit," where she promotes the ties between spirituality and the environment, with a special focus on the sacredness of water.

Some Catholic groups have borrowed information and ideas from Think Outside the Bottle, a major non-religious player in the anti-bottled water movement. The organization has launched a Web-based campaign that provides information and support. In addition to inviting individuals to sign a pledge to boycott bottled water, the program urges people to send postcards to corporations challenging corporate control of water, to attend stockholders' meetings and mount other forms of pressure on corporate executives. Think Outside the Bottle ([www.thinkoutsidethebottle.org](http://www.thinkoutsidethebottle.org)) is part of a larger organization called Corporate Accountability International ([www.stopcorporateabuse.org](http://www.stopcorporateabuse.org)).

In April 2007, Dillon spoke out at the shareholders' meeting of Coca-Cola against the company's marketing of bottled water and what she regards as its pseudo-concern about world water issues.

"Nestle, Coke and Pepsi are marketing their bottled water as being better than tap water," she said. Pepsi has gone on record that their Aquafina water comes from public sources, but Coke, which makes Dasani bottled water, so far has refused to say where its water comes from, she said. "If you're not going to honestly reveal to the public where the water's coming from," that's a form of corporate abuse, Dillon said.

(The Dasani Web site says the water comes from "the local water supply." All three companies have expressed commitments to preserving the environment.)

Such alleged corporate missteps have led to actions by other Franciscans. Sr. Betty Kenny, a member of the Rochester, Minn., Sisters of St. Francis, said they buy "token shares of stock in the big water companies such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Nestle. We do this so we can work the stock -- vote proxies, contact the company CEOs and attend the shareholder meetings."

As the Earth Policy Institute noted in a Dec. 7 news release, "Slowing sales may be the wave of the future, as the bottle boycott movement picks up speed. With more than 1 billion people around the globe still lacking access to a safe and reliable source of water, the \$100 billion the world spends on bottled water every year could certainly be put to better use creating and maintaining safe public water infrastructure everywhere."

Dillon said, "There are communities around the world without clean, drinkable water" while large corporations earn hefty profits by selling a resource that should be affordable to everyone. "Somebody has to take this on."

Laura Lloyd is a freelance writer who lives in Kansas City, Mo.

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**January 14, 2008**

KANSAS CITY STAR

Posted on Sun, Jan. 13, 2008

King would not be silent on Earth's plight

By MYRON F. MCCOY



### Special to The Star

Like some who try to address contemporary issues through the lens of historical figures and time frames, I wish never to be guilty of attributing to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stances he would have never considered or subscribed to.

Saying that, I have every reason to believe that if Dr. King were around today, he would have much to say about global warming, environmental sustainability and our need to act immediately.

These concerns would be rooted in his strong belief that persons are to strive to live in harmony with both the physical and moral laws of God and acknowledge the consequences of our living in disharmony with such laws.

Therefore, global warming and our inability to work on issues of sustainability as a human race should make recognizable the lethal consequences of our failure to address this rampant disharmony.

Dr. King would readily perceive the danger we face with global warming, evidenced by victims still recovering in the Gulf region, the diminishing habitat of polar bears in the far north, and growing drought-like conditions in his native South and in the West.

And I do believe he would have a problem with our speaking of democracy and human rights with a “fork-like tongue” with some nations and not with others when our steady diet of energy consumption is at risk.

I’m convinced that if Dr. King were living today, we in the U.S. would be taken to task for our voracious consumerist appetite that has led to the depletion, destruction and destabilization of much of God’s creation.

We would be reminded that at least a quarter of the world’s population does not have access to electricity or safe drinking water, and that we are the world’s leading polluter and emitter of greenhouse gases in our disproportionate use of nonrenewable energy sources.

We would be challenged to look beyond our own comfort to consider the welfare and survival of our world and take the lead in turning the above picture around.

Also, being a man of faith and reason, Dr. King would have been persuaded by the evidence of scientists, fellow Nobel Prize laureates on the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and former Vice President Al Gore.

I can imagine Dr. King challenging us with their forewarnings of the rising sea levels and the Earth’s surface being blighted by drought.

He would remind us, too, that these changes represent justice issues both here and abroad, as the poor will disproportionately suffer from our collective inability to recognize that "The Earth is the Lord's."

Dr. King would want us to communicate the message of dangerous disharmony to our elected officials. He would want us to tell the U.S. auto industry to engineer for even more miles per gallon than already agreed to by the president and Congress.

Dr. King is so right: "No individual can live alone; no nation can live alone. ... We must all live together. ... Or we will perish together as fools. We are tied together in a single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. ... Whatever affects one directly affects all."

We would be posited with this question from Dr. King: "What will happen to humanity if I don't help?" Conservation would be emphasized, as it could relieve us of the pressure of jumping into quick fixes without considering all the risks and exploring other alternatives.

Conservation could help us from mounting faulty foreign policy objectives and adding to our position as a debtor nation. Everyone would be invited to do their part in conserving these "God-owned" and "God-given" precious resources.

Indeed, Dr. King would want people of faith to lead the way in contributing to environmental sustainability, as energy conservation could lead to more physical exercise, less pollution and numerous other direct benefits to human health.

He would want us to recognize that we're quickly running out of time, and the time to begin doing the right thing is always now. Myron F. McCoy is president of the St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City.

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## **January 14, 2008**

Kalimantan bishops issue pastoral letter on environment

PONTIANAK, Indonesia (UCAN): The eight Catholic bishops of Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo Island, have called on local people to pay serious attention to preserving the environment.

"Destruction and damage to the environment has become a big concern because it threatens the continuity of life on earth," the bishops wrote in a recent pastoral letter. They stressed that "every inhabitant of this planet must be aware of the importance and urgency of taking concrete actions to save our earth from destruction."

The Catholic prelates issued their letter as a follow up to the 13th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held Dec. 3-14 in Bali. More than 10,000 people from more than 180 countries attended the event.

The Kalimantan bishops' letter was read out at Masses on Jan. 5 and 6 in all churches in Kalimantan. Local Catholics told UCA News they are discussing its implementation at parish and neighborhood prayer meetings. "Forest fires, excessive mining, conversion of forests into farmland and accumulation of trash in densely populated areas have brought an "increase in water, land and air pollution," say the prelates, led by Archbishops Hieronymus Bumbun of Pontianak and Florentinus Sului Hajang Hau of Samarinda.

They and Bishops Blasius Pujaraharja of Ketapang, Giulio Mencuccini of Sanggau, Agustinus Agus of Sintang, Fransiskus Xaverius Rocharjanta Prajasuta of Banjarmasin, Aloysius Maryadi Sutrisnaatmaka of Palangkaraya and Justinus Harjosusanto of Tanjung Selor warn of dire consequences. The Church leaders blame environmental destruction for horrific disasters such as droughts, floods and landslides that they say are threatening human beings and the earth itself.

Their letter, Save Our Earth from Destruction, further identifies the problem as having political, economic, social and cultural dimensions. They see this as requiring an integrated response from all parties.

The bishops cited Pope John Paul II as emphasizing in his 1979 encyclical Redemptor Hominis (redeemer of mankind) that respect for the natural environment is a fundamental part of Church social teaching.

The bishops also point to the 2005 pastoral note of the Bishops' Conference of Indonesia, the 2005 Grand Synod of the Indonesian Catholic Church and the 2008 Lenten Action for Development, all of which encourage Catholics and others to respond to take concrete action to protect the environment.

According to the Kalimantan bishops, people's aggressive pursuit of worldly pleasures is the main cause of environmental destruction. "This mentality does not care about the integrity of the environment and harmony of all creation," they say.

Thus the environmental crisis is basically a moral issue, as Pope John Paul II observed in his 1990 World Day of Peace message, they note. This is why repentance is required, they say, adding that "the way we do this is by treating the earth and all Creation in a responsible way, because this universe is created by God for his glory and for the welfare of humans."

The bishops call on the government and all people to help preserve the environment by stopping illegal logging and by planting trees. They also encourage parents and educators to instill a love for Creation in children from an early age.

"None of us can deal with this serious problem alone," they acknowledge. "Nonetheless we must do what we can because we are part of this earth."

Local Catholics say their parish priests and parish pastoral councils are now discussing what kinds of trees they will plant in their respective areas.

Meanwhile Father William Chang, vicar general of Pontianak archdiocese, told UCA News clergy, laypeople and Religious in all parishes and mission stations must follow up the bishops' "very relevant" pastoral letter with action. The Capuchin priest, who attended the U.N. conference in Bali, said on Jan. 3 that all seminarians should study the issues involved so they can facilitate appropriate action.

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## **January 24, 2008**

### UNEP Calls for Nominations for the 2008 UNEP Sasakawa Prize

Nairobi, 24 January 2008 - Nominations are officially open for the 2008 UNEP Sasakawa Prize, the United Nations Environment Programme announced today.

The US\$200,000 award is given out every year by UNEP and the Nippon Foundation to reward environmental innovation, initiatives and research from around the world.

This year, winners will be chosen for work related to the theme for this year's World Environment Day: 'Kick the Habit: Towards a Low Carbon Economy'. The Prize will be awarded for work related to reducing society's dependence on carbon-intensive technologies and lifestyles. Sustainability and the proven potential to replicate will be among the key elements that will guide the search for a winner.

Sasakawa Prize winners are achievers with an established track record of achievement and the potential to make outstanding contributions to the protection and management of the environment consistent with UNEP's policies and objectives. UNEP's hope is that the Prize will offer the financial support laureates need to build on their achievements.

To nominate someone, please visit [www.unep.org/sasakawa](http://www.unep.org/sasakawa) before 15 March 2008.

Further information on the UNEP Sasakawa Prize and the nomination process is available at [www.unep.org/sasakawa](http://www.unep.org/sasakawa) or from [sasakawaprize@unep.org](mailto:sasakawaprize@unep.org)

Or contact Nick Nuttall, UNEP Spokesperson, at tel: +254 20 762 3084, mobile: +254 733 632755, or e-mail: [nick.nuttall@unep.org](mailto:nick.nuttall@unep.org); or Anne-France White, Associate Information Officer, at tel: +254 20 762 3088, or e-mail: [anne-france.white@unep.org](mailto:anne-france.white@unep.org).

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## **January 24, 2008**

### GEMS/WATER INFORMATION NOTE

## Launch of 2008 Environmental Performance Index and Water

BURLINGTON, Ontario, 24 January 2008 -- UNEP's GEMS/Water Programme would like to congratulate Yale and Colombia University for their 2008 Environmental Performance Index launched this week at the Davos World Economic Forum. GEMS/Water was Lead Science Advisor to developing the water quality components of the EPI.

The 2008 Environmental Performance Index (EPI) ranks 149 countries on 25 indicators tracked across six established policy categories: Environmental Health, Air Pollution, Water Resources, Biodiversity and Habitat, Productive Natural Resources, and Climate Change. The EPI identifies broadly-accepted targets for environmental performance and measures how close each country comes to these goals. As a quantitative gauge of pollution control and natural resource management results, the Index provides a powerful tool for improving policymaking and shifting environmental decision-making onto firmer analytic foundations.

GEMS/Water collaborated on the Water Pollution section of the EPI. The Effects on the Ecosystem indicators are described at <http://epi.yale.edu/WaterEffectsOnEcosystem>

The Water Quality indicator is a proximity-to-target composite of water quality, adjusted for monitoring stations' density in each country, with the maximum score of 100. Data were available to compute indicator values for 94 countries. For countries where no values could be computed using available data, a regional imputed value was used. Water Quality was imputed for a total of 138 countries.

GEMS/Water is pleased to continue to work in the future with both Yale and Colombia University on further development of the EPI. For the EPI to be most effective, environmental water quality data and information are urgently needed to fill the gaps in GEMS/Water's database GEMStat. National governments, water authorities, NGOs and universities around the world can contribute to the success of indicator development by participating in UNEP's GEMS/Water Programme. GEMS/Water would like to highlight the valuable contributions made by our present National Focal Points and Collaborating Focal Points.

Information and documents related to the 2008 EPI are available at <http://epi.yale.edu/Home>.

What does GEMS/Water do? Since its establishment in 1978, UNEP's Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS) Water Programme has become the primary source for global environmental water quality data. It is a multi-faceted water science centre oriented towards knowledge development on inland quality issues throughout the world. Major activities include monitoring, assessment and capacity building.

The twin goals of the Programme are to improve water quality monitoring and assessment capabilities in participating countries, and to determine the status and trends of regional and global water quality. These goals are implemented through the GEMS/Water data bank, at [www.gemstat.org](http://www.gemstat.org), including water quality data and information from more than 3,000 stations in 100 countries, with over four million entries for lakes, reservoirs, rivers and groundwater systems. By compiling a global database, GEMS/Water adds value to country-level data by

contributing to global and regional water quality assessments.

Through its Quality Management System (QMS), UNEP's GEMS/Water Programme improves global water quality data by ensuring the comparability and validity of analyses performed by laboratories worldwide, and by encouraging and supporting data integrity at all levels.

The Programme also carries out evaluations on a range of water quality issues and methodologies. GEMS/Water data have been used by other organizations, including the UN system and universities around the world.

For more information about GEMS/Water, please contact: Dr. Richard D. Robarts, Director, tel: +1-306-975-6047 fax: +1-306-975-5143 e-mail: richard.robarts@gemswater.org or visit [www.gemswater.org](http://www.gemswater.org) and [www.gemstat.org](http://www.gemstat.org).

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## **January 24, 2008**

Green efforts inspire local churches to conserve

January 23, 2008

BY TINA LAM

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

While politicians argue in Lansing and Washington over how and when to reduce America's global-warming gases, some Michigan churches are already doing it.

Michigan Interfaith Power and Light, whose mission is to save money, energy and carbon dioxide emissions, started in 2003. It now has 230 member congregations of all faiths across the state.

Advertisement

Energy calculators show that since fall 2004, the churches have saved at least a combined \$2.5 million and kept 17,350 tons of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.

That's the equivalent of taking 3,100 cars off the roads for a year.

"We need to be caretakers of the Earth," said the Rev. David Preuss of St. Charles Borromeo church in Detroit. "How better to do that than not waste fuel?"

Since joining MIPL, Preuss' church has put in new insulation, installed energy-efficient lightbulbs, put solar panels on the rectory roof to collect energy for water heating, and is trying to raise \$53,000 for a new geothermal heating and cooling system.

For his church, Preuss said, it's a matter of faith, but also survival.

St. Charles was at risk of closing in the late 1980s because energy costs for the 1918 building, with soaring 56-foot ceilings, soaked up 34% of the church's revenue.

Now, those bills are just 10% of the budget, and Preuss hopes geothermal energy will cut that in half.

"Our water bills are higher than our energy bills," he said.

"Changing the world, one light at a time," is the motto of MIPL's national parent, Interfaith Power and Light, founded a decade ago in San Francisco. The group promotes renewable energy and conservation as a moral issue.

The Rev. Charles Morris likes to climb to the roof of the rectory at St. Elizabeth's in Wyandotte to show off his church's solar panels and wind turbine.

"We're not just talking and preaching about this," said Morris, MIPL's founder. "We have street credibility."

Morris has been honored by Rolling Stone magazine and featured in the New York Times for his efforts.

In 1997, St. Elizabeth's paid \$5,000 for an energy audit and put in improvements over the next five years.

The changes have cut energy costs 60%, saving an estimated \$25,000 per year, Morris said.

And when a massive blackout hit Michigan and the eastern United States in 2003, it took Morris hours to learn about it -- from his television. That's because the blackout didn't affect the rectory, which mostly is off the grid.

One MIPL project is a Web site where individual members of congregations can buy discounted compact fluorescent lightbulbs, which use less energy and last longer than regular bulbs.

Members also can buy energy-efficient appliances, such as refrigerators, at 25% discounts from ABC Warehouse.

At Church of the Holy Family in Novi, the church's kilowatt hours have dropped since installing new energy-efficient bulbs, motion sensors in bathrooms that turn lights on only when they're needed, and dimmer switches, said business administrator Beth Meyer.

The church joined MIPL in 2004. A church committee held sales of compact fluorescent lightbulbs on two Sundays for parishioners, and it is considering solar panels on its roof to help supply electricity, Meyer said.

St. John's Episcopal Church in Royal Oak has replaced 75% of its old-fashioned lightbulbs with energy-efficient ones, put more efficient lightbulbs in its exit signs and has a new energy-efficient air-conditioning system and office copier, said member Julie Lyons Bricker, chair of the church's green committee and an MIPL board member.

And the faith-connected effort to save energy isn't just at Christian churches.

Concern among Muslims for the environment has spiked in recent years, said Imam Achmat Salie of Muslim Unity Center in Bloomfield Hills, an MIPL board member.

"People realize they can make changes themselves," he said.

The center's goal is to build a green mosque, Salie said.

Contact TINA LAM at 313-222-6421 or [tlam@freepress.com](mailto:tlam@freepress.com).

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### **January 24, 2008**

Daryl Hannah Signs On to Narrate New IMAX (R) 3D Theatre Film DOLPHINS AND WHALES 3D: Tribes of the Ocean  
Thursday January 24, 7:45 am ET

Produced and directed by the Mantello Brothers and presented by Jean-Michel Cousteau, the film will have its world premiere at the New England Aquarium's Simons IMAX (R) Theatre in Boston on February 13th

SANTA MONICA, Calif. and LONDON, Jan. 24 /PRNewswire/ -- Filmmakers Jean-Jacques and Francois Mantello (the Mantello Brothers) and film ambassador Jean-Michel Cousteau are pleased to announce that their new IMAX ® 3D Theatre film DOLPHINS AND WHALES 3D will feature narration by actress and environmentalist Daryl Hannah (Kill Bill: Vol. 1&2, Blade Runner). Beginning its theatrical run at IMAX ® 3D theatres on February 15th, DOLPHINS AND WHALES 3D will invite audiences on a journey of discovery with these marine mammal tribes of the ocean.

"We are thrilled that such an accomplished actress and charismatic personality as Daryl Hannah has accepted to lend her talent and distinctive voice to this immersive and emotional film adventure," said the Mantello Brothers. "Her involvement in the protection of the environment, whether through Reef Check, EcoAmerica or the Sustainable Biodiesel Alliance, is indisputable and we could not dream of a better, more inspiring person to call for ocean conservation alongside our outstanding ambassador, Jean-Michel Cousteau."

"Less than 1% of human beings have had the incredible opportunity to visit the underwater world," said Daryl Hannah. "With this beautiful adventure projected onto IMAX ® 3D screens, viewers can virtually touch some of the most incredible mammals in the world," she said. "It is amazing how much we share with these beautiful creatures -- play, family, education,



community, struggles. Unfortunately, because we often are so unaware of these underwater tribes and our negative impact upon them through slaughterings and uncontrolled human activities, they are facing the greatest challenge of all: to survive the destruction of their habitat and depletion of food resources."

DOLPHINS AND WHALES 3D will immerse viewers in the daily lives of small and giant cetaceans as they interact socially, play, communicate through their highly complex system of sound, feed, breed, migrate and fight for their survival. The film delivers a powerful message in favor of both ocean conservation and the protection of its tribes. It marks the first time humpback whales, belugas, orcas, bottlenose dolphins and manatees have been filmed in 3D for the world's biggest screens. Unlike other IMAX® -type films, DOLPHINS AND WHALES 3D was shot entirely in the wild and consists solely of underwater footage.

The New England Aquarium's Simons IMAX® Theatre on Central Wharf in Boston (MA) will hold the world premiere of DOLPHINS AND WHALES 3D on February 13, 2008. The VIP event will be hosted by Daryl Hannah and Jean-Michel Cousteau. Both will address the media and educators on the critical situation in which cetaceans currently find themselves. For more information, please visit <http://www.neaq.org>

On February 15th, 3D Entertainment Distribution's release will open to the general public at the New England Aquarium in Boston, as well as at the Virginia Aquarium (Virginia Beach, VA), Texas State History Museum (Austin, TX) and Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo (Omaha, NE). The film will then roll out at both domestic- and international IMAX® 3D Theatres throughout the year. For complete theatre listings, please visit the film's official website <http://www.DOLPHINSandWHALES3D.com>

DOLPHINS AND WHALES 3D reunites director Jean-Jacques Mantello and producer Francois Mantello with director of photography Gavin McKinney and music composer Christophe Jacquelin, once again forming the highly successful 3D filmmaking team behind 3D Entertainment's unique ocean-themed film series. The company's first two episodes, OCEAN WONDERLAND and SHARKS 3D, which respectively address the urgent need to protect coral reefs and shark species have proven immensely popular around the globe, grossing a cumulative \$56 million at the box office worldwide and counting.

The film will be released at IMAX® 3D Theatres by 3D Entertainment Distribution in association with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), PADI's Project Aware and Reef Check.

A high-resolution headshot of Daryl Hannah is available through AP Archive and PR Newswire.

#### ABOUT 3D ENTERTAINMENT

3D Entertainment Ltd. is a fully-integrated independent company specializing in the production, distribution and marketing of unique and innovative underwater-themed 3D documentaries for IMAX® theatres and Digital 3D Cinemas worldwide. Our mission is to immerse audiences of all

ages in unique 3D story-driven experiences that inspire and educate on the vital need to protect the oceans and their inhabitants. For more information, visit <http://www.3DEFilms.com>

#### ABOUT JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU

Explorer, environmentalist, educator, film producer. For more than four decades Jean-Michel Cousteau, son of Commandant Jacques Cousteau, has used his vast experiences to communicate to people of all nations and generations his love and concern for our water planet. Honoring his heritage, Jean-Michel founded Ocean Futures Society in 1999, a non-profit 501(c)(3) marine conservation and education organization to carry on this pioneering work. For more information on Jean-Michel Cousteau, visit <http://www.oceanfutures.org>

#### ABOUT THE NEW ENGLAND AQUARIUM

The New England Aquarium in Boston is one of the most prominent and popular aquariums in the United States. Its mission is "to present, promote, and protect the world of water." Beyond its exhibit halls, the Aquarium is also a leading ocean conservation organization with research scientists working around the globe and biologists rescuing stranded marine animals in New England. For more information, visit <http://www.neaq.org>

IMAX is registered trademark of IMAX Corporation.

SOURCE 3D Entertainment Distribution; Ocean Futures Society; New England Aquarium

Source: 3D Entertainment Distribution; Ocean Futures Society; New England

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#### **January 27, 2008**

Humans urged to respect our planet  
Change sense of entitlement, says theologian

Graeme Morton  
Calgary Herald

Saturday, January 26, 2008

Iwaasa Lectures in Christian Spirituality

- Global Warming: A Theological

Problem, Jan. 28, 7:30 p.m., St.

Barnabas Anglican, 1407 7th Ave. N.W.

- Urban Ecology and Religion, Jan. 29, noon, Nickle Arts Museum, University of Calgary.

- - -

Canadians need to change the lightbulbs inside their minds as well as those in their homes and churches when it comes to a new spiritual approach to the environment.

Sallie McFague, distinguished theologian in residence at the Vancouver School of Theology and the author of a number of books on religion and ecology, is calling for a profound shift in the way humans view our place in the natural world.

McFague will be in Calgary on Monday and Tuesday to deliver the University of Calgary's Iwaasa Lectures in Christian Spirituality.

"The heart of the question is who do we think we are in the scheme of things, and what do we have the right to do?" says McFague.

She notes while global warming and climate change are scientific and economic issues, they are also deeply theological debates.

"Religions have traditionally been involved in helping to form the basic assumptions about who we are and what we ought to be doing," McFague reasons. "In our market-driven system, we have the view that we are individuals who deserve to get everything we can legally get hold of without worrying too much about other people."

McFague says scientific research is painting a different scenario: that we can't continue on our present course without destroying other life forms.

"Sharing is not just a warm, fuzzy word; radical interdependence is the law of the universe in terms of a just and sustainable living situation."

McFague says changing such entrenched assumptions of individual entitlement won't be easy, but people of faith can play an important role.

"If we think of ourselves as the only 'subject' and the rest of the world as an 'object,' then you look at a forest first as so many board-feet of lumber -- it becomes merely a resource," she says.

McFague says many mainline Christian denominations have been primarily inward-looking in recent years, focusing on issues such as declining membership and sexuality.

But she senses a significant shift in the wake of the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Al Gore in bringing global warming to the public's collective radar screen.

"It's a time of great openness and possibility for much more serious analysis and action. Global warming is not a cosmetic issue; this is very basic stuff for our survival," says McFague.

McFague says individuals and congregations doing green surveys of their lives and facilities is a good first step in focusing on climate change.

"It helps them raise their consciousness and embrace a different attitude," McFague says. "But people realize pretty quickly that personal changes are not enough. It doesn't matter how many times you ride the bus if there aren't large systemic, political changes."

Rev. Meg Roberts of the Unitarian Church of Calgary says world religions share common values of respect for other beings and for the earth itself.

"To call us back to that foundation gives us inspiration," says Roberts. "Both faith communities and environmental groups can offer support to each other; that you're not alone when you despair over the size of the challenge ahead of us."

"We all have to remember faith and values are connected to the economic and political systems," Roberts says.

McFague's latest book, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World and Global Warming*, is due out in May.

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## **January 27, 2008**

Lifestyle

Churches find common ground on green issues

By Alex Breitler

January 26, 2008

Record Staff Writer

Doctrines differ and creeds clash, but leaders of many faiths appear to share ground on at least one subject: the environment, and mankind's role sustaining it.

Some preach from the pulpit on this very topic. Others say it's already an implied, or intrinsic, part of their faith.

"I think if some churches are really making this a much more conscious effort, that we should also do the same," said the Rev. Charles Hasegawa at the Stockton Buddhist Temple. "I think we should all work together."

This "greening of the churches" in many cases transcends the gap between the perceived liberal and conservative faiths.

The National Association of Evangelicals, a group of 60 denominations, has challenged its congregations to reduce energy use, saying that "nowhere in the Bible does God condone mismanagement or waste."

Similarly, at Stockton's First Unitarian Universalist Church, congregants have committed to reducing their carbon footprints at home this year.

"This is one of our basic tenets," said member Rick Mielbrecht. "We are responsible not just for ourselves," but for the world around us.

Where churches sometimes differ is on the role humans play. May we exercise "dominion," as the book of Genesis says, by using the Earth's natural resources as we see fit? Or do such scriptures imply careful stewardship?

The latter, says Norman Kinney, pastor of Central Seventh-day Adventist Church in Stockton.

Make no mistake: Kinney does not place man and animal on equal ground.

"We're focused on the (second) coming of Christ, not as hysterically focused on preserving everything at the expense of man for some horned toad or something like that," he said.

But the Bible says that God will destroy those who destroy the Earth, Kinney said.

A literal reading of the Bible says that earthquakes and natural disasters precede Christ's second coming, and that those who are unprepared will be destroyed, he said. The Earth is then melted and destroyed before being recreated clean of sin.

But the planet's ultimate demise does not make environmental stewardship a moot point, Kinney said.

"We've got to live here until it's over, and therefore we need to be concerned about it," he said.

The environment is invoked at nearly every meeting of the Interfaith Council of San Joaquin County, said Rick Nafzinger of Stockton, who through his Hindu faith believes that the divine can be found in everything.

Nafzinger avoids even stepping on ants and will not use chemical pesticides on fruits or vegetables.

"If we do harm to the physical world, we're harming ourselves," he said. "Our hell is not something we experience after our body dies. Our hell is something we experience right now as a result of our actions."

The current upwelling of environmentalism is akin to one of two primary deities, Mother Earth, making herself known to us, Nafzinger said.

Even the most prominent religious leaders have made natural resources a priority. Pope Benedict XVI earlier this month said: "Respecting the environment does not mean considering material or animal nature more important than man. Rather, it means not selfishly considering nature to be at the complete disposal of our own interests."

Betsy Reifsnider heads a three-year-old environmental justice program for the Catholic Diocese of Stockton. The group has delved into the complicated issue of air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley, its members testifying before committees, writing letters and talking with lawmakers.

Members have distributed thousands of compact fluorescent light bulbs to Valley parishes, and messages during Sunday mass have been tailored toward the environment.

It is not just an ecological crisis, Reifsnider said: "It is a moral crisis."

Contact reporter Alex Breitler at (209) 546-8295 or [abreitler@recordnet.com](mailto:abreitler@recordnet.com).

Where they stand

Here's a sampling of how several faiths weigh in on the environment:

- Catholic: "We need to care for the environment; it has been entrusted to men and women to be protected and cultivated with responsible freedom," said Pope Benedict XVI.
  - Buddhist: "Humans, nature, everything is all interrelated. Buddhist teaching has always emphasized the truth of interdependence," said the Rev. Charles Hasegawa of Stockton Buddhist Temple.
  - Jewish: Many commandments instruct Jews to protect God's creation, including conservation. Also, the greeting "Shalom" means peace or wholeness, or harmony in all creation, according to the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life.
  - Methodist: "God chose to give human beings a divine image not so we would exploit creation to our own ends, but so we would be recognized as stewards of God," says a statement from the United Methodist Church.
  - Southern Baptist: Men and women are greater in value than the rest of creation but should exercise careful stewardship, says a 2006 resolution by the Southern Baptist Convention. Environmentalism has been made into a "neo-pagan" religion by elevating animal life; church calls for respect for ownership and property rights, and resisting alliances with extreme environmental groups.
  - Hindu: Everything is divine; the form of a person is just a shell or container for that divinity. "We believe the physical world should be loved and respected as one loves and respects God," said Rick Nafzinger of Stockton, a practicing Hindu and author.
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**January 27, 2008**

Where greenliness is next to . . . TheStar.com - Environment - Where greenliness is next to . . .

COLIN MCCONNELL/TORONTO STAR

Alan Levine and Tamara Zielony are co-chairs of the environment committee at Darchei Noam synagogue on Sheppard ave. west. The synagogue is green, with recycled carpets and low energy lights.

**WHAT'S GREEN AT DARCHEI NOAM**

- Programmable thermostats in most rooms
- Carbon dioxide sensors, ensuring air is brought in from outside only as needed
- Tinted, double-glazed windows with low heat-transmission that in many places open, so Mother Nature can do some of the cooling in spring and fall
- Motion-activated sinks and low flush toilets and urinals
- Waste diversion of all recyclable and organic materials
- White roof, which reflects hot summer sun and reduces air conditioning
- 100 per cent recyclable carpet made out of reclaimed materials
- Solvent-free paints
- Compact fluorescent light fixtures and lamps

From solar panels to windows and paint, synagogue keeps the faith with eco-efficiency

January 27, 2008

Catherine Porter

Environment Reporter

Think of it as the Darchei Noam's new green yarmulke – a row of solar panels and a reflective, white membrane covering the synagogue's new roof.

But here, it's a symbol of the congregation's commitment to the environment, as well as God.

"It's a Jewish value – to heal the world and take care of the planet," says Tamara Zielony, looking out at the newly-arrived burgundy chairs lining the sanctuary.

When worshippers fill them for the first time today to watch as the synagogue's Torah scrolls are delivered into the sanctuary's ark, marking the official opening of the building, it will be as the greenest Jews in the country.

Rows of energy-efficient compact fluorescent and ceramic metal halide lights dangle from the ceiling. The beige carpet is 100 per cent recycled. The walls were coloured a rich mahogany with natural paint that emits no asthma-inducing volatile organic compounds. And the window curtain that lines the whole north side is double-paned with thermal insulation and built to ensure that no joints would leak air.

"Anything we bought was energy efficient," says Alan Levine, the enthusiastic chair of the congregation's construction committee. "We designed the building with environmentally sustainable principles."

Darchei Noam's members are leaders in an emerging green religious movement. Just down Sheppard Ave., the new home for St. Gabriel's Catholic Church was built with a green roof and solar wall – garnering it the country's first and only gold-standard certificate for a religious building by the reputable LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System.

The non-profit organization "Faith in the Common Good" now includes more than 100 faith groups, many actively working to reduce their carbon footprint in the face of global warming.

"Eco-spirituality is a common denominator among all faiths. All have instruction in their holy texts to revere the natural world, to keep it holy," says Rory O'Brien, a co-ordinator with the multi-faith group. And despite dwindling congregations, religious sanctuaries have the potential to make a big impact.

"There are 30,000 faith buildings across the country, 7,000 in Ontario. If we green them all and prevent all the energy losses, we'll save a lot of money and tonnes of greenhouse gases from going into the atmosphere," O'Brien says.

If there's one place that people can be truly motivated by the greater good – rather than the bottom line – it's here, in a place of worship.

Darchei Noam is a reconstructionist congregation – a progressive branch of Judaism that holds democracy and social justice among its tenets. After 30 years of worshipping in rented space, the congregation bought an old synagogue on Sheppard Ave. near Allen Rd. five years ago, and set out to raise money – and ideas – for its renovation.

The \$6.5 million result is breathtaking in beauty and eco-consciousness. The original brick walls were insulated and then stuccoed. The old boiler was ripped out and a high-efficiency heating system installed, which allows different parts of the building to be heated at different levels and draws cool air from outside instead of motoring up the air conditioning.

"To have enough hot water for 300 people one day and six the next would have been very wasteful," says Levine, opening a closet to reveal a gas-fired water heater that heats water on demand. He opens the door to the women's washroom and jumps inside, triggering the lights above. "Most spaces have motion sensors, so the room's only lit when it's in use," he says.



Led by a member-architect and the volunteer "Shomrei Adamah" committee (Hebrew for "guardians of the Earth"), the congregation examined every element, right down to the glass dishes in the kitchen – replacing paper – and the bike rack in the basement, which come spring will move outside.

Their next step is buying green office and cleaning products, says Zielony, who, inspired by the project, built a green roof on her North Toronto home.

Instead of applying for expensive LEED certification, the congregation decided to install 22 solar panels along the roof, which will generate around 5,000 kilowatt-hours over the year – enough to power half a home.

He doesn't know how long it will take to pay off the expensive retrofits in energy savings.

"We never needed to justify the investment from a payout point of view. We justified it from an environmental point of view," he says.

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### **January 28, 2008**

Green achievers from Bangladesh to New Zealand will be honoured at international award ceremony in April in Singapore

Nairobi, 28 January 2008- From protecting the unique biodiversity of Yemen's islands to piloting climate-proofing strategies in Sudan and boosting conservation in Barbados, the 2008 Champions of the Earth are making their mark across the planet.

Prince Albert II of Monaco, former US Senator Timothy E. Wirth and New Zealand's Prime Minister Helen Clark -whose country will host World Environment Day this year with the theme "Kick the Habit: Towards a Low Carbon Economy!" -are among the seven environmental achievers chosen for this year's awards, the United Nations Environment Programme announced today.

The Champions of the Earth prize, which will be given out at a ceremony in Singapore on 22 April, recognizes individuals from each region of the world who have shown extraordinary leadership on environmental issues.

The other 2008 Champions of the Earth are: Balgis Osman-Elasha, a senior researcher at Sudan's Higher Council for Environment & Natural Resources; Atiq Rahman, the Executive Director of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies; Liz Thompson, the former Energy and Environment Minister of Barbados; and Abdul-Qader Ba-Jammal, the Secretary General of the Yemen People's General Congress.

All the winners have spearheaded outstanding initiatives in many different areas from environmental policy to cutting-edge research, with a particular focus on sustainable development and the fight against climate change.

The announcement comes on the eve of the 10th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council, which will bring together over one hundred ministers from around the world in Monaco on 20-22 February. This year's Governing Council will also focus on the urgent challenge of climate change -specifically, the issue of mobilizing finance to realize a low carbon world.

Achim Steiner, the UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director said: "Today, we face environmental challenges of unprecedented magnitude. More than ever, our planet needs committed leaders and achievers like the 2008 Champions of the Earth who spur real, positive change and fuel innovative solutions to environmental problems. In doing so, these inspirational individuals demonstrate not only that action and different development paths are possible but also the abundant opportunities arising as a result of a transformation towards a green economy."

## 2008 Champions of the Earth

### UNEP SPECIAL PRIZE

Rt. Hon. Helen Clark

By setting a carbon neutral goal for New Zealand, Prime Minister Helen Clark has put her country at the forefront of today's environmental challenges. Three major policy initiatives launched by Miss Clark are also blazing new trails for sustainability and the fight against climate change: the Emissions Trading Scheme; the Energy Strategy; and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy.

Miss Clark's policies champion renewable energy and energy efficiency across key sectors of the economy. Her government is also achieving substantial work on environmental protection, from forestry and agriculture to improving public awareness and boosting private sector involvement in sustainability.

New Zealand will be hosting this year's World Environment Day - one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action. The event will take place on 5 June 2008 with the slogan "Kick the Habit! Towards a Low Carbon Economy".

### AFRICA

Dr. Balgis Osman-Elasha

Dr. Balgis Osman-Elasha, a senior scientist from Sudan, is at the forefront of global research on climate change. A leading author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, she has produced groundbreaking work on global warming - the defining challenge of our era - in Africa, with an emphasis on northern and eastern Africa.

Dr. Osman-Elasha's emphasis on global warming and adaptation in Sudan is vital given the strong interlinkages between climate change and conflict in the country. Her work as a prominent researcher on climate change makes her a true role model for women in Africa.

The award also recognizes Dr. Osman-Elasha's efforts to educate Sudanese university students about the issue of climate change, thus raising awareness among the country's new generation.

## ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Dr. Atiq Rahman

Dr. Atiq Rahman is an eloquent advocate for sustainable development from Bangladesh- a country highly vulnerable to climate change and flooding. As one of the top specialists in his field, the Executive Director of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) transformed the NGO into a leading think-tank in South Asia on sustainable development issues.

Dr. Rahman's extensive publications on the subjects of environment and development in Bangladesh are a reference for his peers, and he has also developed an innovative post-graduate course on sustainable development and North-South dialogue.

With his national and international experience in environment and resource management, Dr. Rahman's expertise remains vital throughout the Asia Pacific region and beyond as he helps to raise awareness of the hazards of global warming.

## EUROPE

H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco

One of Prince Albert II's first acts as sovereign of Monaco was to sign the Kyoto Protocol - an eloquent sign of his longstanding commitment to the environment. Prince Albert has been a prominent voice on environmental issues since the early 1990s and he has been strongly involved in raising awareness on climate change, leading an expedition to the North Pole in 2006 to draw attention to the consequences of global warming.

The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, which he created in 2006, works actively on protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development, with a focus on biodiversity loss, water and the fight against climate change. Prince Albert is also a patron of the Billion Tree Campaign, which successfully led to the planting of well over a billion trees across the planet in 2007.

Prince Albert has also shown remarkable commitment to sustainable development on his home turf of Monaco. Under his leadership, Monaco is now applying an exemplary policy on CO2 reduction in every sphere of society as well as in the business sector.

## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

H. E. Liz Thompson

Ms. Thompson has become one of the recognized leaders on environmental issues of the Small Island Developing States.

During her time as Minister of Energy and the Environment of Barbados, she enacted a range of progressive policies for sustainable development and environmental protection. She also became a key voice to raise awareness of global warming in Barbados - a country where the challenges of climate change and conservation are of particular relevance.

Ms. Thompson has also played a role in environmental awareness and protection across the Caribbean region. She has encouraged small island states to diversify their economies, undertake sustainability assessments, and promote community-based programmes that have positive environmental impacts.

#### NORTH AMERICA

Timothy E. Wirth

For the last thirty years, Timothy E. Wirth has been an advocate for environmental issues in the United States. As the president of the United Nations Foundation and Better World Fund, Mr. Wirth has established the environment as a key priority and is mobilizing strong resources to address crucial issues from biodiversity to climate change and renewable energy.

A strong supporter of the Kyoto Protocol, Mr. Wirth was instrumental in raising awareness and calling for policy action on global warming during his time as US Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs.

Mr. Wirth was also a steadfast advocate on environmental issues during his time as a member of the US Senate, when he engaged in a number of conservation and natural resource issues in his state of Colorado. Mr. Wirth authored the Colorado Wilderness Bill as well as other successful legislation on energy, conservation and environmental protection.

#### WEST ASIA

H.E. Abdul-Qader Ba-Jammal

Mr. Ba-Jammal has had a truly pioneering influence on environmental protection in Yemen - a country which faces acute challenges from water scarcity to desertification. During his time as Minister and then Prime Minister, he established Yemen's Ministry of Water and Environment and Environment Protection Authority, solicited national and international funding for environmental conservation and sustainable water management, and implemented a series of groundbreaking environmental policies in Yemen and its region.

Mr. Ba-Jammal also orchestrated conservation efforts for the Socotra archipelago, a site of global importance for biodiversity. The Socotra conservation fund came into being under his patronage, and the archipelago was listed as a UNESCO Man and Biosphere reserve in 2003.

Among other achievements, Mr. Ba-Jammal also supported the declaration of several marine and land protected areas in Yemen and established a state agency for the development of Yemeni islands with a focus on marine resources conservation. Along with Mr. Ba-Jammal's work on Yemen's water sector, all these projects serve as key examples of environmental awareness in a region where water and conservation issues are of vital importance - increasingly so in a climate-constrained world.

#### Notes to editors

Champions of the Earth is an international environment award established in 2004 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The annual prize rewards individuals from around the globe who have made a significant and recognized contribution globally, regionally and beyond, to the protection and sustainable management of the Earth's environment and natural resources. Candidates are judged by a senior UNEP panel with input from UNEP's regional offices.

Past Champions of the Earth winners include among others: Ms. Massoudeh Ebtekar, the former Vice President of Iran; H.E. Mikhail Gorbachev of the Russian Federation; H.R.H. Prince Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan; Jacques Rogge and the International Olympic Committee; and Al Gore, the former Vice President of the United States.

The Champions of the Earth are invited to accept their award at an international ceremony which will be held in Singapore on 22 April 2008. The event will be hosted in conjunction with the Business for the Environment Summit (B4E), details of which can be found on the UNEP website.

No monetary reward is attached to the prize -each laureate receives a trophy made of recycled metal especially designed by the Kenyan sculptor Kioko and representing the fundamental elements for life on earth: sun, air, land and water.

Background on the Champions of the Earth award and all the laureates can be found at [www.unep.org/champions](http://www.unep.org/champions) or from UNEP's communications division at [championsoftheearth@unep.org](mailto:championsoftheearth@unep.org).

UNEP's 10th Special Session of the Governing Council /Global Ministerial Environment Forum will take place at the Principality of Monaco on 20-22 February 2008. More information can be found at <http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-x/>

For information on World Environment Day 2008, please visit [http://www.unep.org/wed/2008/english/About\\_WED\\_2008/index.asp](http://www.unep.org/wed/2008/english/About_WED_2008/index.asp)

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UNEP press release 2008/01

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## January 28, 2008

All About: Religion and the environment

- \* Story Highlights
- \* Christianity established "dualism of man and nature"
- \* Islam shares sense of "responsible stewardship" with Judaism
- \* Hindus shun the pursuit of happiness through material gain
- \* Buddhists: natural born environmentalists?

By Rachel Oliver  
For CNN

(CNN) -- Whether we are actively religious or not, religious belief permeates the very fabric of our existence. Namely, it influences -- if not directly shapes -- our legal systems; and therefore our constitutions; and therefore our nations' policy choices, both at home and abroad.

It is then only logical to surmise that religion also influences how we -- individually and collectively -- view our role with regards to protecting the environment.

To suggest that any one religion somehow cares more for the Earth than the others would be foolish and simplistic, but within each belief system there lie subtle differences that, many argue, give an indication as to how we view our position in relation to it.

Namely, there appear to be two opposing questions that the world's religions have sought to answer over time: Are humans an equal part of a greater organism which they should therefore respect, serve and nourish? Or is the very purpose of that organism to serve and nourish the human race?

As Lynn White wrote in what many view as a groundbreaking, yet controversial 1967 essay, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," published in Science magazine: "What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny -- that is, by religion."

### World's Leading Religions by Followers (from Adherents.com)

- Christianity: 2.1 billion
- Islam: 1.5 billion
- Hinduism: 900 million
- Buddhism: 376 million

#### Christianity

"Christianity," wrote White, "Not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends." The emergence of Christianity, many, like White believe, marked the moment humans broke away from previously common held beliefs that all beings, all forms of life -- including plants -- had spirits (or souls).

"In Antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genius loci, its guardian spirit," he wrote. And Christianity changed all that, he believed. Man was created in God's image, Christians believed, and notably Man was created at the end of Creation and humans therefore inherited the Earth. "By destroying pagan animism," White wrote. "Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects."

Many disagree -- and indeed are offended by -- the assertion that Christians do not care for the Earth and all of its beings and have dismissed White's conclusions. Marcia Bunge in her 1994 essay, "Biblical Views of Nature: Foundations for an Environmental Ethic," published by Chicago's Lutheran School of Theology's journal "Care of the Earth," claimed the Bible "contains ample grounds for environmental responsibility."

Bunge cited examples such as the story of Noah as evidence that God's covenant was not just with humans but with all creatures; that the name Adam stemming from the Hebrew word 'adamah', meaning ground or earth implied "the connection between human beings and the earth," and that, in the New Testament, Paul's vision of redemption or liberation through Christ's death did not just apply to humans but "of all creatures of nature".

#### Judaism

Christians are not the only ones looking for guidance in the Old Testament. But when drawing from Genesis, the Jewish faith is not so much divided, many believe, more to say appreciative of two opposing ideas that can happily co-exist. As Daniel B. Fink's 1998 essay, "Judaism and Ecology: A Theology of Creation", published in "Earth Ethics", explains: "We are both a part of nature and apart from it." Jews understand, Fink says, that the fact that Man was created at the end of the sixth day could have two possible meanings: either humans are the "guest[s] of honor" at a great feast, or, it's a reminder in case humans become too arrogant "that even the gnats preceded them in the order of creation".

In that regard, the perception is that humans have a "unique" responsibility to "use nature's bounty to our benefit" while also recognizing that "each part of God's creation has its own

intrinsic value". Humans, in the Jewish interpretation, are the stewards of the Garden of Eden, but vitally, they are looking after it for God, not for themselves. Underlying the Jewish ethic, Fink writes, is the belief that humans are "only tenants on this earth. The land belongs to God. We are given permission to enjoy the Creator's abundant gifts, but we must not waste or wantonly destroy anything."

### Islam

Responsible stewardship is a theme also shared by Muslims. In "Environmental Protection in Islam" published by the Meteorology and Environmental Protection Administration of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prophet Muhammad's stance on the environment is quite clear: "Created beings are the dependents of God, and the creature dearest unto God is he who does most good to God's dependents," it says. Humans' good deeds therefore, "are not limited to the benefit of the human species but rather extend to the benefit of all created beings."

Similar to the Jewish and Christian faiths, human beings are seen in Islam as stewards of the environment, but more in line with Judaism, a principal belief amongst Muslims is that, a human is "only a manager of the earth and not a proprietor." Therein lies among Muslims an appreciation of a profound duty to protect the Earth, many believe. But vitally, the belief system is not just based on what humans do now, more what they set up for humans to come. Continuing the theme of stewardship, we are permitted to enjoy the fruits of the earth, but Earth must not be ruined for our descendents: "Man should not abuse, misuse, or distort the natural resources as each generation is entitled to benefit from them but is not entitled to "own" them in an absolute sense."

### Hinduism

Hinduism is an immensely complex and diverse religion and shares certain beliefs with Buddhism, but essentially it is governed by three concepts: Brahman (a divine force which manifests itself in everything); Karma (the law of cause and effect) and the goal of moksha (enlightenment). At its core is living a simple life and shunning the myth of happiness through material gain.

"Hindu religion wants its followers to live a simple life ... People are meant to learn to enjoy spiritual happiness, so that to derive a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment, they need not run after material pleasures and disturb nature's checks and balances," writes Ranchor Prime for the Alliance of Religions and Conservation.

Notably, Hinduism appears to be a de facto supporter of renewable fuels, such is its adherence to sustaining the natural order of things. Hindus are instructed not to "use anything belonging to nature, such as oil, coal, or forest, at a greater rate than you can replenish it."

### Buddhism

Buddhism -- with all its different subsets -- is viewed by many as the most environmentally-friendly religion of them all, mainly because it believes in the fundamental equality of all



sentient beings: We are all born, we all age, then we all die. There is no reason therefore, they believe, why a human's experience specifically should be any more important than that of a pig or a cow. And as a result all beings deserve equal levels of empathy -- or as is oft referred to, 'loving-kindness.'

"All sentient beings share the fundamental conditions of birth, old age, suffering, and death...the mindful awareness of the universality of suffering produces compassionate empathy for all forms of life," writes Harvard University's Director of the Center for the Study of World Religions, Donald Swearer in *Earth Ethics*. And as he points out, that includes plants too

Interestingly, Buddhism has its own story of Creation, with its own kind of Eden, but with one key difference: "In the Buddhist mythological Eden, the earth flourishes naturally, but greedy desire leads to division and ownership of the land that in turn promotes violent conflict, destruction, and chaos. In short, in the Buddhist myth of first origins, human agency destroys the natural order of things."

(Sources: The Alliance of Religions and Conservation; Harvard University Center for the Environment; Adherents.org; ReligiousTolerance.org)

Find this article at:

<http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/01/27/eco.about.religion>

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## **January 31, 2008**

Gore: Christians should be stewards of Earth  
Former vice president speaks to Baptist group in Atlanta

By CHRISTOPHER QUINN  
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution  
Published on: 01/31/08

Former Vice President Al Gore brought his save-the-Earth campaign to an audience more used to saving souls Thursday.

Close to 2,500 Baptists paid \$35 a head for lunch, the speech and a slide show Gore has perfected on global warming and its threat to humankind.

"Too many in the faith community, too many of those who call ourselves Baptists, too many spokespersons who don't speak for me but claim to speak for me, have said global warming is not real. This is just a myth," he told them.

"When did people of faith get so locked into a ideological coalition that they have got to go along with the wealthiest and most powerful who don't want to see change of the kind that is aimed at helping people and protecting God's green Earth?" Gore asked the supportive crowd.

Thousands of participants from dozens of African-American and white Baptist denominations and organizations are meeting jointly in Atlanta through Friday for the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant. Former President Jimmy Carter helped call the groups together and spoke Wednesday night.

The Rev. Jimmy Allen, an organizer, said Gore's presentation was key for the conference.

"This is an issue that has found its day," he said. "It is one of the major moral issues of our time."

Climate change has become a hot issue for evangelical Christians. One year ago, a group of leading evangelicals publicly called for action to stave off the threat of global warming.

Churches and Christian groups have organized to take political or personal action to focus attention and to work on the issue.

Not all Christians have agreed with scientific assessments of the threat, but it was clear that those in Atlanta did, both ministers and church members.

Gore, a Baptist, religiously spiced up his presentation by sprinkling in quotes from the Bible about caring for the Earth or heeding warnings about coming disasters.

Melting ice caps, growing levels of carbon in the atmosphere and the increasing intensity of tropical storms all are signs something is wrong, Gore said, and Christians must join others to act in averting possible catastrophe.

After the speech, Allen pointed to the disaster spawned by Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the Gulf Coast. "Now we are asking: Is there any way we can diminish the future Katrinas?" he said.

Bob and Jan Moore of Venice, Fla., believe being caretakers of the Earth, which is God's creation, is a Christian responsibility.

And they will apply evangelical witnessing about it to folks back home in Florida, they said.

"For the ones who choose to ignore it, it is our job to bug them until they get on board," Jan Moore said.

Gore told the crowd, "We who are Baptists are not going to countenance heaping contempt on God's creation."

Find this article at:

[http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2008/01/31/baptistsgore\\_0201.html](http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2008/01/31/baptistsgore_0201.html)

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**February 2, 2008**

Face to faith

Evangelicals, beginning to voice concern for God's earth, are critical to the US elections, says James Jones

James Jones

Saturday February 2, 2008

Guardian (UK)

If a week is a long time in politics, three months is an eternity. When I was in America in November everyone was preparing for Bill Clinton to be the first lady. Barack Obama was just an interesting political novelty; Hillary would be the first first lady to become president. On the Republican side the frontrunners were Rudy Giuliani and Mitt Romney. Now everything has changed. The primaries have sent tremors through the political establishment.

Super Tuesday comes like the ides of March, sealing the fate of many of the candidates. Falling the day before Ash Wednesday that marks the beginning of Jesus' sojourn in the desert, these primaries will dispatch a number of failed messiahs into the political wilderness.

I was in Orlando and got a ticket for the Republican convention, where all nine candidates for the GOP nomination appeared before a frenzied audience of thousands. Broadcast live by Fox TV, the nervous nine stood at miniature podiums as if on a set for *The Weakest Link*. The strongest links, judging by the attention of the media and the order of questioning, were Giuliani and Romney. In the 90 minutes of interrogating the possible leaders of the most powerful nation on earth there was not one question about climate change.

This was particularly strange, because the Republican governor of Florida has put climate change at the top of his political agenda. Florida has even signed a special agreement with the UK on climate change. It's another example of how there is much more being done to reduce carbon emissions at state level than by the federal government. Many Republicans remain sceptical about the causes of global warming. Fuelled by the interests of the oil and car industries, the Cheney/Bush administration has its foot firmly on the brake.

The Climate Security Act going through Congress and the Bali negotiations bear witness to the resistance. The problem is that many Americans still dismiss the sustainability agenda as bad science, bad religion, bad for business and bad for America. Their fear is that if you factor in the environmental costs you'll price America out of the market and export their jobs and factories to India and China. Or that the environmental agenda will be the trojan horse that will bring socialism to America and the country to its knees.

One of the ways to the American heart is to appeal to their entrepreneurial spirit and show what a fortune there is to be made from renewables. But the conservative mind is shaped also by religion. It's an oversimplification, but if you think the earth is going to end up in a ball of flames then you might as well milk it for all its worth. Couple this with the belief that creation is there for mankind to enjoy and you can understand how some could, with good conscience, resist the Kyoto protocol.

But the landscape is changing. Many leading evangelicals have begun to voice concern. Caring for God's creation is becoming a political issue, especially among younger evangelicals.

In Orlando I took part in a seminar on faith and the environment. The host was Joel Hunter, pastor of a mega-church. It holds 3,500 and they fill it five times on a Sunday. There, defying all prejudice, were the local Catholic bishop, imam and rabbi discovering common ground from their sacred texts about caring for God's earth.

Evangelicals make up one of the largest voting blocs in the electorate and the Democrats know that they have to get a sizable slice of it if they're to make it to the White House. All the Democratic candidates have signed up to the climate change agenda. Significantly, it is Mike Huckabee, the surprise candidate among the Republicans, who's the first to register his interest in this issue.

On Super Tuesday when the voters go to the polls they'll be sending some of the candidates into the political wilderness. However, it is the outcome of the election in November which will determine whether planet Earth will join them in the desert.

· The Rt Rev James Jones is the Bishop of Liverpool

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## **February 5, 2008**

### Lent fast to cut carbon emissions

Two senior bishops are urging people to cut back on carbon for Lent instead of the conventional chocolate or alcohol.

The Bishops of London and Liverpool, Dr Richard Chartres and James Jones, are launching the Carbon Fast at Trafalgar Square with aid agency Tearfund.

They hope to encourage people to reduce their carbon footprint for 40 days.

The scheme aims to raise awareness of global warming to help protect poor communities around the world who are already affected by climate change.

### Stark reality

The "fast" involves a simple energy saving action each day, including avoiding plastic bags, insulating the hot water tank and checking the house for draughts.

Bishop Jones, who is vice president of Tearfund, said: "It is the poor who are already suffering the effects of climate change.

"To carry on regardless of their plight is to fly in the face of Christian teaching."

One Tearfund employee will camp outside the charity's offices in Teddington for a week in an attempt to reduce his emissions to that of an average Malawian farmer.

Dr Chartres called for "individual and collective action".

The moral imperative for us to act is unquestionable and inescapable

Sir John Houghton, former Met Office chief executive

He said: "A whole host of scientific studies have made clear that it is no longer possible to find excuses for doing nothing.

"Nor is it enough to point the finger of blame at others and to demand that somebody should act for us."

The campaign is also being backed by scientists and church leaders including the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams.

Sir John Houghton, former Met Office chief executive and first chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's scientific assessment said: "Climate change shows us that our energy-hungry lifestyles are harming our poorer neighbours across the world now.

"The moral imperative for us to act is unquestionable and inescapable."

Story from BBC NEWS:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/7226488.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/england/7226488.stm)

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## **February 6, 2008**

From: Reuters

Published February 6, 2008 03:15 PM

Catholic bishop blasts Brazil on Amazon destruction

BRASILIA (Reuters) - A senior Roman Catholic bishop criticized Brazil's government on Wednesday for energy and agriculture policies that he said were destroying the Amazon forest and threatening the livelihood of local populations.

"We cannot ignore deforestation by loggers who violate the country's laws and ... threaten tribal Indians and others who depend on (the Amazon)," said Bishop Guilherme Antonio Werlang in launching the church's annual Lent campaign to mobilize followers on issues of social concern. The comments are likely to increase pressure on Brazil's government to rein in deforestation. Brazil is the world's largest Catholic country and the church remains highly influential despite falling membership.

Werlang's warning follows disagreement within the government of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva over increasing Amazon deforestation rates.

The environment ministry has blamed farmers and cattle ranchers for moving deeper into the forest in search of cheap land, while Lula and the agriculture ministry reject the charges. Between August and December an estimated 2,703 square miles, or two-thirds the annual rate for the 12 months ending in July 2007, were chopped down.

Increased sugar cane production, the raw material for the country's much-touted ethanol program, also drives crops and cattle further north into the Amazon, environmentalists say. "We have to question the energy programs that deteriorate our rivers and land with the construction of ever more hydroelectric plants and monoculture farm production," said Werlang, member of the Brazilian Bishops Conference CNBB. Part of its campaign this year in defense of life aims to raise environmental awareness.

The Lula government tendered in December the right to build a \$5 billion hydroelectric plant, the first of two along the Madeira river in the western Amazon.

Friends of the Earth, an environmental advocacy group, estimates that the project could attract as many as 100,000 settlers to the region, increasing pressure on land and natural resources.

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## **February 11, 2008**

Financing the Transition from a Brown to a Green Global Economy Tops Environment Ministers Meeting

UN Environment Programme's 10th Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Monaco 20-22 February

Nairobi/Monaco, 11 February 2008 - The biggest gathering of environment ministers to take place since the climate change breakthrough in Bali will be happening in Monaco later this month under the theme "Mobilizing Finance for the Climate Challenge".

More than 100 ministers from across the globe are scheduled to attend the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) - the world's forum for environment ministers - alongside senior figures from industry and economics; science; local government; civil society, trades unions and intergovernmental bodies.

These include Tulsi Tanti, Managing Director of Indian wind energy company Suzlon; Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; and Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the International Labour Organisation.

Other key figures include Gunter Pauli, entrepreneur, businessman and founder of the Zero Emissions Research and Initiatives and an expert on nature's solutions to environmental challenges; James Cameron, founder of Climate Change Capital - an investment banking group

specializing in financing a low-carbon economy; and Fernando Ibanez, Chief Executive Officer of Saguapac, one of the world's most successful and largest water cooperatives.

They will be joined by V. Ramanathan of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, an expert on the emerging challenge of 'global dimming'.

Professor Ramanathan is leader of the Atmospheric Brown Cloud research team. It is carrying out cutting edge research on the emerging links between soot in the atmosphere and novel climatic impacts including accelerated glacier melt, reduced crop yields and shifts in rainfall patterns of the Monsoon.

The delegates will all be attending the 10th Special Session of the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "The last climate convention meeting delivered the Bali Road Map. This is the path along which over 190 countries are traveling in order to deliver a new and decisive climate deal by Copenhagen in 2009."

"Mobilizing finance, focusing markets and unleashing innovation will be central to successfully negotiating the Road Map and avoiding too many detours and dead ends," he added.

"We are already glimpsing a transition to a low carbon society. Billions of dollars are now being invested in renewable energy and hundreds of institutions with trillions of dollars of assets are now endorsing investment principles that reflect environmental alongside social and governance concerns," said Mr. Steiner.

"Designing and delivering a Green Economy will not only avert dangerous and debilitating climate change. It can address the wider sustainability challenges outlined in UNEP's recent Global Environment Outlook from loss of biodiversity and rapid ecosystem degradation to collapsing fish stocks and depleted soils," he said.

"In doing so, it opens the door to true sustainable development - development that benefits rich and poor alike by unleashing creativity and innovation, spawning new technologies and industries and stimulating new kinds of green employment patterns. In short, it is about investing in tomorrow's economy today," said Mr. Steiner.

Examples of transformations already underway include:

- UNEP's Sustainable Energy Finance Initiative (SEFI) is helping financiers scale up investment in the growing global markets for renewable energy and energy efficiency. SEFI's report last year underlined how capital is mobilizing towards these low carbon sectors, with total transactions surpassing the \$100 billion milestone in 2006 and reaching nearly \$160 billion in 2007.

- In collaboration with the United Nations Foundation and Shell Foundation, UNEP helped two of India's largest banking groups - Canara Bank and Syndicate Bank - create a credit market for helping rural villages finance the purchase of solar lighting systems. 100,000 people in southern India have benefited and the initiative is now self-financing with some 20 banks involved. The Programme was awarded the prestigious Energy Globe Award in 2007.

- In Tunisia a similar initiative has created a credit market for bank financing of solar hot water systems. Over 20,000 systems have been financed, affecting about 100,000 people and increasing market volume more than 700% since 2004. The positive results have led the government to enact legislation aimed at decreasing the country's reliance on using Liquid Petroleum Gas for water heating and instead make the shift to solar.

- UNEP and partners such as UNDP and the World Bank are also building the capacity of some 30 developing countries to access the carbon markets for financing climate friendly infrastructure. These multi-million dollar initiatives, including ones under the Nairobi Framework, fall under the umbrella of the CD4CDM programme - the largest initiative of its kind within the development community.

- The geothermal electricity potential in Africa is estimated at 7,000MW, much of it in the part of the Rift Valley that runs from Kenya to Djibouti. With funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNEP and the World Bank are about to launch the African Rift Geothermal Facility (ARGeo). The \$17 million project will underwrite the risks of drilling for steam and in doing so build the confidence of the private sector to build geothermal power stations.

- UNEP and the GEF's Solar and Wind Resource Assessment have 'found' 10 million MW of solar and wind energy in 26 developing countries available for private sector development.

- With \$20 million in GEF and UN Foundation support, UNEP is also working with the Asian and African Development Banks to leverage private sector financial flows towards clean energy entrepreneurs. Over 50 entrepreneurial businesses specializing in clean energy technologies and services have been financed to date in Africa, Brazil and China

#### Evolving UNEP

Other key issues on the table in Monaco include the approval of UNEP's new Medium-Term Strategy for 2010-2013. It is designed to evolve the institution into a more efficient, focused, effective and results based environmental body of the United Nations better equipped to deal with the sustainability challenges of the 21st century.

Ministers will also address the issue of International Environment Governance and how well UNEP is placed to address the challenges and opportunities outlined in the recently published landmark report, Global Environment Outlook-4.

#### Chemicals and Waste Challenges

Also on the table are reports on improved funding for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and the extent to which the international community is moving forward on the management of the hazardous heavy metal mercury.



Ministers will also be presented with a key report on tackling illegal international trade in hazardous substances alongside one outlining recommendations on how to improve waste management including recycling in developing economies.

#### UNEP Year Book 2008 - An Overview of Our Changing Environment

This year's Year Book will be presented to ministers and the media. It includes a Global Overview highlighting emerging climate change concerns including the way rising CO2 emissions are triggering acidification of the seas and oceans.

The 2008 Feature Focus reflects on how market and financial mechanisms are evolving and discusses barriers to progress but also underscores the enormous economic opportunities from improved efficiencies and innovations in consumption and production patterns.

The Emerging Challenges section examines how feedback mechanisms in the Earth's climate system, for example methane releases from thawing Arctic permafrost and marine hydrate deposits, might amplify global warming in the future.

#### Green Jobs - Towards Sustainable Work in a Low-Carbon World

UNEP in partnership with the ILO and the International Trades Union Confederation will also be launching a preliminary report from the Green Jobs Initiative on how an emerging Green Economy is generating new employment opportunities in agriculture, construction, engineering and transportation.

#### Global Civil Society Forum

The meeting will be preceded on 19 February by the 9th Global Civil Society Forum whose steering committee includes Professor Michael Koech, Sustainable Development and Environment Network of Kenya; Dr Mahmood Khwaja, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan and Ms. Zhang Hehe, Friends of Nature, China.

Other members are Ms Sascha Gabizon, Women in Europe for a Common Future, Germany; Mr. Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Norway; Ms Esther Neuhaus, Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for Sustainable Development, Brazil.

#### Art for the Environment Initiative

A groundbreaking touring art exhibition, reflecting the climate theme and entitled "Melting Ice / A Hot Topic: Envisioning Change", will be shown at the Office of Cultural Affairs in Monaco throughout the environment ministers' meet and on until 16 March.

The unique exhibition, a partnership between the Natural World Museum and UNEP which was first shown on World Environment Day last year at the Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo, brings together leading artists from the developed and developing world.

#### Notes to Editors

The 10th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum <http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-x/>

The Principality of Monaco's host country site

<http://www.unep2008.gouv.mc/pnue/wwwnew.nsf/HomeGb>

9th Global Civil Society Forum [http://www.unep.org/civil\\_society/GCSF/indexGCSF9.asp](http://www.unep.org/civil_society/GCSF/indexGCSF9.asp)

Natural World Museum <http://www.artintoaction.org/about.html>

Journalists who wish to attend should be accredited - please see: <http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-x/media.asp>

Press conferences are scheduled every day at 1pm. Journalists who cannot follow the daily conferences on site will have the opportunity to phone in, listen live and ask questions. Interested journalists should contact Robert Bisset (see below).

For More Information Please Contact Nick Nuttall, UNEP Spokesperson/Head of Media, on +254 733 632755, when traveling +41 79 596 57 37 or E-mail: [nick.nuttall@unep.org](mailto:nick.nuttall@unep.org)

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UNEP press release 2008/02

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## February 12, 2008

Friday, February 15, 2008

Last modified Monday, February 11, 2008 11:54 AM PST

Buddhist monk Ven Phuoc Tinh, Ven meaning elder brother, sprinkles water on a new array of solar panels during a ceremony to cleanse the panels and to ask the land's plants, animals, and ancestors permission to use the sun for energy before switching the panels on at the Deer Park Monastery north of Escondido on Sunday. The monastery installed three arrays of solar panels that will supply 100 percent of the electricity used there.

HAYNE PALMOUR IV Staff Photographer

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Monastery throws switch on green initiatives

By: DAVE DOWNEY - Staff Writer

Deer Park expects to supply all its electricity with solar panels

ESCONDIDO ---- With the flip of a switch Sunday, a secluded monastery tucked away in the brush-and-oak-covered canyons north of this city's downtown began producing its own energy.

Deer Park Monastery's new 66-kilowatt, sun-powered electricity system will provide virtually all the electricity required to keep the lights on and air conditioners humming in its living quarters, meditation hall, dining hall and offices.

The solar panels are just one of many environmental efforts under way at the Buddhist monastery.

In the past year, the monks and nuns have retrofitted three 1980s-era, diesel-powered Mercedes cars to run on 100-percent vegetable oil. They voluntarily park all their vehicles on Tuesdays. And they have installed a system they call Earth Tub that slowly breaks down the monastery's food scraps and turns it into compost, which later is used to fertilize the monastery's lush gardens.

Brother Stream, a 32-year-old monk from Connecticut whose given name is Douglas Bachman, said the residents do not view any of the green initiatives as painful, obligatory sacrifices.

"That is exactly not what we are doing," said Brother Stream, wearing a traditional Vietnamese straw hat. "The earth is a beautiful place, and it's a joy to make the Earth a more beautiful place."

Off the grid

Only on the hottest days will the Buddhist monks and nuns who live on the quiet, 440-acre campus have to supplement the power generated by their three sets of solar panels with electricity from San Diego Gas & Electric Co., residents say.

The few times they need extra power, they should be able to obtain it, in essence, for free. That's because utilities credit solar-powered customers for the surplus electricity they put into the regional system, and Deer Park plans to send a lot of it back to the San Diego County grid.

On the other hand, there won't be any rebates coming. Under California law, utilities do not have to reimburse customers if, say, at the end of a year, they return more power to the grid than they take out.

Extraordinary example

Bob Noble, chairman of the California Center for Sustainable Energy in San Diego, praised the initiative.

"The level of commitment is extraordinary," Noble said. He founded Envision Solar, a La Jolla company specializing in shaded solar panels for parking lots.

Noble said the monastery's solar system would generate enough electricity to power 15 North County homes, while keeping "many hundreds of tons" of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.

"That's not just for them," Noble said. "That's for the community, that's for the state and that's for the world."

A large majority of climate scientists believe that increasing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are warming the planet by trapping heat, similar to the way heat is trapped in a greenhouse.

Electricity generation produces a quarter of the state total's carbon dioxide emissions, according to the California Air Resources Board.

Dennis Howard, a lay Buddhist practitioner who lives at the rural retreat and helped launch the green initiative, said the monastery had planned initially to build a larger solar system, on the order of 78 kilowatts. But Deer Park curbed its energy appetite by replacing light bulbs in its buildings with modern, efficient ones and scaled back the project.

"We discovered that we could conserve an extraordinary amount of energy," Howard said. "We had numerous archaic light fixtures in our dorms and in our kitchens."

#### Saving green by going green

Howard said the cost for the solar project came to \$700,000. He said the monastery didn't have to foot the entire bill, as it received a state grant of about \$180,000 to offset a portion of the cost.

"If we didn't have that contribution from the state, it would have been a really difficult decision to make," Howard said, adding the monastery will pay off its investment in 6 to 13 years in savings on electric bills.

But saving money wasn't the driving force behind the project, he said.

"Our purpose is to clean up our global footprint," said Noble. "We also want to be a motivator for others in the community."

Brother Bernard Ziegler, 37, a German monk said, "We're doing it because we think it is the right thing to do environmentally."

Deer Park monks stressed that living in harmony with nature is something its founder, the prominent Buddhist teacher and Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, promotes.

"We are not separate," Brother Bernard said. "We all connected with everyone and everything. If we take care of the environment, we take care of ourselves."

#### Aromatic emissions

Every day but Tuesday ---- a day when Deer Park residents only take the wheel in emergencies -- -- the exhaust out of their biodiesel-retrofitted car tailpipes smells like French fries.

"Instead of smelling like diesel fumes, they smell like a kitchen cooking," Howard said.

The Mercedes cars ---- a sedan and two station wagons ---- take a while to warm up. And they are a tad on the noisy side, with their rhythmic knocking.

But they work fine, Howard said.

"It feels good not to be using oil or coal," said Brother Bernard.

"And we like buying used cars because that is another form of recycling," Howard added.

As for the Earth Tub, it is sort of the final product of much trial and error going back five years.

"We have tried and tried and tried to do composting here," Howard said. "And we have had all kinds of practical difficulties with it."

More to come

In the early days, the monastery residents put kitchen garbage directly on the ground to dry up and decompose in the sun. That didn't go so well. Howard said the piles put out an awful smell and were magnets for rodents. And with the rodents came rattlesnakes.

Eventually, though, Deer Park solved the problems. San Diego County recycling officials loaned the monastery an enclosed, 3-cubic-yard-capacity tub several months ago. And it effectively ---- without a stinging, unpleasant odor ---- breaks down the scraps.

In the future, the monastery plans to launch still more green initiatives.

One project already is in the works. The monks and nuns are preparing to replace the thirsty ice plants that line a steep hill behind a dining hall and the exotic tropical trees planted around a reflective pool with drought-resistant native vegetation.

For more information about the monastery's environmental efforts, go to

[http://www.deerparkmonastery.org/no\\_car\\_day/greener\\_deerpark.html](http://www.deerparkmonastery.org/no_car_day/greener_deerpark.html).

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## **February 13, 2008**

Tuesday, February 12, 2008

Iowa - 'Cool Congregations' go green  
Many churches are heeding the call to go green  
By The Associated Press

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) -- Within most faiths is a call to members to be good stewards of the Earth. So calling on congregations to "go green" makes sense, say area coordinators of a movement encouraging faith groups to become more environmentally aware.

"Every faith tradition has an ethic that calls us to care for creation," said Sarah Webb, who, with two other "church moms" two years ago, started Cool Congregations, a project aimed at teaching church communities how to be better caretakers of the Earth.

"It's something we've neglected over the last millennium, so we're looking to our own Scripture for inspiration," Webb said. Congregations across the country have noted global warming,

climate change and Earth stewardship for decades, but in just the past few years have changes started to occur. When Webb and her home congregation at St. Lukes

Episcopal Church in Cedar Falls started turning into a "green congregation" less than two years ago, the church became a leader in Iowa. Now Webb, 49, and other Cool Congregations coordinators hold workshops teaching participants how to determine their carbon footprints.

At a recent workshop in Iowa City, Webb said, 54 people representing 15 congregations planned to make a difference.

"They have decided to form a network among themselves to keep it going," she said.

Jamie McCoy, 47, has taken an active role in getting his congregation at Zion Lutheran Church in Iowa City, more involved. Zion sponsored the Cool Congregations workshop on Jan. 26.

"The only way we're going to have any action taken on climate change is from a grass-roots effort," McCoy said. "Our government just really isn't that interested.

"As Christians we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves," he said. "Future generations and climate-vulnerable people around the world are also our neighbors. The Earth itself is also a sacred place entrusted to us by God."

Webb said many successful efforts toward social change -- for example, the abolition of slavery, women's suffrage and, more recently, the saving of the Endangered Species Act -- were strongly supported by faith communities.

What many workshop participants find especially interesting, she said, is how little it takes to make a big difference.

"My friend Kate changed over 75 percent of the light bulbs in her home to compact fluorescent bulbs and was able to reduce her carbon emissions by 10 percent," Webb said. "Her initial investment was about \$200 for the light bulbs, but she's saved that and more every year."

Washing two loads of laundry in cold water rather than warm or hot each week can reduce carbon emissions by 500 pounds per year, Webb said, and adjusting the thermostat down 2 degrees in winter and up 2 degrees in summer can save another 500 pounds.

"There are a lot of inexpensive things you can do that make a big difference," she said.

Mark Kresowik, 23, of Des Moines, is interim director of Iowa Interfaith Power and Light, which helps coordinate green efforts in churches across the state. He said the movement for congregations to become more ecologically minded is not new, nor is it focused in Iowa or the Midwest. There are Interfaith Power and Light groups in 25 states, he said, "and we're not the only group out there."

"I think part of it is that churches truly recognize the challenge that we are facing in terms of our moral obligations to take care of God's creation, the Earth," Kresowik said. "Certainly with issues like global warming in particular, we are not doing our part."

Steve Mitchell might disagree, at least from his church's perspective. Mitchell, 58, is a congregational financial officer at Community of Christ Church in Hiawatha, and also serves as an ex officio member on the building and grounds committee. He said church leaders there started going green in 1992, when they started switching incandescent light bulbs over to compact fluorescent.

In addition, windows in the church's two largest rooms, the sanctuary and family life center, have been replaced with thermal insulated windows. Because the windows face south, they have a mirror finish to reflect the sun in summer.

"We also do a lot of recycling. We don't use Styrofoam, and we use supplies that are environmentally friendly," he said. The church's old lawn mower and snow blower have been replaced with energy-efficient four-cylinder models, and the grounds of the church have been landscaped to include trees and shrubs "to replace as much green as we can."

"It's not a new concept, and it's nothing we've just started," he said.

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Information from: The Gazette, <http://www.gazetteonline.com/>

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## February 13, 2008

Eco-Spiritualism, Global Warming Teach-Ins and Progress

Science, Nature, Spirituality – and Action Are Closely Linked

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry, two theologians who spent part of their lives in New York's Hudson Valley, wrote about an inextricable link between science, nature and spirituality. A few years ago, religious and environmental leaders from all over the world converged at the United Nations and on college campuses to celebrate the teachings of de Chardin, who lived for a time at a Jesuit seminary in Hyde Park, N.Y. and whose remains are buried there.

Mary Evelyn Tucker, one of the most eloquent voices of the eco-spiritual movement, spoke at the U.N. about the daunting challenges faced by 21st-century humanitarians: widespread environmental degradation, crippling poverty, social inequities and unrestrained militarism. However, she sees in the vision of de Chardin that "the spirit of the earth is calling us into the next stage of evolutionary history, moving us forward from viewing ourselves as isolated individuals and competing nation states, to realizing our collective presence as a species on the planet."

These are lofty and inspiring thoughts for us here on the ground in the Hudson Valley and for those who are attempting to follow the teachings of these leading thinkers across the world. They

teach us to value and respect nature, to look for the common ground across religious, sovereign and ethnic divides and to help boost our collective efforts to protect the earth from environmental threats into higher orbits.

That same spirit was in the air last week in the Hudson Valley and at more than a thousand college campuses throughout the United States at teach-ins on global climate change. The non-partisan national event, endorsed by Senator Barack Obama and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger among others, was sponsored by Focus the Nation. Simultaneous events drew together college students, professors, environmental activists and industry leaders who are working to implement strategies that will stem the tide of climate change. Dr. Sharon Nunes, vice president of Strategic Growth Initiatives at IBM, spoke about the efforts this major global corporation is taking to make their computer technology more energy-efficient and supportive of conservation strategies. Scenic Hudson education and membership staff Susan Hereth and Lisa Lynch talked directly with students about what they can do to reduce their carbon footprints, while I spoke about the benefits of land preservation in sequestering carbon. Every acre Scenic Hudson or other conservation groups protects from deforestation keeps 3.5 tons of carbon on the ground, rather than releasing it to the atmosphere, where it adds to the greenhouse effect.

Read Ned Sullivan's Oct. 24 speech to the World Affairs Council of the Mid-Hudson Valley.

Find this article at: <http://www.thedailygreen.com/living-green/blogs/easy-tips/eco-spirituality-55021201>

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## **February 17, 2008**

### **Green group spotlights toxic sites in Newark**

Sunday, February 17, 2008

**BY ALLISON STEELE**

**Star-Ledger Staff**

Neighbors of the crumbling former Pabst brewery in Newark are probably accustomed to the factory's hulking, hollowed-out buildings, which have been undergoing demolition for a few years.

But what might not occur to them and others, according to environmental officials, is that chemicals remain on the site, seeping into the soil or perhaps buried in it, and that asbestos may drift into the air every time a block of concrete is broken off and tossed in a pile of rubble.

Yesterday, a group of about 150 spent the morning touring some of the most environmentally blighted spots in Newark, and learning just how toxic they are.

The tour was sponsored by GreenFaith, an interfaith environmental group that has organized similar events in other parts of the state during the past year.

"A lot of this is education," said the Rev. Fletcher Harper, executive director of GreenFaith. "Most people just don't think about these things."



The Pabst site, at South Orange Avenue and Grove Street on the outskirts of the city, is expected to be transformed into a housing project and shopping center. But the plan has been stalled by disputes over how the site will be remediated. Pressure from a local advocacy group ended in a court decision forcing the developer to put stricter safety measures in place to protect the neighborhood from asbestos exposure and other hazards.

"The way we operate now is, the people who are the most vulnerable -- politically and financially -- are those who bear the greatest burden from contaminants," Rev. Harper said.

Later, the tour visited Newark's Ironbound neighborhood to get a crash course on the area's biggest environmental threats, including a trash incinerator which is the largest in the state, said Ana Baptista, a member of the Ironbound Community Corp.

The Ironbound is also home to the Diamond Alkali Superfund site, where a pesticide factory for decades polluted the soil and Passaic River with high levels of dioxin, a toxin that can cause disfiguring skin problems and cancer.

The Ironbound's only playing field for children was also recently shut down when the AstroTurf being used was found to be contaminated with lead, Baptista said.

Within the four square miles that comprise the Ironbound, there are at least 100 brownfields -- locations where contamination is either suspected or known.

"We have a lot of those in the community that were turned into housing," Baptista said. "And that's another challenge we face, housing built on former industrial sites, where we're not sure if they're contaminated."

Community members, activists, college students and church leaders from across the state were among those on the tour. Peggy Hodgkins, an Episcopal priest at St. Andrew's Church in New Providence, said she joined the tour in hopes of bringing some eye-opening information back to those who attend services at her church.

"I want to energize my suburban congregation to get involved with something that's relevant to their neighbors," she said.

*Allison Steele may be reached at [asteel@starledger.com](mailto:asteel@starledger.com) or (732) 404-8083.*

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## **February 18, 2008**

Churches urged to help protect environment

Carol Hazard Richmond Times-Dispatch, Va.

Source: Richmond Times-Dispatch (VA) (KRT) Date: February 18, 2008

Feb. 18--Churches need to do more than save souls. They need to save the Earth, says the Rev. Richard Cizik, vice president for governmental affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals.

"If Jesus were to come back next week, I cannot imagine he would be happy with his creation," Cizik said yesterday at an interfaith gathering in Chesterfield County.

"The future of this issue in this country will not happen without people of faith," said Cizik, who also serves on the Virginia Commission on Climate Change.

"This is not a political issue. It is not a scientific issue. It is not a red-state, blue-state issue. It is a moral, spiritual issue."

About 100 people attended the first in a series of four meetings, "Planting Seeds: Faith and the Environment," at The Brandermill Church. The program was funded by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The organizing committee has volunteers from eight faiths, including Christians, Muslims and Jews.

"Creation is the piece we all have in common," said the Rev. Pat Watkins, an ordained elder in the Virginia Conference of United Methodist Churches, who spoke along with Cizik.

"I see it as the church's job to heal the planet," Watkins said. "It is as simple as that and it is as difficult as that."

Watkins is environmental-policy coordinator for the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy.

He said he learned to depend on the environment while living without running water and electricity as a missionary in Nigeria.

"You had to live more connected to the Earth; there was no Kroger to get a mango," Watkins said.

Environmentalism is rooted in the Christian faith but is largely ignored, the speakers said.

The Bible calls on people of faith to be stewards of the Earth, Cizik said. "Scripture is filled with creation from beginning to end."

Preachers tend to focus on the personal relationship with God and ignore the relationship with God's creation, Cizik said.

"If we know God's requirement for stewardship, then we have to act on it," Cizik said.

If the challenge seems a bit daunting, turn to faith -- and take a hike, to reconnect with God's creation, Watkins said. "That is how you can sustain yourselves."

Contact Carol Hazard at (804) 775-8023 or [chazard@timesdispatch.com](mailto:chazard@timesdispatch.com).

MCTviaNewsEdge

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## **February 20, 2008**

### Breaking Down the Barriers to a Green Economy

UNEP Launches Year Book 2008 at its 10th Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Monaco 20-22 February

Monaco, 20 February 2008-An emerging Green Economy is glimpsed in the latest United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Year Book as growing numbers of companies embrace environmental policies and investors pump hundreds of billions of dollars into cleaner and renewable energies.

Climate change, as documented in the Year Book, is increasingly changing the global environment from the melting of permafrost and glaciers to extreme weather events.

But it is also beginning to change the mind-sets, policies and actions of corporate heads, financiers and entrepreneurs as well as leaders of organized labour, governments and the United Nations itself.

Increasingly, combating climate change is being perceived as an opportunity rather than a burden and a path to a new kind of prosperity as opposed to a brake on profits and employment, the new report shows.

The UNEP Year Book 2008 says the emerging green economy is also driving invention, innovation and the imagination of engineers on a scale perhaps not witnessed since the industrial revolution of more than two centuries ago.

It includes the growing interest in novel 'geo-engineering' projects such as giant carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) collectors that absorb greenhouse gases from the air rather like trees do during photosynthesis.

"Based on technology used in fish tank filters and developed by scientists from Colombia University's Earth Institute, this method called 'air capture'.can collect the CO<sub>2</sub> at the location of the ideal geological deposits for storage," says the report.

Meanwhile scientists in Iceland and elsewhere are looking at injecting CO<sub>2</sub> into that country's abundant basalt rocks where it is claimed the pollutant reacts to form inert limestone.

Similar "sequestration rocks" exist in geological formations across much of the world and may provide a safe and long term disposal option for the main greenhouse gas emissions.

Elsewhere, scientists are helping to unravel both the uncertainties and the opportunities posed by the enormous quantities of methane trapped in the sea bed and in arctic permafrost.

As a greenhouse gas methane is 25 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> so the possibility of dramatic increases in methane emissions from these deposits is a global warming 'wildcard' - a growing source of concern.

At the same time methane hydrates are a potentially large stockpile of clean-burning fuel, if ways can be found of mining them safely and economically.

Despite a great deal of activity and action, formidable challenges remain if all these fledgling transformations are to be sustained and embedded in the global economy over the coming years and decades.

Barriers include subsidies that favour fossil fuels over cleaner energies; tariff and trade regimes that make cleaner technologies more expensive and the risk-averse lending patterns of banks and other financial institutions when it comes to solar and wind power loans for poorer communities, the new report says.

The Year Book's findings were presented today at the opening of the largest gathering of environment ministers since the climate convention meeting in Indonesia late last year which gave birth to the Bali Road Map.

The Road Map is the climate negotiation agreement scheduled to be completed by the climate convention meeting in Copenhagen in 2009 in order to deliver a post 2012 climate regime.

The ministers, joined by senior figures from the worlds of business, organized labour, science and civil society, are attending UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum under the theme "Mobilizing Finance for the Climate Challenge".

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "Hundreds of billions of dollars are now flowing into renewable and clean energy technologies and trillions more dollars are waiting in the wings looking to governments for a new and decisive climate regime post 2012 alongside the creative market mechanisms necessary to achieve this."

"Formidable hurdles remain as to whether these funds will ultimately seek out new, climate-friendly investments for the future or whether they will seek the lowest common denominator by flowing into the polluting technologies of the past," he said.

"Designing an attractive, creative and equitable investment landscape which rewards those willing to invest in tomorrow's economy today is the challenge before ministers here in Monaco and the challenge for the international community over the next two years in the run up to Copenhagen," said Mr Steiner.

"However I am optimistic that we can shift gears to a Green Economy. If humans can go to the Moon; submarines sent under the Arctic; liver and heart transplants perfected; the mysteries of the human genome deciphered and tiny nano-machines designed then managing a transition to a low carbon society must be within humanity's grasp and intellect," he added.

### Some Key Findings

The findings here are based on the UNEP Year Book 2008 with some additional supporting facts and figures from documents prepared by UNEP for the GC/GMEF

### Responsible Investing Takes Off

The UNEP Year Book, an annual report requested by ministers, underlines some of the elements of a Green Economy which are already falling into place.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reporting including environmental concerns is now found among corporations in over 90 countries with the number of such statements mushrooming from virtually zero in the early 1990s to well over 2,000 now.

. The Investor Network on Climate Change, launched in November 2003, now has some 50 institutional investors with assets of over \$3 trillion.

. The Principles for Responsible Investment, jointly facilitated by UNEP's Finance Initiative and the UN Global Compact in 2006, now has 275 institutions with \$13 trillion of assets.

Many companies now perceive that 'going' Green also improves their bottom line. The Year Book 2008 underlines a study by the investment bank Goldman Sachs.

A survey of companies in six sectors-ranging from mining and energy to food and media-indicates that those with pioneering environmental, social and governance strategies are out-performing the general stock market by 25 per cent.

Over 70 per cent out-perform their peers in similar sectors, the Year Book 2008 notes.

Meanwhile a survey of some 150 companies with CSR strategies in the United States as well as France, Germany and the United Kingdom underlines corporations' growing environmental priorities.

Cutting greenhouse gas emissions and boosting energy efficiency ranked number one among 54 per cent of those questioned followed by recycling, 52 per cent and waste reduction, 27 per cent.

Bottom of the list are 'making shipping and transport more efficient and eco-friendly, eight per cent; environmental education and research, seven per cent and supporting employees use of alternative transportation, six per cent.

### Industrial Emission Reductions Remain Mixed

Meanwhile, some of the globe's most carbon-intensive industries are leading the way in publicly disclosing their carbon footprint under an eight year-old initiative called the Carbon Disclosure Project.

Disclosure is seen as one powerful route towards companies taking responsibility and acting to reduce their emissions.

The Project, aimed also at empowering shareholders to better understand the current and future economic risks facing the companies they support, estimates that:-

- . Close to 80 per cent of the Financial Times 500 corporations are disclosing their carbon performance.

- . Over three quarters of those who are disclosing such information are now also implementing greenhouse gas reductions via direct emissions reductions or via the emerging carbon markets. This is up from nearly half the year before.

Interestingly the highest rate of achievement in terms of carbon disclosure is among the carbon-intensive industries such as metals, mining and steel sectors alongside oil and gas and the power sector.

However the Year Book 2008 indicates that despite these promising steps, more needs to be achieved.

A survey by Innovest, a research company whose findings are in the report, shows that some sectors are making in-roads into greenhouse gas emissions.

These include electric power companies in North America; international automobile manufacturers and metals and mining companies.

But other sectors appear to be either treading water or seeing emissions continue to rise including oil and gas and chemicals.

#### Carbon Markets

The best known carbon markets are those established under the Kyoto Protocol of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

These include International Emissions Trading; Joint Implementation and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

The CDM allows industrialized countries to offset some of their domestic emissions via cleaner and renewable energy schemes alongside afforestation and reforestation projects in developing countries.

As of November 2007, over 850 projects had been registered in close to 50 countries worth just over \$1 billion in what are known as certified emission reductions.

A further \$1.4 billion are in the pipeline and the CDM could, if fully exploited eventually trigger investment flows for some \$100 billion from North to South.

A recent survey of the CDM, published in the Year Book, indicates that close to 30 per cent of such projects are currently aimed at tackling the refrigerant by-product HFC-23 followed by:-

- . Reductions in the nitrous oxide gas adipic acid, 10 per cent
- . Waste methane from landfills into electricity, 11 per cent
- . Biomass fuels, seven per cent
- . Wind power, installation of combined gas turbines and hydro-power six per cent each
- . Emissions reductions from oil-fields and coal mining, four per cent each.

The Year Book also chronicles the rise of voluntary emission reduction markets such as the Chicago Climate Exchange and the Over the Counter offsets.

The Chicago exchange now has over 330 companies, cities, states and other participants despite the decision of the United States not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. And while it is deemed a voluntary exchange, those involved are required to sign legally-binding contracts.

Since 2003, the volume of carbon traded has risen from zero to around 20 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2006. The exchange is also involved in a wider suite of offsets when compared with the formal Kyoto-inspired markets.

For example, participants in the Chicago exchange can invest in reducing emissions from livestock and animal wastes including biogas; agricultural soil carbon sequestration and grass planting; urban tree planting and forest conservation projects.

The voluntary Over the Counter offsets market is also evolving after suffering a measure of criticism and concern that some projects were flawed, counter-productive or even environmentally and socially-damaging.

"Schemes are emerging to guarantee to purchasers that carbon offsets represent genuine emission reductions, without harmful environmental side effects," says the Year Book.

The Voluntary Carbon Standard was introduced in November 2007 and is endorsed by the International Organization for Standards under its ISO 14064 and ISO 14065 series.

The latest figures indicates that the total voluntary carbon market was, in 2006, worth around \$90 million with most projects in North America and dominated by forestry schemes, followed by Asia where the lion's share of projects are for renewable energies.

This compares with close to \$30 billion from the formal Kyoto markets and mechanisms in the same year.

#### Payments for Ecosystem Services

The formal and voluntary carbon markets are triggering new market mechanisms for including the carbon removing value of forests alongside other benefits such as water management, biodiversity conservation and the preservation of traditional livelihoods.

Some countries and communities are already pursuing these multiple goals under the voluntary markets by finding buyers interested in more than just carbon.

The Year Book cites the case of the Grupo Ecologico Sierra Gorda and the organization Bosque Sustentable of Mexico. In 2006, they completed a sale of land to the United Nations Foundation which was keen to reduce its carbon footprint via a project that will also alleviate poverty.

A similar sale is the final stages to the World Land Trust, a UK-based organization who will be selling the Sierra Gorda Carbon and Environmental Offsets to a range of European buyers.

These developments are also underlined by a project funded by the Government of the Netherlands in Tanzania called Kyoto: Think Global, Act Local.

The project has involved training people on hand-held Geographic Information Systems in order to assist local forest communities estimate the amount of carbon being sequestered by their trees.

Each village forest was found to be sequestering 1,300 tonnes of carbon per year-equivalent to an income of \$6,500 per village per year at the then prevailing market price for carbon.

By bundling in the added value of water and biodiversity conservation, the actual incomes could be even higher.

The chance to realize such incomes is becoming a growing possibility. Late last year, the World Bank announced the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility to conserve standing forests and to begin avoiding the estimated 20 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation.

A further development emerged at the Bali climate convention in December 2007 when Norway announced \$2.7 billion of funding for Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD).

#### Adapting Insurance to Vulnerability

Creative market mechanisms are also emerging to try and deal with adaptation to climate change.



Extreme weather events are on the rise and are likely to become more prevalent in a climate constrained world. Yet many of those at risk have little access to formal insurance markets.

The Year Book cites a new study by Munich Re, one of the world's leading re-insurance companies. This estimates that cover for catastrophic events such as hurricanes and storm surges, is virtually non-existent for billions of people in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

"Of the 2.5 billion people world-wide who have less than two dollars a day at their disposal, it has been estimated that only ten million are able to purchase insurance," says the report.

Some developments are underway however including micro-insurance. In Africa, pilot projects that pay out to farmers when rainfall drops below a key threshold, are being tested.

. For example the UN's World Food Programme have partnered with the re-insurer AXA to develop weather derivatives that pay out to Ethiopian farmers in the event of severe drought.

. Swiss Re, a member of the UNEP Finance Initiative, has launched a Climate Adaptation Development Programme to provide financial protection to up to 400,000 people in 10 countries in Africa from drought.

The UNEP Year Book 2008 concludes that "for new developments to reach the scale and scope that is needed, governments must play a stronger stimulation and facilitation role".

Some of the measures that governments might wish to consider include

#### Subsidies

. Removing fossil fuel subsidies could reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by five to six per cent annually. Currently, fossil fuel subsidies amount up to \$200 billion a year versus support for low-carbon technologies of an estimated \$33 billion annually.

#### Research and Development (R+D)

. Boosting research and development. The International Energy Agency estimates that R+D for low emission innovations such as renewables and energy savings declined by 50 per cent between 1980 and 2004.

. In order to achieve a CO<sub>2</sub> stabilization target of 550 parts per million, support for innovation needs to rise from just over \$30 billion to \$90 billion by 2015 and to \$160 billion by 2025 according to some experts.

#### Energy Savings

. Increase global targets for energy efficiency improvements to 2.5 per cent annually.

. These should be supported by policies including stronger energy savings building codes for new and existing structures; penalties or disincentives for builders to choose the cheapest, least energy efficient designs, materials and gadgets; policies that promote mass transit especially rail and international minimum performance standards for industrial and household appliances.

. Other measures include the promotion of utility pricing that favours energy efficiency; promotes combined heat and power and improves energy savings in existing power plants and electricity transmission infrastructure.

### Renewables

. Policies that increase the uptake of renewables may include 'feed-in laws' that guarantee a fixed price for each unit of renewable electricity generated; regulations that boost access to the Grid; incentives for second generation biofuels and ones that address other barriers including resource mapping-UNEP/GEF's Solar and Wind Energy Resource Assessment is a good example of the latter.

. Government agencies and donors need to develop and deploy new forms of 'end-user' credit schemes to assist consumers to purchase climate mitigation technologies and systems.

. New approaches are needed to assist small to medium-sized enterprises innovate including enterprise development services and seed capital.

. Attention needs to be paid to new financial and regulatory solutions that address the lack of local currency financing in least developed economies-this is effectively shutting out such economies from low CO2 emitting infrastructure developments.

. Harnessing the 'green procurement' potential of local authorities through financial incentives that stimulate voluntary low carbon investments.

### Adaptation

. Public investments are needed to mobilize finance for adaptation given that market mechanisms are in their infancy.

. Other actions for adaptation include regulations to limit the vulnerability of new investments and infrastructure such as bans on building in flood prone areas and new, labour intensive, programme to 'climate proof' rural areas that improve resilience of local populations; address poverty; boost incomes and increase the skills base.

### Notes to Editors

The 10th Special Session of UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum will take place between 20 and 22 February in Monaco. <http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-x/>

The theme is Globalization and the Environment-Mobilizing Finance to Meet the Climate Challenge.

The UNEP Year Book 2008 can be found at [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)

It can be purchased at Earthprint [www.earthprint.com](http://www.earthprint.com) and is available in all six official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish)

This press release is also based on a UNEP report to ministers that can be found under Official Documents [http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-x/info\\_docs.asp](http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-x/info_docs.asp)

The meeting will be preceded on 19 February by the 9th Global Civil Society Forum [http://www.unep.org/civil\\_society/GCSF/indexGCSF9.asp](http://www.unep.org/civil_society/GCSF/indexGCSF9.asp)

Monaco, the Host Country's web site is at <http://www.unep2008.gouv.mc/pnue/wwwnew.nsf/HomeGb>

Media are welcome to attend the GC/GMEF.

Three press conferences are currently scheduled

20 February-Findings from the UNEP Year Book 2008 and Findings from Green Jobs Initiative

21 February-Launch of a new Climate Neutrality Initiative involving Countries, Corporations and Cities

22 February-Launch of a New Report on the Threats Climate Change Pose to the World's Fisheries and Oceans

Side events-Nine news-worthy and informative side-events are scheduled

20 February

1- High-level Roundtable on Climate Change and Trade (World Trade Organisation and UNEP)

2- UNEP Scientific Initiatives: Atmospheric Brown Cloud and Agricultural Assessment.

3- UNEP experience in designing financial mechanism for climate change mitigation.

22 February

1- Launch of the Global Strategy for Follow up to The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

2- Harnessing GEF catalytic financing for advancing global environmental issues.

3- Supporting Local Authorities - combining the event "Financing for the sustainable building sector" with "The UN, regions and local authorities: a new alliance in response to Climate Change"

Friday 22 February

1- Green Jobs

2- Oceans, Coasts and Climate Change (with the UN Foundation)

3- Private - Public bank Dialogue "UNEP Finance Initiative".

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## **February 21, 2008**

World

Are You Going Neutral on Global Warming? 13 Countries, Cities and Companies Say Yes!

Author: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Published on Feb 21, 2008 - 6:30:00 AM

Monaco/Nairobi, 21 February 2008 - Four countries, four cities and five corporations have become the pioneering founders of a bold new initiative to address climate change and the urgent need to de-carbonize the global economy.

The participants are the first to join the Climate Neutral Network (CN Net), launched today by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in cooperation with the UN's Environmental Management Group, as one inspiring solution to the challenge of rising greenhouse gases.

The Network, a web-based project, is seeking to federate the small but growing wave of nations, local authorities and companies who are pledging to significantly reduce emissions en route to zero emission economies, communities and businesses.

Over the coming months, intergovernmental bodies, organizations, civil society groups and eventually individuals will be invited to take part.

The aim is a truly global information exchange network open to all sectors of society from Presidents, Prime Ministers and Princes to people from Pittsburg and Sao Paulo to Poznan and Apia.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said today: "Climate neutrality is an idea whose time has come, driven by the urgent need to address climate change but also the abundant economic opportunities emerging for those willing to embrace a transition to a Green Economy".

"This new initiative supports the formal negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Here governments need to navigate the Bali Road Map to a successful conclusion in Copenhagen in 2009. The CN Net can assist in building confidence through demonstrable action at the national and local level on the art of the possible," he said.

"The CN Net is also in for the long haul and equally aimed at mobilizing a broad-based response demonstrating that a transition to a low, even zero carbon future, can be a reality if inspiring and practical actions can be federated around the world," said Mr Steiner.

The first four countries to partner are Costa Rica, Iceland, New Zealand and Norway. They, along with the initial cities and companies, represent a diversity of challenges and opportunities which have the potential to be replicated by others in whole or in part.

"For Norway it is emissions from oil and gas that dominate whereas for New Zealand, agriculture represents 50 per cent of its current greenhouse gases," said Mr Steiner.

"Iceland's central challenge is perhaps transport and industry including fishing and fish processing. I am especially delighted that Costa Rica is at the forefront of the initiative. Its commitment demonstrates that the economic benefits of reducing dependency on fossil fuels and action on deforestation and degradation are of central interest to developing and developed countries alike," he said.

Costa Rica aims to be climate neutral by 2021 when it celebrates 200 years of independence.

The strategy will build on Costa Rica's decision to tax fossil fuels in 1996 with 3.5 per cent of the money raised allocated to the National Forestry Financing Fund.

These are part of a 'payment for environmental services' programme that pays landowners who manage forests for their carbon sequestration and storage alongside management for water production, biodiversity and scenic beauty.

In 2007 Costa Rica planted more than five million trees or 1.25 per person making it the highest per capita planting in the world. Various industries are supporting the initiative including a C-neutral plan by Costa Rica's banana sector.

Other elements of the strategy include increasing the percentage of renewable energy generation to well over 90 per cent and action on energy efficiency including energy saving appliances.

Iceland has drawn up a plan to reduce its net greenhouse gas emissions by up to 75 per cent by 2050. The country's electricity production is already among the greenest on the globe.

Currently 99 per cent of electricity generation and 75 per cent of total energy production is coming from geothermal and hydro-power. Iceland's biggest challenge comes from transport including vehicles and its fishing fleet whose emissions have risen since 1990.

The country is planning to extend discount fees to people buying environmentally-friendly vehicles such as ones powered by methane, hydrogen, electricity or hybrid technology.

Iceland is also looking to equip the country's fishing fleet with eco-friendly fuel systems including fuel cells. Progress is also under way to substitute ammonia for HCFCs – an ozone damaging and greenhouse gas – in the fleet's refrigeration equipment.

Tapping methane from landfills and better management and restoration of soils, wetlands and forests in order to 'sequester' carbon from the air and minimize releases from the land are also part of Iceland's strategy.

New Zealand is aspiring to climate neutrality through a wide range of domestic initiatives including a trading scheme covering all sectors of the economy and all six greenhouse gases regulated under the Kyoto Protocol.

The country has set itself the target of generating 90 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2025, and halving per capita transport emissions by 2040 by introducing electric cars and a requirement to use bio fuels.

Meanwhile six government agencies will be aiming to achieve full neutrality by 2012. Where emissions cannot be cut they will be offset through forest regeneration projects on tribal lands.

New Zealand, which will host World Environment Day 2008 under the theme 'Kick the CO<sub>2</sub> Habit', is paying particular attention to emissions from agriculture. Some 40,000 farms account for 50 per cent of the country's greenhouse gases versus around 12 per cent from agriculture in most developed countries.

Norway aims to become climate neutral by 2030, advancing by around 20 years a previously announced deadline.

The country has embarked on a vigorous energy efficiency and energy savings policy and is perfecting carbon capture and storage at its offshore oil fields.

Norway recently joined the European Emissions Trading Scheme and has approved over \$730 million to invest in offsets via the Kyoto Protocol's Joint Implementation and Clean Development Mechanism.

It has announced plans to invest \$2.7 billion in Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation-global greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation are estimated to be around 20 per cent of the total from all sources.

During the period 2008-2012, Norway estimates that it will over-fulfill its Kyoto Protocol commitments by five million tonnes.

### Cities

Four cities are also today announcing they have joined the CN Net. They are Arendal, Norway; Rizhao, China; Vancouver, Canada and Vaxjo, Sweden.

Arendal took a decision on climate neutrality in 2007. It is currently assessing its greenhouse gas footprint and will have a final estimate in May 2008. The city's initial target is stabilization in 2012 and a 25 per cent emission reduction by 2025.

City-wide action, including energy efficiency measures in buildings, will be supplemented by the purchasing of carbon offsets via a scheme run by the Norwegian State Pollution Control body. This may commence as early as this year.

Rizhao is implementing a transition to a low carbon society via a variety of innovative measures including boosting solar power in homes and schools up to harvesting methane as a fuel from industrial waste-water.

Close to 100 per cent of urban housing now has solar heaters and 30 per cent of rural homes. Compared to 2000, the amount of energy used per unit of GDP has fallen by almost a third and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by almost half.

Vancouver has adopted targets to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions to 33% below current levels by 2020 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. In addition, Vancouver adopted the target of greenhouse gas neutral buildings for all new construction by 2030.

The city has also set a target of being carbon neutral in its own civic operations by 2012 by retrofitting public buildings to save energy, adopting more efficient vehicles, including those powered by alternative fuels, and capturing methane gas from its landfill and converting the energy to heat and electricity .

Vaxjo has decided to become a 'Fossil Fuel Free" City.

In 1996, there was a unanimous political decision to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per inhabitant by at least 50% by the year 2010, compared to 1993. In 2006, the reduction was 30%. For the year

2025, the goal is 70% and the long term goal is of course to stop using fossil fuels. Today, over 50% of the city's energy supply comes from renewables.

### Corporations

Five companies have become the first to join the CN Net. They are Co-Operative Financial Services, UK; Interface Inc, United States; Natura, Brazil; Nedbank, South Africa and Senoko Power, Singapore.

Co-operative Financial Services's (CFS) 25-storey headquarters in the North of England is the largest solar installation in the UK with 7,000 photovoltaic panels. In addition, 99 per cent of the CFS's electricity is sourced from 'good quality' renewable energy supplies.

The company has also developed a range of innovative products for customers including car insurance and mortgages that include offsets covering a fifth of a vehicle and a household's emissions.

Interface Inc, a commercial interiors company, has committed to climate neutrality by 2020 under the Clinton Global Initiative. Employee and company travel is offset through several schemes including Cool CO2mmute and Trees for Travel.

Seven of its manufacturing facilities are run using renewable energy including its LaGrange plant in Georgia that is fueled by methane from a landfill site. The company is committed to greening its supply chain and offers a range of climate neutral products including Cool Carpet.

Natura, a Brazilian multinational cosmetics company, has pinpointed potential emissions savings of 33 per cent from its business supply chain. The company has committed to replace petroleum-based products in its cosmetic in favour of natural minerals and plant materials.

As early as 1997, Natura converted its distribution fleet in the greater Sao Paulo area to natural gas. Emissions that cannot be cut will be offset via native species forestry projects and renewable energy.

Nedbank is working to reduce its own emissions and those of its 24,000 employees through a range of initiatives including public awareness schemes for environmentally-friendly living.

The company is a signatory to South Africa's Energy Efficiency Accord; is the only African bank to have signed up to the Equator Principles and is a leading member of the Carbon Disclosure Project that encourages companies to disclose their carbon footprint as a stepping stone to greater emissions reductions.

Senoko Power is Singapore's largest power company. In 1998, over 80 per cent of its power plants were powered by fuel oil or diesel. Today over 90 per cent of electricity is generated by natural gas and since 1990 the 'carbon intensity' has fallen by close to 40 per cent.



Part of its Corporate Social Responsibility strategy includes building climate awareness in the community including in schools and via a National Weather Study Project. Senoko is the first power company in Singapore to meet the environmental standard ISO 14001.

Quotes from some of the CN Net's founding partners

Roberto Dobles, Environment and Energy Minister, Costa Rica

"Costa Rica seeks to be climate neutral in 2021, unilaterally, because even though our emissions are small, we believe there is a common yet differentiated responsibility. The successful economies of the future will be those that are decarbonized and climate friendly.

"Costa Rica is developing the National Strategy on Climate Change to act responsibly with present and future generations, in a view to reduce emissions and adapt our country to climate change. Costa Rica is developing a National Strategy on Climate Change to generate new competitive capabilities in a global environment heavily impacted by climate change.

The country is beginning to share the vision that a climate neutral economy is also a competitive one, since costs can be reduced and climate quality factors added."

Thorunn Sveinbjarnardottir, Environment Minister, Iceland

"Climate change can have dire consequences for a large part of humanity in the coming decades. We must, however, be able to frame the challenge in a positive way, and to see it as a task of doing things in a better way, a cleaner way.

Iceland has effectively de-carbonized its energy production sector, and hopes to do the same in the coming decades with other sectors of the economy. UNEP's Climate Neutral Network initiative allows countries to illustrate best examples in various fields, and to stake out an ambitious profile in climate affairs. Who stays ahead in this friendly race towards carbon neutrality is not most important; if we all manage to beef up our efforts the real winners will be the future inhabitants of Planet Earth."

David Parker, Minister for Climate Change, New Zealand

"The development of the Climate Neutral Network signifies a major step forward in creating a coordinated global response to climate change. I am proud that New Zealand is a founding member of the Climate Neutral Network. As a signatory we are leading the way in actively laying out strategies to become carbon neutral.

The creation of the network recognizes that global economic growth and well-being sit alongside a clean and healthy environment. It also recognizes that climate change is an issue of the highest concern to the United Nations."

Erik Solheim, Minister of the Environment and International Development, Norway

"The Climate Neutral Network will be an important contribution to the development and promotion of carbon neutral economies. It will facilitate the role of market-based solutions and economic regulatory measures to combat climate change."

Torill Rollstad Larsen, Mayor of Arendal

"The UN city of Arendal is paying strong attention to the threats from Climate Change and trying to live up to the notion 'think globally and act locally'. We are currently embarking on an ambitious program to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases from Arendal's own activities drastically by 2012. We will further become climate neutral from 2008 by offsetting remaining emissions. We also work with major events in the city like the Hove rock festival, the World Speed Boating Championship and the Canal Street jazz festival to be climate neutral this year. We very much look forward to sharing ideas and experience with other colleagues in UNEP's Climate Neutral Network."

Sam Sullivan, Mayor of Vancouver

"The City of Vancouver is proud to be recognized by the Climate Neutral Network as a world leader acting to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Along with our focus on EcoDensity and making Vancouver green, livable and affordable, we follow approaches where we can have the greatest impact: improving our own operations, following integrated and sustainable land-use and transportation planning, encouraging renewable district energy systems, and requiring the highest standards of energy performance from buildings."

Anders Franzén, Development manager, Växjö

"In Växjö, Sweden we took an early responsibility to become climate neutral by a decision 1996 to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions that make us a fossil fuel free city. By different measures we have reached a considerable reduction and are now emitting less than world average. We like to share our program, vision and experience world wide. One good way can be through the Climate Neutral Network."

David Anderson, Chief Executive of CFS

"By using green energy, pursuing energy efficiency and offsetting all our remaining CO<sub>2</sub> emissions we are doing everything to reduce our impact on the environment. However, we cannot ignore the legacy we have left over the years. That is why we are going beyond carbon neutral and offsetting 110% of our emissions each year."

Daniel T. Hendrix, Chief Executive Officer, Interface, Inc.

"Interface is excited to join UNEP's Climate Neutral Network and share ideas and strategies on achieving climate neutrality. It will take the collaborative work of many to solve global climate change problems and we want to do everything we can to inspire and enable others to join us in our mission to be a climate neutral enterprise."

Eduardo Luppi, Vice-President for Innovation, Natura

"To Natura, initiatives like the Climate Neutral Network are essential to stimulate the exchange of ideas in a way that countries and companies commit themselves more and more to the neutralization and, mainly, the reduction of greenhouse gases. Participation in this network is very important for Natura to share experiences on its Carbon Neutral Program and to exchange best practices on environmental issues".

Selby Baqwa, Group Executive for Governance, Compliance and Sustainability, Nedbank Group

"Having worked with both UNEP and the UN Global Compact over the last few years, we strongly support the collaborative approach to dealing with one of the greatest challenges facing the world today, that of climate change, and look forward to working with the Climate Neutral Network.

Nedbank is committed to a variety of energy efficiency projects, supporting clean energy and creating awareness around how to minimize the individual effect on global warming of each of our staff members and clients through their carbon footprints".

Roy Adair, President & CEO of Senoko Power Ltd

"UNEP's launch of the climate neutral network is an excellent step to raise public awareness on climate change mitigation. Through this platform, the public, organizations, and people sectors will be able to share solutions and strategies to combat climate change. As a power generation company, we at Senoko Power are honored to be a part of this global initiative.

In Singapore, we are committed to minimizing our impact on the environment. We have significantly reduced our carbon intensity by as much as 40% compared to 1990s by adopting the latest energy-efficient combined cycle plant technology, while also shifting fuel consumption to mostly natural gas.

In addition, we have committed more than S\$1.8 million (US\$ 1.25 million) for the sponsorship of the National Weather Study Project (NWSP) between 2005 and 2007. The NWSP was launched to raise awareness on climate change among students from 240 schools and junior colleges in Singapore.

Through these initiatives, we continue to serve as an agent of change not only for the power generation industry but also for the public".

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## **February 22, 2008**

**Warmer World May Mean Less Fish**

**Global Warming Adding to Pollution and Over-Harvesting Impacts on the World's Key Fishing Grounds Says New UNEP - "In Dead Water" - Report**

Monaco/Nairobi, 22 February 2008 - Climate change is emerging as the latest threat to the world's dwindling fish stocks a new report by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) suggests.

At least three quarters of the globe's key fishing grounds may become seriously impacted by changes in circulation as a result of the ocean's natural pumping systems fading and falling they suggest.

These natural pumps, dotted at sites across the world including the Arctic and the Mediterranean, bring nutrients to fisheries and keep them healthy by flushing out wastes and pollution.

The impacts of rising emissions on the marine world are unlikely to end there. Higher sea surface temperatures over the coming decades threaten to bleach and kill up to 80 per cent of the globe's coral reefs-major tourist attractions, natural sea defences and also nurseries for fish.

Meanwhile there is growing concern that carbon dioxide emissions will increase the acidity of seas and oceans. This in turn may impact calcium and shell-forming marine life including corals but also tiny ones such as planktonic organisms at the base of the food chain.

The findings come in a new rapid response report entitled "In Dead Water" which has for the first time mapped the multiple impacts of pollution; alien infestations; over-exploitation and climate change on the seas and oceans.

"The worst concentration of cumulative impacts of climate change with existing pressures of over-harvest, bottom trawling, invasive species infestations, coastal development and pollution appear to be concentrated in 10-15 per cent of the oceans," says the report.

This 10-15 per cent of the oceans is far higher than had previously been supposed and is "concurrent with today's most important fishing grounds" including the estimated 7.5 per cent deemed to be the most economically valuable fishing areas of the world, it adds.

The report, the work of UNEP scientists in collaboration with universities and institutes in Europe and the United States, was launched today during UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum taking place in Monaco.

It is the largest gathering of environment ministers since the climate convention conference in Indonesia just over two months ago where governments agreed the Bali Road Map aimed at delivering a deep and decisive climate regime for post 2012.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "The theme of the Governing Council is 'Mobilizing Finance for the Climate Challenge for trillions of dollars can flow into climate-friendly energies and technologies if government's can provide the right kind of enabling market mechanisms and fiscal incentives'".

"It is sometimes important to remind ourselves why we need to accelerate these transformations towards a Green Economy. In Dead Water has uniquely mapped the impact of several damaging and persistent stresses on fisheries. It also lays on top of these the likely impacts of climate change from dramatic alternations in ocean circulation affecting perhaps a three quarter of key fishing grounds up to the emerging concern of ocean acidification," said Mr Steiner.

"Climate change threatens coastal infrastructure, food and water supplies and the health of people across the world. It is clear from this report and others that it will add significantly to pressures on fish stocks. This is as much a development and economic issue as it is an

environmental one. Millions of people including many in developing countries derive their livelihoods from fishing while around 2.6 billion people get their protein from seafood," he said.

The report comes in wake of findings issued last week by a team led by the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis which estimates that over 40 per cent of the world's oceans have been heavily impacted by humans and that only four per cent remain relatively pristine.

It also comes amid concern that sea bird chicks in the North Sea may be being choked after being fed on a diet of snake pipefish-a very bony species. Over the past five years snake pipefish numbers have boomed a meeting of the Zoological Society in London was told last week.

One reason for their sharp increase in numbers might be changes in ocean currents bringing the fish into North Sea waters, the experts suggest.

The new UNEP report has been compiled by researchers including ones at UNEP's GRID Arendal centre; UNEP's World Conservation Monitoring Centre and UNEP's Division of Early Warning and Assessment.

It draws on a wide range of new and emerging science including the latest assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change-the 2,000 plus panel of scientists established by UNEP and the World Meteorological Organisation.

Other contributions have come from organizations and institutions including the University of Plymouth; the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research; the University of British Columbia; the Institute of Zoology; Princeton University; the University of Barcelona and the Sustainable Europe Research Institute.

#### In Dead Water Key Findings

- Half the world's catch is caught along Continental shelves in an area of less than 7.5 per cent of the globe's seas and oceans.
- An area of 10-15 per cent of the world's seas and oceans cover most of the commercial fishing grounds.
- 80 per cent to 100 per cent of the world's coral reefs may suffer annual bleaching events by 2080 under global warming scenarios.
- Those at particular risk are in the Western Pacific; the Indian Ocean; the Persian Gulf; the Middle East and in the Caribbean
- Over 90 per cent of the world's temperate and tropical coasts will be heavily impacted by 2050. Over 80 per cent of marine pollution comes from the land. Marine areas at particular risk of increased pollution are Southeast and East Asia.

- Increasing concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere are likely to be mirrored by increasing acidification of the marine environment.
- Increasing acidification may reduce the availability of calcium carbonates in sea water, including a key one known as aragonite which is used by a variety of organisms for shell-building.
- Cold-water and deep water corals could be affected by acidification by 2050 and shell-building organisms throughout the Southern Ocean and into the sub-Arctic Pacific Ocean by 2100.
- Climate change may slow down the ocean thermohaline circulation and thus the continental shelf "flushing and cleaning" mechanisms, known as dense shelf water cascading, over the next 100 years. These processes are crucial to water quality and nutrient cycling and deep water production in at least 75 per cent of the world's major fishing grounds.
- Dead zones, area of de-oxygenated water, are increasing as a result of pollution from urban and agriculture areas. There are an estimated 200 temporary or permanent 'dead zones' up from around 150 in 2003.
- Up to 80 per cent of the world's primary fish catch species are exploited beyond or close to their harvesting capacity. Advances in technology, alongside subsidies, means the world's fishing capacity is 2.5 times bigger than that needed to sustainably harvest fisheries.
- Bottom trawling is among the most damaging and unsustainable fishing practices at the scales often seen today
- Alien invasive species, which can out-compete and dislodge native ones, are increasingly associated with the polluted, overharvested and damaged fishing grounds. The report shows that the concentration of 'aliens' matches with some precision the world's major shipping routes.

Christian Nellemann, who headed up the rapid response team that compiled the report, said: "We are already seeing evidence from a number of studies that increasing sea temperatures are causing changes in the distribution of marine life".

Some of these changes are being found from the Continuous Plankton Recorder survey of the Northeast Atlantic.

Warmer water copepod species or crustaceans have moved northward by around 1,000km during the later half of the 20th century with the patterns continuing into the 21st century.

"Further evidence of this warming signal is seen in the appearance of a Pacific planktonic plant in the Northwest Atlantic for this first time in 800,000 years by transfer across the top of Canada due to the rapid melting of the Arctic in 1998," said Dr. Nellemann. "We are getting more and more alarming signals of dramatic changes in the oceans. It is like turning a big tanker around. Our ability to change course and reduce emissions in the near future will be paramount to success".

The link between healthy and productive fishing grounds and ocean circulation or 'dense shelf water cascading' is in some ways only now emerging.

Three years ago the Hotspot Ecosystem Research on the Margins of European Seas of which UNEP is part, documented such a phenomenon in the Gulf of Lions in the north-western Mediterranean.

A quantity of water equal to two years-worth of the river discharge from all rivers flowing into the Mediterranean is, in four months, transported from the Gulf of Lions to the deep Western Mediterranean via the Cap de Creyus canyon.

It has a critical impact on the population of the heavily harvested deep sea shrimp *Aristeus antennatus*, the crevette rouge, by bringing food that in turn triggers a sharp increase in young shrimp resulting in plentiful catches three to five years after the 'cascading' event.

"Imagine what will happen if climate change slows down or stops these natural food transport and "flushing" effects in waters that are often already polluted, heavily fished, damaged and stressed", said Dr. Nellemann. "We are gambling with our food supply".

Stefan Hain of UNEP's World Conservation Monitoring Centre, said it was critical that existing stresses were also addressed too in order to conserve fish stocks and coral reefs in a climate constrained world.

He said there was growing evidence that coral reefs recover from bleaching better in cleaner, less polluted waters.

Dr Hain cited monitoring of corals around the main Seychelles island of Mahé which were among corals world-wide that suffered from the high sea surface temperatures of the late 1990s. Here coral reefs recovery rates have varied between five to 70 per cent.

"Coral reefs recovering faster are generally those living in Marine Protected Areas and coastal waters where the levels of pollution, dredging and other kinds of human-induced disturbance are considered low," he said.

#### Notes to Editors

The report "In dead Water: Merging of climate change with pollution, over-harvest, and infestations in the world's fishing grounds" can be accessed at [www.grida.no](http://www.grida.no) or at [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org) or [www.globio.info](http://www.globio.info) including high and low resolution graphics for free use in publications.

The 10th Special Session of UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum will take place between 20 and 22 February in Monaco. <http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-x/>

The theme is Globalization and the Environment-Mobilizing Finance to Meet the Climate Challenge.

Monaco, the Host Country's web site is at  
<http://www.unep2008.gouv.mc/pnue/wwwnew.nsf/HomeGb>

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UNEP News Release

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## **February 22, 2008**

Renewal' spreads the environmental gospel  
Email | Text size – + By Ty Burr, Globe Staff  
02/21/2008

Global warming makes strange but useful bedfellows. "Renewal," a documentary by Marty Ostrow and Terry Kay Rockefeller opening at the Museum of Fine Arts today, traces the rise in environmental activism among religious communities throughout America.

The congregations include evangelical Christians in Kentucky and Muslims in Chicago, Connecticut Jews and Mississippi Baptists. All are striving to preserve what they see as God's creation, and all are increasingly working together as conscious stewards of the earth. Says one of the committed, "What gives me hope on this is that I've never seen a wider coalition."

The film, accordingly, is earnest, idealistic, and fired with the righteous potential of making a difference. And maybe it's right to: When New Mexico Catholics and Native Americans joined forces recently to protest development that was siphoning water from farms, the results were a very pretty community celebration - and pro-environment resolutions passed by the local planning commission.

"Renewal" is really eight short documentaries stitched into a 90-minute whole, each focusing on a local action spearheaded by a different religious organization. Catholics and evangelicals in Appalachia raise awareness of the coal-mining practice known as "mountaintop removal" by flying over in helicopters and videotaping the devastation. (Later they sing "Amazing Grace" while dynamite detonates nearby cliffs.) New Jersey's GreenFaith organization outfits churches with solar panels while teaching them to reduce their own consumption.



California's Buddhist Green Sangha petitions The New Yorker and National Geographic to print on recycled paper; the Teva Learning Center in Falls Village, Conn., teaches Jewish kids about nature and waste. (One of my favorite scenes in "Renewal" shows a group of blindfolded tweens led up to a mountain ridge and then told to take the blindfolds off. "Oh my God," they exclaim when they see the view, which sums up the film's message in three simple words.)

The two most inspiring segments of "Renewal" - which, after all, exists to inspire - concern Muslims in suburban Chicago and Episcopalians in San Francisco. In the former, a young mother named Shireen Pishdadi contacts rural organic chicken and beef farmers to bring healthy halal food to her religious community. The triangulation between Muslim beliefs, middle American agriculture, and the new philosophy of food promulgated by writers like Michael Pollan gives one hope for the future of eating and civilization.

Led by the Rev. Sally Bingham of San Francisco, the Interfaith Power and Light campaign is a 24-state multi-denominational response to global warming that in one exhilarating sequence descends on Washington to merrily browbeat various elected representatives. "Renewal" documents that religious zeal can be yoked to change as well as conservatism, that differing faiths can speak to each other, and that, really, good works are faith these days. Above all, the film spreads the good news that we're just getting started.

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## **February 24, 2008**

Faithfully Green Try a 'Carbon Fast' for Lent  
Sunday, February 24, 2008; N04

Penance for Lent traditionally has meant abstaining from meat or forsaking chocolates. In light of climate change, however, two Church of England leaders are calling on congregants to curb their energy consumption instead.

Bishops Richard Chartres of London and James Jones of Liverpool recently partnered with the U.K.-based nonprofit organization Tearfund (Jones is a vice president) to promote a Lenten "carbon fast," a plan that prescribes a household energy-saving tip for each of the period's 40 days. Carbon-cutting reflects the Christian value of caring for the poor, the logic goes, because coastal and drought-prone third-world regions are disproportionately affected by global warming.

Though we know of no other denominations that have formally recommended going green for Lent, the idea is catching on: A blog (<http://greenlent.blogspot.com>) is devoted to the concept, and locally, Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light, a nonprofit organization that works with area congregations to spread the sustainability gospel, is promoting a Lenten carbon fast in the D.C. area, offering pledges and tip sheets for distribution at worship services and church events.

"It's a biblical mandate that we take care of our planet," says Robin Simpson, pastor of D.C.'s Luther Place Memorial Church. "Lent is a great place to start; I would encourage that the idea continue all year." Luther Place, a Lutheran congregation and Washington Interfaith Network member, established an Eco-Stewards program in 2006 that includes alternative transportation and carpooling programs, weekly newsletter tips for congregants and initiatives for the church building itself, such as phasing out paper plates, placing insulating film over stained-glass windows, seeking out climate-appropriate landscaping and purchasing fair-trade, sustainably harvested palms for Palm Sunday.

Increasingly, religious leaders are coming around to the green way of thinking: The Presbyterian Church asked its members to become carbon-neutral in 2006; the Vatican hosted a climate change conference last year; the Church of England initiated "Shrinking the Footprint," a plan to reduce its carbon usage by 60 percent. And Call to Action, a group founded last year, seeks to make global warming a top political issue for evangelicals; its leaders include the Rev. Joel C. Hunter, president of the Christian Coalition of America, and the Rev. Richard Cizik, vice president for government relations of the National Association of Evangelicals. Some political analysts speculate that "eco-evangelicals" could be a crucial voting bloc in this fall's elections.

Here are a few of the carbon fast's Lent tips that are easy to implement, no matter your faith:

Check tire pressure; cars with tires that aren't properly inflated burn more fuel.

Cover cooking pans with lids to make food heat faster, and boil water in a kettle rather than in an open pot.

Fit your hot-water heater with an insulating jacket.

Reuse an item you would have otherwise discarded, such as a glass jar or ice-cream container.

Have a silent Sunday: no cellphones, TV or cars.

For more tips, visit <http://www.tearfund.org> and <http://www.gwipl.org/lent.asp>.

-- Eviana Hartman

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## February 24, 2008

New and Forward Looking Strategy for UNEP Authorized

Environment Ministers Get to Grips with Greening Global Economy at 10th Special Session of Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum

Monaco, 22 February 2008 - Close to 140 governments today gave the green light to evolve the environment programme of the United Nations (UNEP) into a more efficient, focused and results-based organization better able to meet the multiple challenges of the 21st century.

Environment ministers, gathering in the Principality of Monaco two months after they gathered in Indonesia to agree the Bali Road Map on climate change, approved a decision authorizing the

UNEP Executive Director to utilize a Medium-Term Strategy in formulating UNEP's programme of work.

The strategy will focus the organization's activities across six cross-cutting thematic priorities aimed at strengthening and focusing UNEP's response to climate change but also disasters and conflicts; ecosystem management; environmental governance; harmful substances and hazardous waste and resource efficiency-sustainable consumption and production.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "This decision is a major milestone in achieving a consensus among the international community as well as civil society and the private sector to set new and transformational directions for this environment programme of the UN".

He said governments, meeting in Monaco for the 10th Special Session of UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, had signaled their determination to address existing and emerging challenges by empowering the UN body responsible for the environmental pillar of sustainable development to move forward.

"I can only applaud governments and delegates for the constructive manner in which they engaged on the suite of issues before them including the Medium-Term Strategy. We have reached a consensus on the way forward for UNEP. I believe this represents growing confidence in our reforms and growing confidence in UNEP and its ability to deliver decisive results," said Mr Steiner.

He said the excellent planning and organization of the Monaco meeting had contributed to the success of the event.

"I must thank the government of Monaco and in particular its Head of State, His Serene Highness Prince Albert II. Prince Albert's commitment, inspiration and presence here at the GC/GMEF has played an important part in empowering delegates to reach such a positive consensus on the issues before them," said Mr Steiner.

He also thanked the President of the Governing Council Roberto Dobles, the Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, whose leadership and steady hand was also key to the gathering's success.

Mr Dobles said: "Governments have come to Monaco to attend their environmental forum in the wake of a 12 month period that was truly a defining moment for the sustainability agenda".

"The reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the UNEP Global Environment Outlook-4 outlined in graphic detail the challenges but also the opportunities facing nations," he said.

"Here in Monaco that momentum, and that understanding was maintained and reflected not only in the quality of debate on the nexus between environment and economics but in the decision to authorize UNEP's Medium Term Strategy. The overall conclusion was that much needs to be

done, but much is already happening and much more is possible. I am delighted to have been part of that evolution," he said.

The theme of the GC/GMEF was "Globalization and the Environment-Mobilizing Finance for the Climate Challenge" and ministers undertook wide-ranging discussions on how that might be accelerated and the barriers broken down.

In the President's summary, many of the more than 100 ministers who took part agreed that "sufficient investment capital" is available in the world to address climate change but that a "sufficiently high and long-term predictable price for carbon will be central for mobilizing that capital for the new economy.

Many also took the view that in terms of 'climate proofing' vulnerable economies to the impacts of global warming, urgency was needed to make the Adaptation Fund of the Kyoto Protocol operational.

The Clean Development Mechanism of the Protocol, which may eventually generate up to \$100 billion of investment flowing North to South into clean and green energy projects, needed to be "supplemented by significant contributions from industrialized countries to meet the envisaged challenge".

Many developing countries underlined a sea change in thinking about a transition to a low carbon economy.

"Developing countries no longer need to be convinced of the advantages of green growth, but they do need financial and technical assistance in order to make the transition to lower carbon economies," the President's summary notes.

Another measure of the transformation in the market place was voiced by members of the private sector who said that renewable energy had 'shed its fringe image' and was now a mainstream business. However, there remained a 'lack of activity' on poorer developing countries including in Africa.

Many delegates stressed that "appropriate finance" that matched the ability of the poor, particular in the area of cleaner energy, was needed and that public finance may be needed to stimulate local lending.

The importance of UNEP and the United Nations in playing a role in assisting developing countries to establish the right policies, institutional frameworks and to build capacity to access finance was also recognized.

At the meeting, the governments emphasized their concern that all countries, in particular developing countries, face increased risks from the negative effects of climate change, and stressed the importance of addressing adaptation needs.

Governments also welcomed the fourth Global Environment Outlook report, which was launched in October 2007, expressing concern over the evidence of unprecedented environmental changes, and encouraging timely action to prevent, mitigate and adapt to such changes. The progress that has been made on several fronts to address the challenges outlined in the report was welcomed by governments, who also encouraged greater sharing of lessons learned and best practices.

Finally, in order to maintain the spirit of international solidarity and commitment generated by the Bali Roadmap, governments requested the UN Economic and Social Council to consider making 2010-2020 an International Decade for addressing Climate Change.

Meanwhile the meeting also show-cased the latest economic and scientific developments through a series of reports, publications and side-events including the impact of soot and the Atmospheric Brown Cloud on the climate and on the shielding of sunlight from the ground-so called global 'dimming'.

Other ground-breaking reports included the UNEP Year Book and its glimpse of a 'green economy' as a result of investments in new and cleaner technologies; a preliminary report with the International Labour Organization and trades unions on 'green jobs' and a sobering study by scientists on the multiple impacts of pollution, alien invasive species and climate change on fisheries-In Dead Water.

Notes to Editors

Documents related to the 10th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum will be posted at <http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-x/>

Press releases relating to the meeting can be found at [www.unep.org/newscentre](http://www.unep.org/newscentre)

Monaco, the Host Country's web site is at  
<http://www.unep2008.gouv.mc/pnue/wwwnew.nsf/HomeGb>

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UNEP News Release

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**February 26, 2008**

Originally appeared on News-Journal Online at

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/NewsJournalOnline/News/Enviro/envWEST02ENV022508.htm> | Print

February 25, 2008

Religious leaders see need to move heaven and Earth

By JIM HAUG  
Staff Writer

LONGWOOD -- As a cause of tree huggers, granola eaters and National Public Radio listeners, global warming has become a victim of guilt by association.

Conservative college students, for instance, have turned a deaf ear because "this is what Al Gore talks about," said Ben Lowe, a youth organizer for A Rocha, a Christian environmental group.

Sensitive to politics, Bishop Thomas Wenski of the Catholic Diocese of Orlando, which includes Volusia County, joked at the Creation Care Conference last week that "Al Gore is not the fifth evangelist (after Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)."

The resistance is being transformed, however, by activism among conference attendees and others who see environmentalism as a deeply religious issue.

Jessica Bailey, a program officer for the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, a New York-based philanthropy, said the religious people meeting at the Creation Care Conference could pull environmentalism "out of its hole" and make it a mainstream movement.

The conference, held Thursday at the Northland Church in Longwood, was organized by the International Evangelical Environmental NetWork and other faith-based environmental groups.

In their speeches to the conference, nationally known evangelists took aim at religious people who have been indifferent or cynical about environmental issues.

Richard Cizik, vice president for governmental affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, called climate change "the civil rights issue of the 21st century." He implored Christians not to be on the wrong side of history.

"There were American Christians who would not change their mind about the slave trade, either," Cizik said.

Calvin DeWitt, a professor of environmental studies at the University of Wisconsin and co-founder of the International Evangelical Environmental NetWork, said, "They're people who are just contrarians. There are Christians like that today. They feel anti."

Quoting Bible passages that urge them "to be good stewards" of the Earth and likening Jesus to the "second gardener of Eden," speakers also challenged the assumption that natural resources were intended for exploitation.

"If we're not being a blessing, can we expect (God's) blessings?" Cizik asked.

Joel C. Hunter, the conference host and pastor of Northland Church, a 12,000-member congregation that draws members from West Volusia, said a hidden blessing of climate change is that it's bringing so many diverse people together.

Besides evangelicals, the conference drew Catholics and mainline Protestants, as well as a rabbi and an imam.

"God has given us a problem no one group can solve," Hunter said.

While the environmentally committed religious bemoaned closed-minded conservatives, they complained about liberal prejudice as well.

Peter Illyn, founder of Restoring Eden, created bumper stickers with the logo, "God's original plan was to hang out in a garden with some naked vegetarians" after he worked "with some hippies."

"They were twitchy that I was a Bible-believing Christian," said Illyn, who calls himself an "inconvenient Christian."

Noting how hard it is to change minds, Lowe, the youth organizer, believes in using youths to change institutions from the inside.

A Sunday school class of fifth-graders, for instance, questioned why their Chicago church was using so many plastic foam cups, Lowe said. So they wrote a letter to the church board.

"It was cute as all get out, (but) they were calling them out," Lowe said. "They were putting them to shame."

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### **March 3, 2008**

Going green for Lent

Many use period of penance to aid environment

By Beth Daley, Globe Staff | March 3, 2008

Many Christians sacrifice a personal pleasure such as chocolate, liquor, or cigarettes to mark Lent, the period of penance and prayer before Easter.

This year, Nina Scott is giving up carbon.

The retired University of Massachusetts at Amherst professor is hanging wet laundry on a clothesline in her basement to prevent emissions of heat-trapping carbon dioxide from using the dryer. She is carpooling as much as she can and turning off lights more often.

These actions will do little to slow global warming - at most, Scott will probably reduce her "carbon footprint" by 1 or 2 percent during Lent - but she says it's important to do nonetheless.

"For me, it's that connection between protecting nature and faith," said Scott, who is one of about a dozen parishioners at Amherst's Grace Episcopal Church who are following a Lenten carbon "diet" until Easter and, hopefully, beyond. Across New England, a small but growing number of Christians are pledging to reduce energy usage as part of the 40 days of sacrifice and charitable deeds leading up to Easter. These Lenten environmentalists say they have come to realize they are morally bound to help protect God's creation from the threat of human-made global warming, and Lent's season of reflection is an ideal time to start making changes.

Sue Butler of Cambridge stopped eating meat after learning how energy intensive its production can be. Lucy Robinson of Amherst installed a low-flow showerhead to cut her use of hot water. The First Church of Christ in Longmeadow will give out "eco-palms" - plants grown and harvested without harming the environment - on Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter. Leftover palms are burned and used for Ash Wednesday the following year, so in some churches, even the ashes that will be smeared on foreheads next year will be eco-friendly.

The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts is circulating green Lent ideas to its churches, suggesting, for example, that worshipers use candles instead of lights on Sundays and eat only locally grown foods to avoid the energy used to transport food long distances. "If we do our share, there is hope for the earth," said Massachusetts Episcopal Bishop Roy F. "Bud" Cederholm Jr.

Religious environmentalism - slowly growing since the 1990s - has exploded along with awareness of human-made climate change. Many faith communities now see the release of heat-trapping gases from power plants and vehicles as the destruction of a precious gift from God. Others see global warming intersecting with a fundamental calling: helping the poor. Because climate change will disproportionately hurt the most vulnerable - in places such as Bangladesh that are more prone to flooding as sea levels rise - religious leaders are embracing emissions reductions as their duty.

"Climate change is visible today . . . it is already affecting social justice," said Mary Evelyn Tucker, who, with her husband, John Grim, codirects the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University. This weekend, the forum is sponsoring a conference examining the alliance between ecology and religion.

Individual behavior change, while collectively important, may not be enough to slow global warming, so faith-based groups also have become politically active on this issue. That's why the Massachusetts Interfaith Climate Action Network - made up of about 20 Christian, Islamic, Jewish, and other groups - was founded last year to lobby state legislators. The group held a day of prayer and advocacy at the State House in January.



Through much of history, scholars say, the environment was not a major cause for religious communities in part because the earth's bounty was seen as unlimited, if not always equally distributed. While indigenous faiths, such as those practiced by Native Americans, were protective of the earth, more mainstream religions often saw the world as God's gift, which could be controlled and used to foster prosperity, religion specialists said.

Even during the dawn of the environmental movement in the United States in the 1960s, organized religions were largely absent, specialists say. Early environmentalists evoked a spirituality about the earth, but some religious people interpreted this spirituality as pagan, one that viewed the earth itself as a deity. Government regulation and legal action against polluters were seen as the proper responses to the poisoning of air and water, not a collective change in overall behavior.

"It was about finding and punishing people who transgressed," said Grim. "There was a mindset it was scientific and antibusiness . . . religions were wary." Starting in the 1980s, some world religions began fighting pollution. By the 1990s, after the Exxon Valdez tanker spill in Alaska and as concerns mounted about the health effects of pollution, faith leaders began discussing more seriously their role in creating and solving an array of environmental problems, from hazardous waste disposal to air quality.

In the first part of this decade, as climate change science solidified, some evangelical Protestants began a "creation care" movement, though other evangelicals vigorously opposed it as shifting focus away from more important moral issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage. Last year, Pope Benedict XVI called on the Catholic Church to better protect the environment and stop wasting energy. Outside the spotlight, other faiths were also taking on global warming. "It's no longer seen as one among many advocacy issues, but one that goes to the core of what it means to be in relationship to God and creation," said Laura Everett, associate director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, an organization of 17 Orthodox and Protestant denominations. "People are talking about it as how you walk in the world, how you use resources."

And Lent, some Christians say, is a perfect time to reexamine consumption issues as they prepare for the commemoration of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Some who are observing a green Lent say they came to the idea of reducing carbon after hearing about two Church of England bishops who urged followers this year to go on a "carbon fast." But others say their participation flows from a deliberate decision to start taking personal responsibility for the world's environmental woes.

Wendy Bell of Arlington, minister of the Harvard Unitarian Universalist Church, which does not traditionally observe Lent, began a blog last year called The Lenten Locavore to document her efforts to eat as many local foods as she could to avoid consuming the energy used in manufacturing and transporting food long distances.

"When I was growing up Methodist, I would give up chocolate or sugar and I still follow the tradition, but I wanted to do something that meant something to me," Bell said. "I wanted to challenge a whole system" that was harming the environment.

For Scott, and the rest of her "carbon diet" group, Lent is a time to not only look inward but outward. The group meets about once a week to discuss ways they can personally change, and how to encourage change among others in their church and the community. "I see this as a religious issue because I see the creation of the earth as a religious issue," Scott said. "This is God's work. If we are really messing it up, it is up to us to do something about it."

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### **March 6, 2008**

#### **GreenFaith's National Fellowship Program Seeks New Applications Nationally Recognized Initiative to Train Ordained, Lay Leaders for Environmental Leadership**

GreenFaith announced today that its GreenFaith Fellowship Program is seeking applications for its second class of Fellows. The Fellowship Program is the first comprehensive education and training program in the US to prepare lay and ordained leaders from interfaith religious traditions for religiously based environmental leadership.

The Fellowship Program consists of three three-day residential sessions in ecologically varied settings (one urban, one rural, and one suburban). The themes of the retreats are: eco-spirituality, environmental justice, and stewardship and consumption. There will also be monthly conference calls, mentoring sessions, an e-mail list serve, networking both within the program and at each fellow's local/regional level and reading/writing assignments before and after each retreat. The second class of Fellows will consist of at least 25 people and will run from the fall of 2008 through the end of 2009. Fellows will be selected through a competitive application process. GreenFaith is interested in attracting applications across a broad religious, geographic and ethnically diverse spectrum. African-American, Asian-American, Latino and Jewish applications for this year's class are particularly welcome.

The first class of 18 fellows is a talented group from across the country and active in a wide variety of religious settings: congregations, campus ministry, NGO work and denominational organizations. Initial reactions of the Fellows towards the Program have been uniformly positive and enthusiastic.

Rabbi Lawrence Troster is the Fellowship Program Director. Rabbi Troster is a nationally recognized religious environmental leader who has worked with the Coalition for the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL), the Jewish Theological Seminary, Bard College, and as a rabbi of congregations in Toronto and New Jersey. A graduate of the University of Toronto and the Jewish Theological Seminary, has published and lectured widely on theology and environmentalism, and has led GreenFaith's Meeting the Sacred in Creation retreats for religious leaders.

“I know of no more important religious work than the restoration of Creation,” said Rabbi Troster. “We look forward to working with our new class of Fellows to support their growth as religious-environmental leaders.”

“This program will offer these leaders the opportunity for educational, spiritual and vocational growth and skill development in religious environmentalism,” said the Rev. Fletcher Harper, GreenFaith’s Executive Director. “We believe these leaders will make a lasting contribution to the development of an environmentally just and sustainable world.”

Rabbi Troster and Rev. Harper co-chair the United Nations Environment Programme’s Interfaith Partnership for the Environment.

Each retreat will feature faculty members with extensive experience in a range of religious and environmental fields. These include Kurt Hoelting, an experienced leader of wilderness retreats for clergy, the staff from WEACTION (West Harlem Environmental Action), a nationally-recognized environmental justice organization, and from a wide variety of theological seminaries including Auburn Theological Seminary. Fellows will develop relationships with these leading teachers and practitioners, will engage with the writings of the best religious-environmental authors, and will write a personal eco-theological statement, grounding their learning in their own religious self-understanding.

Later in the program Fellows will design and implement their own religious-environmental leadership plans, applying for up to \$1,000 in matching funds through a Fellowship mini-grant program designed to support their work. Upon graduating, they will join the Fellowship’s alumni/ae network and mentor other emerging leaders, building and taking part in a community of support.

An advisory committee of nationally recognized religious and environmental leaders have shared their experience with past religious-environmental initiatives and offered strong support.

“The GreenFaith Fellowship Program is a critical initiative for the religious environmental movement,” said Drs. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, co-directors of the Forum on Religion and Ecology. “There is currently no such program of its kind and thus its potential contribution is clear. There is a dearth of religious leaders in the United States who are speaking out regarding key environmental issues we are facing. This interfaith effort is indispensable.”

Dr. Larry Rasmussen, Reinhold Niebuhr Professor Emeritus of Social Ethics at Union Theological Seminary, said “The GreenFaith Fellowship Program meets a palpable need for a select group at a critical time. I applaud the substance and details of the program – if it didn’t exist, we would need to invent it.”

Rabbi William Lebeau, former Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the Rabbinical of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, said “I believe that this kind of program will help to produce a cadre of clergy and lay leaders who will help to bring their communities to a new level of environmental knowledge and action.”

The Fellowship Program intends to play a major role in strengthening, broadening and deepening the impact of the religious-environmental movement. GreenFaith is excited to have the opportunity to launch this effort.

GreenFaith is grateful to the Richard Oram Charitable Trust, the Keneda Fund, the Edgebrook Foundation, and to GreenFaith members for their support for the Fellowship Program

GreenFaith is a New Jersey based interfaith coalition for the environment. Founded in 1992, GreenFaith inspires, educates and mobilizes people of diverse spiritual backgrounds to deepen their relationship with nature and to take action for the earth.

Individuals interested in learning more about the Fellowship or in applying should visit [www.greenfaith.org](http://www.greenfaith.org) or contact Rabbi Troster at [rabbiltroster@greenfaith.org](mailto:rabbiltroster@greenfaith.org) or 732-565-7740.

Rabbi Lawrence Troster

Director, Fellowship Program,  
GreenFaith: Interfaith Partners for the Environment

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### **March 8, 2008**

REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN (Waterbury, CT) 8-3-08

Religious environmentalism

Yale's schools of divinity, forestry joining forces to tackle global issues

BY TRACY SIMMONS NEW HAVEN — Evelyn Tucker, co-founder of the Forum on Religion and Ecology (FORE), won't hesitate to say that climate change is the largest crisis humans have ever had to face. She calls it a moral calamity and is calling for people of faith to step up.

A recent conference titled "Renewing Hope: Pathways of Religious Environmentalism" at Yale Divinity School addressed the issue, beginning with a lecture that highlighted a frightening representation of humanity and the wounds it is inflicting upon the planet. The conference was organized by the school and the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and Tucker said about 300 people from across the country attended.

"This whole conference is part of a much larger movement. This whole study was developed over a period of 12 years," she said referring to FORE, a discussion hosted by Harvard that brings together religious studies with academic dialogue on the environment.

To open last week's conference, theologian Sally McFague of the Vancouver School of Theology, said religious traditions can bring hope to the globe by acknowledging the "interconnectedness" of all beings, rather than focusing solely on the "salvation of the individual."

"It demands a paradigm shift in who we think we are," she said.

McFague used quotes from her fellow authors and environmentalists to make her point that religion is "central to addressing the environmental crisis epitomized in climate change," including words from Researcher Gary Gardner who said, "Religions provide the cosmologies, the world views, that orient us in the world and our role in it."

Tucker, in a phone interview, said that people of various faiths are called to be stewards of the Earth and said that religions are beginning to feel a "sense of urgency," noting Pope Benedict's XVI's 2007 recent statement on environmentalism.

The pope's report said that Catholic churches should become greener. He has also spoken on the need to preserve rainforests. He will speak to the United Nations about climate change during his upcoming April visit.

"All world religions now have made statements on the very critical nature of this environmental crisis," Tucker said. "It's a big move, a big shift."

The Rev. Kenneth Frazier of First Congregational Church in Waterbury said he addresses the climate with his parish through sermons and classes.

"I try to encourage the basics, like recycling and wise use of resources," he said.

He said locally, churches try to re-use basic resources through clothing drives and participating in the Food Bank.

"My own experience is that churches have been involved in it for quite some time," Frazier said. "I think it's probably been a low-profile thing with churches since we tend not to have a lot of access to publicity, but many churches I've served in the past 25, 30 years have been actively involved in grassroots green living."

"My own experience is that churches have been involved in it for quite some time," Frazier said. "I think it's probably been a low-profile thing with churches since we tend not to have a lot of access to publicity, but many churches I've served in the past 25, 30 years have been actively involved in grassroots green living."

He said, for example, that the World Council and National Council of Churches has been involved in climate change since at least the 1980s.

The Rev. Audrey Murdock of St. John's Episcopal Church in Bristol is trying to be such a warden. Some months ago she began a recycling program at her church.

She's asking parishioners to donate energy friendly light bulbs and has the sanctuary heater set to a timer. She's hoping, she noted, that once the church has the finances it will be able to switch from oil to natural gas.

"It's only really been in the last 10 or 20 years that we've really thought about the people that come after us and what we can do and that what we are doing is detrimental for our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren," she said.

She said Al Gore's 2006 book, "An Inconvenient Truth" was an eye opener to many religious.

Murdock, who drives a Subaru Forester, is even toying with the idea of buying a hybrid. She and Tucker agreed that if churches and parishioners continue to ignore global warming and climate change, the consequences mean that the Earth will continue to get hotter, have more violent storms, like Hurricane Katrina, and face water shortages.

"If parishioners, or non-parishioners, turn a blind eye there will be tremendous consequences for our children," Tucker said.

But Tucker said it's about more than being energy conscious, although that is an important part of improving the climate.

"It's about modeling a change that's much deeper and more transformative, ultimately for the human spirit," she said. "We would hope that ministers would be eventually talking about the sacredness of creation."

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## March 9, 2008

NAVHIND (Goa) TIMES

Archbishop for organising programmes to reduce man-induced climate change  
NT Staff Reporter

Panaji, March 8 The Archbishop of Goa and Daman, Rev Filipe Neri Ferrao, as part of a campaign to raise awareness on reducing the impact of human induced climate change, has urged all parish priests, chaplains, parish bodies, educational and religious institutions to organise programmes to make people more aware of the prevalent situation and motivate them to be actively involved in effective action plans for their respective areas, with the theme 'Dare to care for planet Earth.'

This campaign is an initiative of Caritas, India. He is of the opinion that in Goa this critical situation demands a firm collective and individual commitment to make it a mission in collaboration with the government and local bodies, for strenuous and persevering efforts to: control pollution at all levels by opting for a simpler life style by saving energy, whether electricity or fossil fuel options are solar/wind/biogas energy; conserve water and take all precautions to eliminate its pollution at all levels; protect land and use it judiciously and fruitfully; plant more trees; promote organic methods of agriculture, horticulture, floriculture; organise awareness and motivation programmes in the villages/towns for practices based on eco

spirituality; empower adolescents/youth in educational institutions and formation houses to take responsibility to protect and promote the integrity of the eco systems.

The press note asserts that Earth is facing an environmental ecological crisis as the essential elements of the physical reality: air, water, land, the well balanced but fragile eco systems are being polluted and steadily destroyed to meet the wants of developed nations and rich individuals in poor countries and through wasteful practices, adding that today's profit oriented scientific technological revolutions whether industrial, communicational or even agricultural are the primary culprits.

The manifestations of this crisis are many and diverse global warming due to depletion of the ozone layer resulting in climate change has caused glacial melting rise in sea levels and major natural calamities all over the world like hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes.

In India, the changing monsoon pattern, cyclones, fluctuating temperatures with heat and cold waves, degradation of the coastline etc are now accepted as part of life. Goa also has experienced this in recent years.

It charges that human induced degradation of the Earth's environment and ecology is basically a question of justice. The stark reality is: The power race to stockpile arms and ammunition, including nuclear weapons, using invaluable resources while sinfully denying the basic needs of the millions of people, perpetuates demeaning poverty.

Depleting all kinds of non-renewable resources and neglecting the replenishing of renewable ones is gross greed and violation of the Earth's sustainability, as also lack of responsibility towards the future generations our own children.

It charges that the inefficiency or conscious neglect by the industry and citizens collectively and individually are accountable for polluting effluences and emissions from factories and reiterates that global warming and climate change are problems that cut across all national boundaries and hence are a concern of the international community.

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## **March 10, 2008**

March 10, 2008

Southern Baptists Back a Shift on Climate Change

By NEELA BANERJEE

Signaling a significant departure from the Southern Baptist Convention's official stance on global warming, 44 Southern Baptist leaders have decided to back a declaration calling for more action on climate change, saying its previous position on the issue was "too timid."

The largest denomination in the United States after the Roman Catholic Church, the Southern Baptist Convention, with more than 16 million members, is politically and theologically conservative.

Yet its current president, the Rev. Frank Page, signed the initiative, “A Southern Baptist Declaration on the Environment and Climate Change.” Two past presidents of the convention, the Rev. Jack Graham and the Rev. James Merritt, also signed.

“We believe our current denominational engagement with these issues has often been too timid, failing to produce a unified moral voice,” the church leaders wrote in their new declaration.

A 2007 resolution passed by the convention hewed to a more skeptical view of global warming.

In contrast, the new declaration, which will be released Monday, states, “Our cautious response to these issues in the face of mounting evidence may be seen by the world as uncaring, reckless and ill-informed.”

The document also urges ministers to preach more about the environment and for all Baptists to keep an open mind about considering environmental policy.

Jonathan Merritt, the spokesman for the Southern Baptist Environment and Climate Initiative and a seminarian at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., said the declaration was a call to Christians to return to a biblical mandate to guard the world God created.

The Southern Baptist signatories join a growing community of evangelicals pushing for more action among believers, industry and politicians. Experts on the Southern Baptist Convention noted the initiative marked the growing influence of younger leaders on the discussions in the Southern Baptist Convention.

While those younger Baptists remain committed to fight abortion, for instance, the environment is now a top priority, too.

“In no way do we intend to back away from sanctity of life,” said the Rev. Dr. Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Ala.

Still, many powerful Southern Baptist leaders and agencies did not sign the declaration, including the convention’s influential political arm, the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

Dr. Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy at the commission, played down the differences between the declaration and the Southern Baptist Convention’s position.

The declaration says in fact that lack of scientific unanimity should not preclude “prudent action,” which includes changing individual habits and giving “serious consideration to responsible policies that effectively address” global warming.



The declaration is the outgrowth of soul-searching by Mr. Merritt, 25. The younger Mr. Merritt said that for years he had been "an enemy of the environment." Then, he said, he had an epiphany.

"I learned that God reveals himself through Scripture and in general through his creation, and when we destroy God's creation, it's similar to ripping pages from the Bible," Mr. Merritt said.

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### **March 10, 2008**

#### **RIGHTS:**

Go Green, Save the Indigenous

Tarjei Kidd Olsen

OSLO, Mar 10 (IPS) - African indigenous peoples are important custodians of their natural environments with valuable local knowledge and skills, but are struggling to survive, according to a report.

"Indigenous peoples are communities that, even though they may be considered backward by urban people, in fact often have very sophisticated knowledge about biodiversity, forest management, and dry areas management," Nigel Crawhall told IPS on Thursday at the launch of his report for the NGO Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in Oslo.

Crawhall is secretariat director for the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC), a network of 150 African indigenous groups. In his report, 'Indigenous Peoples in Africa', he argues that threatened indigenous peoples will be easier to protect if their value as stewards of nature is appreciated by policy makers.

"We should take a human rights based approach to protecting indigenous peoples, but understanding that human rights is not a strong culture in some parts of Africa, you also consider how they can make important contributions to sustainable environmental management," said Crawhall.

The report focuses mainly on indigenous peoples that are hunter-gatherers or pastoralists (herders), such as the San of southern Africa or the Maasai in Kenya and Tanzania, but also other marginalised groups. They are usually nomadic or semi-nomadic.

Social marginalisation, alienation from government, forced relocations and land encroachment by farmers are some of the threats to these groups. They are extremely vulnerable in wars and conflicts -- for instance, a third of the Batwa population of Rwanda was wiped out during the 1994 genocide.

The situation is particularly precarious for hunter-gatherers. Unlike pastoralists they do not possess livestock, surviving instead by hunting and gathering different foods. They have been ignored by governments since colonial times.

"Most hunter-gatherer communities are not recognised by their own government. Their identity is not recognised at all, they're not counted in the censuses, their languages are not taught in schools, and in most cases they don't even have national identity documentation or birth certificates, so in practice they can't be citizens, they can't actually vote," Crawhall told IPS.

He rejects the suggestion that pastoralist and hunter-gatherer lifestyles are outmoded in the 21st century, emphasising that such lifestyles are necessary adaptations to the harsh environments in which they exist. He also rejects the view of some NGO and policy circles that nomadic groups need to become sedentary so that they can be supplied with services such as education and health.

"That civil servant, I'm talking about a real case, has never met nomadic families, and has no idea what kind of knowledge and competence a young nomad must learn to handle remote desert conditions with mobile animals and very scarce resources," he said.

"By the age of five to ten you will know basically everything you need to know for a lifetime in a traditional pastoralist society -- extremely sophisticated scientific, zoological and botanical knowledge. School is not offering any of that. School is offering a very primitive, often alienating process of teaching in a European language, a curriculum that has almost nothing to do with life in the desert or in the forest.

"Everyone agrees that it is valuable to have access to literacy and numeracy and education, but the quality of education in Africa is so bad that it doesn't give skills to young people, it deskills them," Crawhall said.

He argues that pilot schemes need to be implemented to develop ways of combining social mobility with the realities of pastoralist and hunter-gatherer life.

"We need to be creative. How do you mesh African knowledge systems with Western-style education so that a child will have choices but also a livelihood and a culture?"

"It's not a question of primitivism. A lot of the work IPACC does is around introducing new technologies such as the Internet, satellite telephones, and palm pilot technology for tracking and monitoring biodiversity. It's about how to keep people on the land, working with the resources in a sustainable way that's good both for them and the environment," Crawhall remarked.

Despite the challenges, threatened indigenous peoples have witnessed progress at the legislative level in recent years, Crawhall says. Last September, after intense lobbying by IPACC and others, African countries adopted the new Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, after 23 years of negotiations.

The Declaration, which was adopted by all but four countries worldwide (the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, Australia), sets important standards and makes it easier for indigenous peoples to press their governments to respect their rights, according to Crawhall. (END/2008)

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=41523>.

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### **March 10, 2008**

Vatican lists "new sins," including pollution

Mon Mar 10, 2008 8:59am EDT

By Philip Pullella

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) - Thou shall not pollute the Earth. Thou shall beware genetic manipulation. Modern times bring with them modern sins. So the Vatican has told the faithful that they should be aware of "new" sins such as causing environmental blight.

The guidance came at the weekend when Archbishop Gianfranco Girotti, the Vatican's number two man in the sometimes murky area of sins and penance, spoke of modern evils.

Asked what he believed were today's "new sins," he told the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano that the greatest danger zone for the modern soul was the largely uncharted world of bioethics.

"(Within bioethics) there are areas where we absolutely must denounce some violations of the fundamental rights of human nature through experiments and genetic manipulation whose outcome is difficult to predict and control," he said.

The Vatican opposes stem cell research that involves destruction of embryos and has warned against the prospect of human cloning.

Girotti, in an interview headlined "New Forms of Social Sin," also listed "ecological" offences as modern evils.

In recent months, Pope Benedict has made several strong appeals for the protection of the environment, saying issues such as climate change had become gravely important for the entire human race.

Under Benedict and his predecessor John Paul, the Vatican has become progressively "green".

It has installed photovoltaic cells on buildings to produce electricity and hosted a scientific conference to discuss the ramifications of global warming and climate change, widely blamed on human use of fossil fuels.

Girotti, who is number two in the Vatican "Apostolic Penitentiary," which deals with matter of conscience, also listed drug trafficking and social and economic injustices as modern sins.

But Girotti also bemoaned that fewer and fewer Catholics go to confession at all.

He pointed to a study by Milan's Catholic University that showed that up to 60 percent of Catholic faithful in Italy stopped going to confession.

In the sacrament of Penance, Catholics confess their sins to a priest who absolves them in God's name.

But the same study by the Catholic University showed that 30 percent of Italian Catholics believed that there was no need for a priest to be God's intermediary and 20 percent felt uncomfortable talking about their sins to another person.

(Editing by Keith Weir)

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### **March 13 2008**

From the March 13, 2008 edition - <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0313/p13s02-lire.html>  
Michael Heller: a thinker who bridges science and theology

The priest and philosopher from Poland wins the 2008 Templeton Prize for advancing a complex dialogue.

By Moises Velasquez-Manoff | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

New York

Polish theologian, cosmologist, and philosopher Michael Heller, who lived through both Nazi and communist rule and has long sought to reconcile science and religion, has won the 2008 Templeton Prize.

The £820,000 prize (more than \$1.6 million) is awarded "for progress toward research or discoveries about spiritual realities." The John Templeton Foundation, whose stated mission is "to serve as a philanthropic catalyst for discovery in areas engaging life's biggest questions," awards the prize yearly.

Author of 30 books in Polish and five in English, Mr. Heller, an ordained Roman Catholic priest and a professor of philosophy at the Pontifical Academy in Krakow, Poland, has made the fostering of dialogue between science and religion a priority.

"He's one of the key contributors in the international scholarly community dedicated to the creative dialogue on science, theology, and philosophy," says Robert John Russell, founder and

director of the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences in Berkeley, Calif. "He's a great example of someone who bridges these fields."

For Heller, these seemingly distinct realms of human understanding actually depend on one another for stability.

"Science gives us knowledge, but religion gives us meaning," he says. "Science without religion is not meaningless, but lame.... And religion without science [slides] into fundamentalism," he says.

Heller draws on deep understanding of cosmology, religion, and philosophy to tackle questions such as, "Does the universe need to have a cause?" and "Why is there something rather than nothing?"

Those familiar with Heller's work laud his rigor of thought.

"In an era when serious scientists and serious religionists declare themselves at war with each other and claims of connections are often by superficial thinkers, Michael Heller is the exception," says Philip Clayton, professor of philosophy and religion at Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, Calif. "Rigorous thinkers seem to have fled the no man's land between the two warring factions."

Heller was born in 1936 in Tarnow, Poland, one of five children. His mother was a teacher, his father a mechanical and electrical engineer. When the Germans invaded in 1939, Heller's father sabotaged the chemical factory where he worked to keep it out of Nazi hands. The family then fled east into what is now Ukraine.

In 1940, Joseph Stalin ordered 1 million Poles, including Heller's family, to Siberia to log the forests. The hardships of exile made a lasting impression.

"[Heller] knew that many people survived the extreme Siberian situation because they found in prayer both their spiritual force and their will to survive," writes Joseph Zycinski, archbishop of Lublin, Poland, in the foreword to Heller's 2003 book, "Creative Tension: Essays on Science and Religion." "His main dream after coming back to Poland was to become a priest and to help people in finding solutions to the most basic problems of life."

Heller has a different take. On his return to Poland, "I was too ambitious," he says, smiling. "I wanted to do what was the most important thing to be done."

In his estimation, that was science and religion. In 1959, at a time when religion was officially discouraged under communism, Heller was ordained a priest. In 1966, he received his PhD in philosophy from the Catholic University of Lublin. And beginning in 1969, Karol Wojtyla, the archbishop of Krakow who later became Pope John Paul II, began inviting scientists, philosophers, and theologians – Heller included – to his residence to discuss how the disciplines interrelated. The group became known as the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies.

Heller also studied Marxist philosophy, primarily so he could rebut it. His time in Siberia had given him an all-too-close view of the reality behind the slogans. "Many young Poles were seduced by Marxism," he says. "But from the very beginning, I had no illusions."

Navigating these worlds sharpened Heller, says Professor Clayton.

"Michael had to work with the complexities of two very difficult systems – the communist system and the complexities of Vatican politics," he says. "Instead of being tempted to sell his soul, he used that complexity as a drive, as impetus to do more careful and more subtle work at the level of the science-religion dialogue where enduring connections could be discovered."

Heller plans to use his winnings to help launch the Copernicus Center in Krakow. It will offer an education in science and theology as an academic discipline.

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

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## March 14, 2008

MARKETPLACE RADIO 12-3-08

[http://marketplace.publicradio.org/display/web/2008/03/12/meaw\\_pm3\\_sustainable\\_islam/#](http://marketplace.publicradio.org/display/web/2008/03/12/meaw_pm3_sustainable_islam/#)

Can Islam shape sustainable business?

Islam frowns on wasting natural resources. It's a nod to tribal days when survival depended on it. Today some Middle Eastern businesses are reaching back to those green Islamic roots to get an edge on the global competition. Sam Eaton reports.

More on International, Middle East

### TEXT OF STORY

**KAI RYSSDAL:** Long before oil transformed the economy in the Middle East, and big business transformed Dubai, Muslim traditions defined almost every aspect of life here, and not just religious customs. Islam frowns on wasting natural resources. It's a nod to tribal days when survival depended on it. Today some Middle Eastern businesses are reaching back to those green Islamic roots to get an edge on the global competition. From the Marketplace Sustainability Desk, Sam Eaton reports.

**SAM EATON:** This is the sound of modern Dubai, family outings at the plush Mall of the Emirates. A jumble of well-known calling cards: Gucci, Versace, Starbucks, a Virgin Megastore. It could be anywhere really, but keep listening. That's the evening call to prayer echoing through six and a half million square feet of retail space. Several decades ago, Dubai was nothing but a sun-baked fishing village. Now it's one of the fastest growing economies in the world, with an annual growth rate of nearly 17 percent. Dubai business leader Mishal Kanoo.

MISHAL KANOO: With the flow of wealth into this region, it's like taking a teenage boy. It's introducing him to the concept of girls. When he first gets into it his hormones are driving him nuts. Kanoo says those financial hormones and this unbridled consumption violate key Islamic principles like the careful balance between man and nature and the sustainable use of land, forests and water.

KANOO: If you applied the teachings of the Qur'an it would fail, because we have failed to fulfill what is required of us, for example, the concept of throwing away plastic that doesn't degrade for 100 years. Wastage is not acceptable. Tough words for a place that produces more waste per capita than any other nation on the planet, more than five times the global average. Many Middle Eastern businesses are trying to shake that wasteful image as they contemplate a post-oil future. Dubai is expected to run out of oil in the next few decades. Abu Dhabi, its prosperous neighbor down the coast, has at least another 100 years of reserves, but that's not stopping Abu Dhabi from investing \$22 billion dollars in green housing, businesses and transportation. Its goal is to build an Emirate as green as Dubai is flashy. Abu Dhabi recently hosted the world's largest renewable energy summit in its sprawling exposition center. All ideas were welcome. Consider the ancient palm date. Dubai entrepreneur Brahim Zitouni hopes to use the region's two million ton surplus of this popular Middle Eastern snack to make everything from biofuels to eco-building products.

BRAHIM ZITOUNI: So from the dates, from the beginning we have used all its components and we do not waste anything. Entrepreneurs like Zitouni show that not only is the Arab world adapting to the modern economy, it's defining it on its own terms. Mariam Al Foudery, with Kuwaiti logistics giant Agility, says that's where Middle Eastern companies stand to gain.

AL FOUDEY: Think about it. This is one of the hottest inhabited regions in the world and yet people lived here not only in days before electricity, but in days when people were dirt poor, I mean literally had nothing. Al Foudery says Middle Eastern development has so far mimicked the West's wasteful and environmentally damaging practices, but unlike the West, sustainable lifestyles here are only a generation removed.

FOUDERY: There's still memory, individual memory of what it was like in the time before oil. There's still that link to a not-so-distant past. And not so far away, really. Bedouin camel farmers still live among the sand dunes east of Dubai City where they keep ancient traditions alive. Mohammed Al Shamsi is one of them. He says the modern economy has brought generators, Toyota Land Cruisers, a house in the city, but his heart is here among his camels and his favorite hunting falcon.

MOHAMMED AL SHAMSI: Shh, shh, shh, shh, shh, shh, shh.

EATON: Why do you still have a falcon?

AL SHAMSI: It's my traditional. I like it. This is still with me the falcons. Excuse me. A four-wheeler sprays us with sand as it tears past. This favorite tourist activity called "dune bashing" carves miles of tracks in the orange sand. It's an uncomfortably close brush between the ancient

Middle East and the modern West, and one that hints of the deep challenges still ahead as the Arab world makes its way in the global economy. In Dubai, I'm Sam Eaton for Marketplace.

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**March 18, 2008**

<http://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/local/state/hc-14165409.apds.m0146.bc-ct--liebmar14,0,2792682.story>

Lieberman: Religious activism helps global warming legislation  
Associated Press

March 14, 2008

FAIRFIELD, Conn. -- Religious activism is helping to generate support for legislation aimed at dealing with global warming, U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman told college students Friday.

Evangelical Christians, traditionally associated with conservative issues, are supporting efforts to deal with global warming, Lieberman said during an appearance at Fairfield University. He also noted that the Catholic Church this week listed pollution as one of the new areas of sinful behavior.

"I think something quite remarkable has happened in recent years," said Lieberman, I-Conn. "The religious community has really come on strongly. This is really helping us to broaden the coalition in Congress of those who are prepared to do something about global warming."

Lieberman noted that he has co-sponsored legislation with Sen. John Warner, R-Va., designed to deal with the issue.

The bill calls for the United States to cut carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions by 70 percent by 2050 from electric power plants, manufacturing and transportation. It would create a "cap-and-trade" system whereby companies would have pollution allowances that they could sell if they went below the emission limits, or buy if they found they could not meet the requirements.

The trading is aimed at reducing the economic impact of putting limits on carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels, the leading greenhouse gas.

Representatives from groups such as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Association of Evangelicals, National Council of Churches and the Union for Reform Judaism said in October that Congress should require a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

The church leaders called for helping low-income families deal with the impact of higher energy prices that result from new climate policies and making sure that vulnerable people are shielded from the environmental effects of global warming.

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### **March 19, 2008**

Message from Achim Steiner, UN Under-secretary General and UNEP Executive Director on the Occasion of World Water Day 2008  
Nature's Answers to the Sanitation Challenge

At a prison on the East coast of Africa, in-mates are pioneering a sanitation project that is working with nature to neutralize human wastes.

The initiative, involving the development of a wetland to purify sewage, is expected to cost a fraction of the price of high-tech treatments while also triggering scores of environmental, economic and social benefits.

Apart from wastewater management, the project is to assess using the wetland- filtered water for irrigation and fish farming giving prisoners a new source of protein or sold to local markets, alternative livelihoods.

Part of the so-called 'black wastewater' with high concentrations of human waste will also be used for the production of biogas.

The biogas can be used as a fuel for cooking, heating and lighting thereby cutting electricity bills, saving the prison service money and cutting emissions from the 4,000-strong jail, including staff and in-mates, to the atmosphere.

News of the project, financed by the government of Norway and the Global Environment Facility with support from a wide range of partners including Kenya's Coast Development Authority and National Environment Management Authority supported by the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and the University of Wageningen, the Free University of Amsterdam and the NGO 'Aqua-4-All' in the Netherlands, comes as the globe marks World Water Day 2008 in the UN International Year of Sanitation.

The day and the year are aimed at raising awareness and galvanizing action to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015. These include halving the proportion of people with no access to sanitation from the current 40 per cent of the global population or an estimated 2.6 billion people.

Sewage pollution, a great deal of which ends up in coastal waters, is estimated to cause four million lost 'man-years' annually in terms of human ill-health—equal to an economic loss of \$16 billion a year.

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In many developed countries, part of the answer over the past half century has been found in ever more sophisticated, multi-million dollar water treatment works.

But as the new project at the Shimo la Tewa jail in the Kenyan coastal city of Mombasa highlights there are other, less costly ways of addressing the same problem with important spin-offs.

The sewerage collection and wetland purification system, plus labour and construction costs and including upgrading of sanitary facilities inside the prison amount to some \$110,000 or \$25 per person served—something of a bargain.

These do not include benefits likely to accrue as a result of diminished economic costs to the wider environment - reductions of solids that can choke coral reefs and nutrients that can increase risk of de-oxygenated 'dead zones' alongside cuts in bacterial pollution that can contaminate shellfish and ruin someone's holiday in a locale where tourism income is important to the local economy.

Meanwhile the project is likely to have benefits for wildlife including birds and marine organisms.

Thus, in its own modest way, it can play a part in assisting to achieve the global target of reducing the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010.

The scheme is among a raft of projects being undertaken under the Addressing Land-Based activities in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO-LaB) initiative which forms part of the UNEP-brokered Nairobi Convention treaty—a regional seas agreement.

It is hoped the lessons learnt can be applied to other parts of the world so that the multiple challenges of sanitation and pollution can in part be viewed through a nature-based lens.

The project is among others also working with the coastal Ndlame communities in Port Alfred South Africa using ponds of natural algae to treat wastewaters including sewage.

The algae, a freshwater or marine organism, assist in de-toxifying the pollutants and is then harvested as a commercial fertilizer and protein-rich animal feed.

The total project cost here is around \$188,000 with economic benefits from utilizing treated wastewater and fertilizer production offsetting the price by \$50,000 a year.

Similar creative and nature-based projects are being pioneered on Pemba Island, Tanzania and in Dar es Salaam.

The sustainability challenges of the 21st century, including those that relate to water and sanitation, demand more intelligent and creative solutions than perhaps have been deployed in the past.

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Working with nature rather than against it is part of that intelligent decision-making that may prove a faster, more cost effective and more economically attractive way of achieving local and international health and poverty goals.

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**March 20, 2008**

## THE QUR'AN SHOWS THE WAY TO CONSERVATION

### IFEES Breaks New Ground

The world's first Islamic conservation guide has been launched by IFEES and the Directorate of Fisheries in Zanzibar. The pioneering instruction manual, written and published by IFEES, uses lessons from the Qur'an to show how vital fishing resources can be protected.

Launched on 29th February 2008 in Weshe on the island of Pemba, the manual is part of a project to protect the Misali conservation area, where fishing provides direct livelihood for 11,000 people. Like many traditional communities the island's growing population faces challenges like depleting resources and the threat of industrial development.

In its senior consultative role, IFEES developed an Islamic environmental education programme that works by bringing the fishing community together with local institutions, government officials and religious leaders in an effort to promote sustainable practices within the designated conservation zone. This has brought to a successful conclusion IFEES' historic initiatives in this phase of an ethics based conservation programme based on the ethical foundations of Islamic teachings.

Founder and director of IFEES, Fazlun Khalid said, "This is a really exciting project, and the first of its kind. At a time when the Shariah is being misunderstood in some parts of the world it is good to demonstrate how it can contribute to protecting the environment. I hope this will be the first of many projects that use Islamic methods to promote conservation."

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**March 20, 2008**

[www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/bal-md.clergy20mar20,0,4761155.story](http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/bal-md.clergy20mar20,0,4761155.story)

[baltimoresun.com](http://baltimoresun.com)

Lobbying to protect God's creation

Clergy at State House backing bill to reduce greenhouse gases

By Tom Pelton

Sun reporter

March 20, 2008

[Click here to find out more!](#)

The Rev. Lee Hudson is preaching at the State House this week, urging legislators to protect God's creation from global warming pollution.

Hudson is lobbying on behalf of 210 Lutheran congregations in Maryland as he tries to persuade the General Assembly to pass a bill to require a 25 percent cut in greenhouse gases statewide by 2020. Other religious leaders - including those of the Presbyterian Church in Central Maryland, the state's Episcopal Diocese, the Unitarian Church, and several ministers and rabbis acting individually - also have come out in support of the Global Warming Solutions Act.

"All of the things that we say in the Genesis story, that God made creation and it was good. ... We think the environment, including the climate, is part of that gift," said Hudson, pastor of the Messiah Lutheran Church in Baltimore's Canton neighborhood. "We will reach a tipping point where the building up of these gases will change the climate, and that's a threat to life and to that created good."

A key vote could come today on the bill, which is supported by environmental and public health groups but fiercely opposed by industries and some unions, which say it could drive jobs out of the state. The Maryland Senate cast a preliminary vote, 28-18, in favor of the legislation yesterday.

The activism of some clergy in the state's political fight over global warming legislation is part of a national trend toward more environmental action by religious organizations. Leaders of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the National Association of Evangelicals and the National Council of Churches, which represents about 100,000 Christian parishes across the country, sent a letter to U.S. Senate leaders in December encouraging action on global warming.

"Major faith groups across a broad denominational and ideological spectrum have reached a religious and moral consensus on the need for effective action to curb global climate change," said the letter to Sen. Barbara Boxer, a California Democrat and chairwoman of the Environment and Public Works Committee.

But it is not a unanimous view that the Bible endorses government regulation of carbon dioxide. Some religious people question whether more harm could come to the poor from pollution regulations, which could drive up the price of electricity, than from the flooding and crop damage associated with global warming.

The Southern Baptist Convention last year passed a resolution cautioning against government limits on greenhouse gases because the group believes the evidence is inconclusive as to whether industry is causing global warming.

"What we don't agree on is whether human emissions of carbon dioxide are a danger," said Barrett Duke, a vice president of an ethics commission at the Baptist organization, which has 44,000 churches with 16.3 million members nationally. "Most Baptists don't want the government to impose limits on CO2 emissions at this time." But this month, a splinter group of 44 Southern Baptist leaders signed a declaration criticizing the "timid" position of the church, saying it "may be seen by the world as uncaring, reckless and ill-informed."

In Maryland, pastors and rabbis have spoken out in legislative hearings and at rallies outside the State House to endorse the global warming bill. And they have used their pulpits and e-mail lists to urge their congregants to call lawmakers.

The legislation would require the state's environmental agency to issue a series of regulations to gradually reduce carbon dioxide emissions from all sectors of the economy by an average of 25 percent by 2020, with a nonbonding goal of a 90 percent reduction by 2050. Some of the cuts would come from pollution credit trading programs that would impose penalties on businesses that use high-pollution fuels such as coal and oil.

Julie Erickson, an ordained elder with the Presbyterian Church USA who lobbies for 74 parishes in the Baltimore region, this week chased down state Sen. Catherine Pugh, a Baltimore Democrat, as she strode out of the State House and asked for her support on the global warming bill. Pugh seemed noncommittal, but voted in favor of it the next day.

"We are the guardians of the garden of Eden, and we must tend to it tenderly and carefully," Erickson said.

Some opponents of greenhouse gas limits - such as the U.S. Steelworkers union - argue that there is another side to the moral argument. They say government regulations could raise the price of coal and oil, bankrupting steel factories, paper mills and brick manufacturers, hurting workers.

But Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb, leader of the Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda, finds implied moral authority for the Maryland bill in Exodus. "Religions urge us to take the long view. For example, in Exodus 20:34 we learn that God is concerned to the 1,000th generation. So we who are created in God's image should likewise be concerned about sustainability far down the line," Dobb said.

Mike Tidwell, an author and founder of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, said the recent call by some Southern Baptist leaders for action to reduce greenhouse gases shows that conservative religious people are now embracing the need to protect the climate. It's not just "liberal Unitarians and Lutherans," he said.

Tidwell said that more than 60 local church leaders in Virginia recently signed a letter asking that state's governor to oppose the construction of a coal-fired power plant in Southwest Virginia. "Even in the cradle of the confederacy in Virginia, the faith community not only is expressing concern about global warming, they are taking active and very public steps to addresses greenhouse gases," he said.

Tom.pelton@baltsun.com

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## April 1, 2008

March 30, 2008

Our Towns

Applying Gandhi's Ideas to Climate Change

By PETER APPLEBOME

GARRISON, N.Y.

At what was once a Capuchin monastery on the Hudson River, the Zen archers were out in force on Friday. They were members of a New York City group celebrating 10 years of study with a retreat at what's now the Garrison Institute, a New Agey organization that tries to meld contemplation and action.

The idea of the Zen archery is to combine intention and action, focus and carry-through. Physical action slows. The archer and the bow become one. The art becomes artless. The archer evolves through perseverance and discipline. Or so they say.

It's not much of a stretch to go from the visiting Zen archers to the institute's own initiative, an ambitious program next month to look at how the ideas of Mohandas K. Gandhi relate to current environmental issues, particularly climate change.

Central to Gandhi, after all, was the notion that the truth, power and moral force of a movement are inseparable from the truth, power and moral force of its actors.

Hence Gandhi nonviolently freeing India from the greatest empire of his time, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. overturning segregation in the South, Nelson Mandela ending apartheid — intention wedded to action, focus leading to carry-through, evolution resulting from perseverance and discipline. Like the Zen archers, it may seem way too abstruse and exotic for the short attention span of modern life, but then, maybe not.

The Garrison Institute, founded in 2003, sits across the river from an important site in American environmental history, Storm King Mountain, where more than 40 years ago an epic battle over land use helped redefine environmental activism and law.

So there's nothing unexpected in the current melding of Gandhi and climate change, tied to the Metropolitan Opera's first staging of Philip Glass's opera about Gandhi, "Satyagraha" ("The Power of Truth"), beginning April 11. After that is a private conference at the institute, followed

by a free public event on April 13 at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in Manhattan including scholars, environmental leaders and artists, among them Mr. Glass.

The guiding notion is that climate change today calls for the same kind of collective will, shared destiny, moral purpose, personal responsibility and strategic acumen as the other great movements, and that Gandhi's ideas and achievements are entirely germane to what needs to happen now.

"The environment and nonviolence is like a marriage made in heaven," Mr. Glass said. "If we treated the environment with nonviolence we wouldn't have the polar ice cap melting away."

Remarkably, almost a century ago, Gandhi's writings were full of thoughts on the environment.

"The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed."

"God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. ... If [our nation] took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts."

"This little globe of ours is not a toy of yesterday."

"We may utilize the gifts of Nature just as we choose, but in Her books, the debits are always equal to the credits."

To the reflexively jaundiced modern eye, Gandhi evokes a presence seemingly ancient and somewhat naïve, but naïve is the last word you could apply to Gandhi, who wedded moral insights to a shrewd tactical sense of politics and public opinion.

"He had an ability to find a very simple symbol that could mobilize a great number of people; think of his Salt March," said Gandhi's grandson and biographer, Rajmohan Gandhi, referring to the 1930 protest against the British tax on salt that helped galvanize India against British rule. "You might say he was an advertising genius."

Al Gore cited both Gandhi and Abraham Lincoln in a speech on climate change in 2007. He noted Gandhi's sense of satyagraha and a statement of Lincoln's during the depths of the Civil War: "We must disenthral ourselves, and then we shall save our country."

But disenthraling ourselves, seeing the world and its perils afresh, may be even harder now than it has ever been — too many diversions, too murky and vaporous a peril, too little sense of urgency, an enemy that is more us than them.

And if there's an advertising genius who has found the simple symbol to make people individually and collectively change behavior, he hasn't stepped forward.

From Storm King to Woodstock to the institutes and ashrams that dot the landscape today, the Hudson Valley has played a remarkable and barely understood role in the evolution of the nation's environmental and personal consciousness over the past half-century.

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But skeptics might say it's produced more individual evolution than a transformed culture.

No mere conference is likely to change that, but maybe the Gandhi-philes will find some clues. Without them, we're left, it seems, with the few Zen archers able to magically hit their targets, while the vast majority of us neither know nor much care what ours are.

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## **April 1, 2008**

Make climate change legislation a priority, Presiding Bishop urges Senate  
By Matthew Davies March 31, 2008 [Episcopal News Service] Urgent action is needed by the United States in response to global warming, Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori said in a March 31 letter to the U.S. Senate, urging Congress' upper house "to take up climate change legislation at the earliest possible moment."

Speaking "as one who has been formed both through a deep faith and as a scientist," Jefferts Schori said she believes "science has shown us unequivocally that climate change and global warming are real, and caused in significant part by human activities.  
"Climate change is a threat not only to God's good creation but to all of humanity."

The full text of Jefferts Schori's letter to the U.S. Senate is available [here](#).

The Presiding Bishop said she was encouraged by bi-partisan legislation, introduced by senators Joseph Lieberman and John Warner, that "successfully moved through the committee process with many improvements and now awaits Senate debate."

Acknowledging support for Senate bill 2191, America's Climate Security Act, which she called "a strong step forward in achieving carbon emission reductions," Jefferts Schori said the legislation "includes measures aimed at addressing the needs of the world's most vulnerable: those, who for demographic reasons such as health or location are most susceptible to the effects of climate change, and those living in poverty at home and around the world.

"Our nation, historically the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter, has a responsibility to lead the way in addressing the impact of climate change."

The 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church passed legislation (B002) affirming that "global warming threatens the future of God's good creation, and the effects of global warming disproportionately hurt the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable in the United States and around the world."

Jefferts Schori said in her March 31 letter that "climate change exacerbates extreme world poverty and poverty is hastening global warming," and emphasized that "most people living in poverty around the world lack access to a reliable energy source, forcing many to choose energy



sources such as oil, coal, or wood, which threaten to expand significantly the world's greenhouse emissions and thus accelerate the effects of climate change. That need for resources to purchase energy must be addressed in any attempt to lift a community out of poverty."

The Presiding Bishop wrote the Senate that this cycle -- "poverty that begets climate change and vice versa -- threatens the future of all people, rich and poor alike. The poverty cycle driven by climate change will only add to political instability, social violence, and war. Our own domestic tranquility and security are intimately tied to the wellbeing of the poor both here and abroad."

She expressed her gratitude for the attention given to climate change by the U.S. Congress, but challenged the Senate "to support measures to further strengthen S. 2191 during floor consideration.

"I want to be absolutely clear that for those living in poverty, inaction on our part now will ultimately be the most costly of all courses of action."

In June 2007, the Presiding Bishop addressed the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee during a hearing titled "An Examination of the Views of Religious Organizations Regarding Global Warming." At the time, she described global warming as "one of the great human and spiritual challenges of our time."

In her March 31 letter, Jefferts Schori said that "many in the faith community have long been aware of the ways in which our lack of concern for the rest of creation results in death and destruction for our neighbors. We cannot love our neighbors unless we care for the creation that supports all our earthly lives."

On behalf of the Episcopal Church, Jefferts Schori urged the Senate to pass the strongest climate change legislation possible. "The acknowledgment of global warming and the Church's commitment to ameliorating it are a part of the ongoing discovery of God's revelation to humanity and the call to a fuller understanding of the scriptural imperative to love our neighbor as ourselves," she said.

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Climate legislation could be taken up as early as this April but is most likely to occur this summer, according to John Johnson in the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations in Washington, D.C. Episcopalians who want to know more about global warming can visit [www.episcopalchurch.org/climate](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/climate).

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**April 2, 2008**

ORONTO STAR

A tactical and moral mistake

(Embedded image moved to file: pic36718.jpg)

TORONTO STAR GRAPHIC

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Penalizing poor, high-growth countries looks more like trade protectionism than good environmental policy. The average citizen in the developed world does far more harm to the environment

April 02, 2008  
Michael Spence

Should a carbon tariff be imposed on products from developing countries like China and India? That prospect was raised in a recent report by two CIBC analysts who noted that wealthy nations, just beginning to tax their own carbon emissions, are becoming less tolerant of growing – and untaxed – emissions in the developing world.

The report followed a common pattern of portraying China as a recalcitrant participant in global warming talks and a large, energy inefficient, polluting, high-growth country that if not reined in will make the problem insoluble. With India not far behind.

This sabre-rattling in the form of a carbon tariff is an escalation in the international process of trying to get China, India and other large developing countries to make commitments to 50-year CO2 emission-reduction targets.

Collectively, we are in the process of making a large tactical and moral mistake with respect to the developing countries, one that will make it difficult to succeed in establishing a global CO2 reduction program that is both efficient and fair.

The accompanying graph shows data on per capita carbon emissions. It also shows the safe level – 2.3 tonnes per person – based on a scientific judgment that a reasonably safe level for global emissions is 14.5 billion tonnes a year. The global population is about 6.4 billion.

The world is now emitting CO2 at a rate of about 4.5 tonnes per person, double the safe level. All the developed countries are above the current global average, with the United States, Canada and Australia at about nine times the safe level and 4.5 times the current global average. European countries and Japan are in the mid-range at about three to four times the safe level. China is just above the global average. All other developing countries are well below it and also at or below the safe long-term level.

Given these data, if an objective outsider took a look and was deciding where to get started imposing a carbon tax of some kind, his/her first thought probably would not be India, with per capita emissions just over one-twentieth of U.S. and Canadian levels.

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Developing countries understandably feel embattled. They know that even though the advanced countries produced most of the current stock of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, they have to be part of the mitigation effort. Without their participation, their growth (China and India have economic growth rates of 9 per cent to 10 per cent per year), and the rising energy consumption that goes with it will simply overwhelm the system.

Yet most of them are still poor countries and their citizens have hopes for continued growth and a better future for their children and grandchildren.

China's per capita annual income is about \$2,500, and India's is \$850, not much more than \$2 a day. There is significant poverty still in India, and it will take several decades of sustained high growth to eliminate it. The per capita income in the U.S. is about \$42,000. Canada's is similar at current exchange rates.

The costs of mitigation at this point are highly uncertain in three dimensions:

The current costs of mitigation for various sources of CO<sub>2</sub>.

How to distribute mitigation across sources and countries so as to achieve mitigation goals at the least cost.

How fast costs will decline in response to new technology in the areas of energy efficiency and CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction.

Given these uncertainties, developing countries view making 50-year commitments to mitigation targets as taking huge risks with their growth and the future well-being of their citizens.

Imposing a carbon tax on their exports, an important driver of their growth, will not pass any common sense test of efficiency or fairness. The challenge is to find a path forward that accommodates developing countries' growth while meeting the challenge of moving global carbon emissions toward the safe level by mid-century.

What then are the ingredients of a global approach that moves us toward a solution that is reasonably efficient and fair and that might form the basis of a 10- to 15-year plan for going forward? There are several needed components.

Everyone should stop trying to set 50-year mitigation targets. We have very little idea of what an efficient pattern of mitigation across countries will look like and hence do not have the information to carry out this exercise.

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Instead, advanced countries need to set aggressive short-term mitigation targets and work to meet them. Developing countries need to co-operate in having some of the resultant mitigation done in their own countries when it is efficient to do so. These cross-border mitigation efforts will be undertaken and largely paid for by advanced countries in the short run. The motivation will be to find the lowest cost opportunities for meeting mitigation targets.

Substantial incentives are needed for the development of technology that reduces the costs of mitigation in the future. This is crucial and in some ways more important than anything else.

Without such technology, there is no solution to the climate change problem that does not also substantially slow global growth for all countries, including the developing ones.

The technology that is developed needs to be disbursed quickly around the world. Taking on the burden of this technology development is the right way for advanced countries to compensate for their past disproportionate contribution to the current stock of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, the result of higher incomes, energy consumption and emissions in the past.

Developing countries should develop growth strategies based on energy efficiency and remove the current widespread pattern of subsidizing energy. Poor countries need help in the form of cost-sharing by advanced countries for mitigation undertaken in those countries. That cost sharing will decline as their incomes rise toward advanced country levels. To be fair, any global mitigation system will need to be able to accommodate this type of burden-sharing for the poorer countries.

Finally, all countries need to co-operate in creating a global monitoring system as it will be required to support any global mitigation program that is put in place over the next decade.

Global warming is the most complex challenge of the current era. It involves great uncertainty, the need for learning and technological change. It requires a sustained, multi-decade effort that is responsive to both the uncertainty and the learning, and that meets the criteria of efficiency and fairness. And it is global. Every country needs to participate.

Penalizing relatively poor but high-growth countries in the form of a carbon tariff because they have large populations (and hence growing energy consumption and emissions) has the appearance of trade protection rather than a reasonable and fair approach to tackling climate change. It is not a useful starting point.

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Michael Spence is chair of the Commission on Growth and Development and a 2001 Nobel laureate in economics.

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## April 7, 2008

### Climate Change Will Erode Foundations Of Health, World Health Organization Warns

Climate change threatens fundamental of health such as access to clean drinking water. (Credit: iStockphoto/Claudia Dewald)

ScienceDaily (Apr. 8, 2008) — Scientists tell us that the evidence the Earth is warming is "unequivocal." Increases in global average air and sea temperature, ice melting and rising global sea levels all help us understand and prepare for the coming challenges. In addition to these observed changes, climate-sensitive impacts on human health are occurring today. They are attacking the pillars of public health. And they are providing a glimpse of the challenges public health will have to confront on a large scale, WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan warned on World Health Day.

"The core concern is succinctly stated: climate change endangers human health," said Dr Chan. "The warming of the planet will be gradual, but the effects of extreme weather events -- more storms, floods, droughts and heat waves -- will be abrupt and acutely felt. Both trends can affect some of the most fundamental determinants of health: air, water, food, shelter and freedom from disease."

Human beings are already exposed to the effects of climate-sensitive diseases and these diseases today kill millions. They include malnutrition, which causes over 3.5 million deaths per year, diarrhoeal diseases, which kill over 1.8 million, and malaria, which kills almost 1 million.

Examples already provide us with images of the future:

European heat wave, 2003: Estimates suggest that approximately 70 000 more people died in that summer than would have been expected.

Rift Valley fever in Africa: Major outbreaks are usually associated with rains, which are expected to become more frequent as the climate changes.

Hurricane Katrina, 2005: More than 1 800 people died and thousands more were displaced. Additionally, health facilities throughout the region were destroyed critically affecting health infrastructure.

Malaria in the East African highlands: In the last 30 years, warmer temperatures have also created more favourable conditions for mosquito populations in the region and therefore for transmission of malaria.

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Epidemics of cholera in Bangladesh: They are closely linked to flooding and unsafe water.

These trends and events cannot be attributed solely to climate change but they are the types of challenges we expect to become more frequent and intense with climate changes. They will further strain health resources that, in many regions, are already under severe stress.

"Although climate change is a global phenomenon, its consequences will not be evenly distributed," said Dr Chan. "In short, climate change can affect problems that are already huge, largely concentrated in the developing world, and difficult to control."

To address the health effects of climate change, WHO is coordinating and supporting research and assessment on the most effective measures to protect health from climate change, particularly for vulnerable populations such as women and children in developing countries, and is advising Member States on the necessary adaptive changes to their health systems to protect their populations.

WHO and its partners -- including the UN Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the UN World Meteorological Organization -- are devising a workplan and research agenda to get better estimates of the scale and nature of health vulnerability and to identify strategies and tools for health protection. WHO recognizes the urgent need to support countries in devising ways to cope. Better systems for surveillance and forecasting, and stronger basic health services, can offer health protection. WHO will be working closely with its Member States in coming years to develop effective means of adapting to a changing climate and reducing its effects on human health.

Adapted from materials provided by World Health Organization.

Need to cite this story in your essay, paper, or report? Use one of the following formats:

APA

MLA

World Health Organization (2008, April 8). Climate Change Will Erode Foundations Of Health, World Health Organization Warns. ScienceDaily. Retrieved April 7, 2008, from [http://www.sciencedaily.com /releases/2008/04/080407094610.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/04/080407094610.htm)

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**April 10, 2008**

[newsday.com/news/local/longisland/ny-lipope0410,0,5581089.story](http://newsday.com/news/local/longisland/ny-lipope0410,0,5581089.story)

Newsday.com

Pope takes lead in effort to save the environment

BY BART JONES

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7:39 PM EDT, April 9, 2008

Last year, Pope Benedict XVI raised eyebrows when the Vatican announced it was installing 1,000 solar panels on the roof of a football field-sized building that is the main auditorium in Vatican City.

Then the pope led an eco-friendly Catholic youth rally in Loreto, Italy, where the faithful received backpacks made from recyclable material and crank-powered flashlights.

Last month, the Vatican added polluting the Earth to the church's list of sins, and the pope has issued a string of increasingly strong statements on global climate change. No wonder many have now declared him the first "green pope."

"I think the pope recognizes that for this and the next generation, it may very well be that global warming is the most important international moral issue that faces humankind," said the Rev. Thomas Reese, former editor of the Jesuit magazine "America."

The pope and other Church officials have said that good stewardship of the earth, as they see it, has theological underpinnings, and they often cite Genesis 2:15: "The Lord God took the man and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it."

Pope Benedict XVI is not the first pope to talk about the environment -- his predecessor, John Paul II, was an outdoorsman who also expressed alarm about global warming.

Nor is he the only religious or secular leader to focus on the issue. But experts say Pope Benedict XVI is taking on the issue from a pulpit no one in the world can match -- leader of the 1.1 billion member Catholic Church -- and with a seriousness that is outdoing even John Paul II.

"His vocal support particularly for climate solutions could really tip the balance in world action," said Melanie Griffin, national director of environmental partnerships for the Sierra Club. "He's really not mincing words. He's walking the walk."

Sierra Club and other environmental organizations have struck what not long ago would have been considered an unlikely alliance with the Catholic Church.

The pope's growing efforts to save not only souls but the planet, too, come as churches across Long Island are joining the "green" bandwagon. Last year the Long Island Interfaith Environmental Network held a workshop to encourage congregations to "go green" by installing solar power and increasing energy efficiency partly through LIPA energy audits.

Network co-chairman Keith Mainhart said the organization was hoping to attract 50 congregations, was expecting 30 -- and got 80. They included Catholic parishes, synagogues, a Muslim mosque and Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Two years ago St. Philip and James Catholic parish in St. James spent \$19,000 to install solar panels on top of its school (the cost was covered by a LIPA rebate program). The longest-running parish experiment in solar energy on Long Island is at Our Lady of Miraculous Medal in Wyandanch, where the Rev. Bill Brisotti helped install solar panels on the church roof more than 25 years ago amid the battle to shut down the Shoreham nuclear power plant.

At Molloy College, a planned \$28-million student center will be "green," emphasizing energy efficiency and appropriate building materials, said Edward Thompson Jr., the college's vice president for advancement.

Climate change "is an issue that's crying out to be addressed," said Thompson. "I think he's the right pope for a world that is confronted with moral issues regarding the environment."

Pope Benedict XVI appeared to get on the "green" bandwagon from the start of his papacy in April 2005. In his first homily, he declared that "the Earth's treasures no longer serve to build God's garden for all to live in, but they have been made to serve the powers of exploitation and destruction."

The pope presents climate change as a moral issue, warning that environmental neglect especially hurts the poor and vulnerable. Besides Genesis, Benedict and others in the church pushing for environmentalism have pointed to St. Francis of Assisi, who lived a simple life respectful of the planet.

"The Catholic Church and Benedict have never been called trendy, but their concern for the environment is an extension of what we believe about creation and what we believe about the creator," said John Carr, executive director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops office of justice, peace and human development.

The church and environmental movements were not allies previously, mainly because environmentalists often cast the issue as a matter of population control -- something that went against Catholic Church teachings on birth control and abortion.

But they have found common ground in protecting the earth. "The Catholic Church is not the Sierra Club at prayer, but we do share a commitment to the earth that is based on a commitment to creation," Carr said.

On Long Island, environmentalists say they hope the pope's advocacy will help push the issue to the forefront of public debate. "I'm very excited about the pope getting on the bandwagon," Mainhart said. "It seems to be a cause that reaches across all faiths."

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**April 14, 2008**

May the truth force be with you  
Gandhi, King, and climate change



Posted by Guest author (Guest Contributor) at 9:42 AM on 11 Apr 2008

Read more about: [greenhouse-gas emissions](#) | [climate](#) | [grassroots activism](#) | [politics](#) | [environmental movement](#)

This is a guest post from Jonathan F. P. Rose, co-founder of the Garrison Institute, presenting a public forum on "Satyagraha: Gandhi's Truth Force in the Age of Climate Change" April 13 at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine in New York City.

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Gandhi  
Mahatma Gandhi

In recent days, we commemorated the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., who died 40 years ago this month. And some have also recalled that King was influenced by Gandhi, learning from Gandhi's Satyagraha or "truth force" movement the nonviolent tactics that ultimately made the civil rights movement a success.

Philip Glass's opera "Satyagraha," which thematizes this, is being revived now at the New York Metropolitan Opera. Now is a good time to remember Gandhi and King, not just in celebration of what they achieved, but because we need them again today. We need them not only to inspire social change in the today's world, but also to inspire a movement to save it from global warming.

Scientists tell us clearly that we must drastically cut greenhouse gas emissions, just at the moment when fossil fuel demand is at record highs and accelerating. India and China's economies and the world's population are exploding to levels the planet has never borne before.

The need to reduce our impacts is actually a tremendous opportunity to build a green economy, green jobs, and green infrastructure. But first it will require us -- the developed world, emerging economies, oil and coal interests -- to change the way we think. As Einstein said, "You cannot solve a problem at the same level of consciousness that created it." So the first task in tackling global climate change is to change our own consciousness.

Gandhi and King understood this. In fact, they eerily anticipated our predicament and speak to us across the decades about it. They both quite clearly foresaw a time when technological development divorced from development of consciousness would threaten the survival of the planet.

In his last sermon before his death, King said, "Through our scientific and technological genius, we have made of this world a neighborhood and yet we have not had the ethical commitment to make of it a brotherhood ... We must all learn to live together as brothers or we will all perish together as fools." Almost a century ago, Gandhi said, "God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West ... If [our nation] took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts."

They also told and showed us what to do about it. Satyagraha or "truth force" for Gandhi meant doing the internal work of embracing the truth of nonviolence. It meant recognizing the shared humanity and ultimate non-separation between people, even those on opposite sides of a burning question. The power of this truth gave Gandhi and King the strength to lead, to convert opponents to admirers and even collaborators. King expressed it in Biblical terms as agape, the power of love, and said in the same sermon: "We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality."

Such ideas have a strong ecological ring today. In fact, Al Gore had Gandhi's "truth force" in mind when he coined "Inconvenient Truth." He said this in a 2007 speech:

Global warming is, first and foremost, a challenge to the moral imagination ... Gandhi used the word satyagraha, or "truth force." In American politics, there have been soaring moments throughout our history when the truth has swept aside entrenched power. In the darkest hours of our Civil War, Abraham Lincoln said, "We must disenthral ourselves, and then we shall save our country." We need once again to disenthral ourselves.

Like other struggles for freedom, disenthraling ourselves from the patterns causing climate change and embracing the truth is just as much an inner journey as an outer movement. As Gandhi said, we must be the change we wish to see in the world. Changing entrenched power in favor of truth begins within, challenging our own moral imagination, changing our own thinking. If we can learn, for example, to recognize that we really are part the same inescapable network of mutuality as the coal miner, the factory worker in China, the farmer in India, a global climate movement will turn opponents to admirers and even collaborators.

Such inner work is within the scope of any committed person, and it is the key to changing the world. Anyone who questions what they can really do to affect global climate change themselves should remember Gandhi and King and their followers confidently transformed the British empire and Jim Crow, not with outward force, but with a personal relationship to the truth, not by constraining and defeating opponents, but by inspiring them. We can do it, too.

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**April 15, 2008**

Benedict may discuss warming, cost of wars  
Stances have differed from those of Bush  
By Farah Stockman, Globe Staff | April 15, 2008

WASHINGTON - As he begins his historic visit to the White House and the United Nations this week, Pope Benedict XVI is widely expected to call attention to two areas in which he has been at odds with the Bush administration: The need for urgent action on global warming and the humanitarian cost of unjust wars, according to Catholic leaders and people familiar with Benedict's papacy.

Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Vatican's permanent observer to the United Nations, said in response to a Globe inquiry that in his UN speech on Friday, Benedict "won't necessarily touch upon specific crises in the world: unfortunately, they are too many to be dealt with in a few minutes. However he will insist on the moral imperative that all, without exception, have a grave responsibility to protect the environment."

He did not say whether Iraq would be mentioned.

Despite their disagreements, President Bush has gone out of his way to welcome Benedict, with plans to greet him in person when he arrives at Andrews Air Force Base this afternoon, and then to have a private discussion in the Oval Office for 45 minutes tomorrow morning. It will be only the second visit by a pope to the White House, after Pope John Paul II met with President Carter in 1979.

Bush is also hosting a special dinner in the pontiff's honor tomorrow night, which is coincidentally Benedict's 81st birthday. But organizers yesterday confirmed that the pope will not attend the dinner with other Catholic leaders, and will instead return to the papal nunciature, where he is staying. Sister Mary Ann Walsh, spokeswoman for the Conference of Catholic Bishops, which is assisting with the pope's visit, said he customarily does not attend such social dinners.

Greg Tobin, a specialist on papal history at Seton Hall University, said he believes the president and the pope maintain a positive relationship based on their common Christianity, but that they do not enjoy the same kind of partnership seen between past presidents and popes.

"I think Bush really wants to have a good relationship with the pope," Tobin said. "I think that President Bush does take the Holy Father's positions very seriously, but I don't think that the pope will have as clear an effect on this administration as previous popes did when they were more in sync with the American government."

During World War II, Pope Pius XII kept a spirited correspondence with President Franklin D. Roosevelt that included a papal plea to avoid civilian deaths during Allied bombings. Later, during the Cold War, Pope John Paul II strongly supported President Ronald Reagan's struggle against the communism in his native Poland and the former Soviet Union.

But in 2003, the Vatican opposed the war in Iraq, saying it did not meet the test of a "just war." Weeks before the invasion, John Paul II sent Cardinal Pio Laghi, a longtime friend of Bush's father, to try to dissuade Bush from toppling Saddam Hussein.

Last summer, when Benedict and Bush met for the first time at the Vatican, the pope told Bush he was concerned about the violence in Iraq, and the plight of Christians living there.

In his televised Easter address last year, Benedict said that "nothing positive comes from Iraq, torn apart by continual slaughter."

And this past February, Benedict told the new US ambassador to the Holy See, Mary Ann Glendon, that human progress "is threatened not only by the plague of international terrorism, but also by such threats to peace as the quickening pace of the arms race and the continuance of tensions in the Middle East. "

Church officials and others familiar with Benedict's papacy say they expect the pope to address the subject of humanitarian suffering in Iraq again with Bush during his US visit. They also said that Benedict's recent statements on global warming and the environment lead them to believe that he will highlight the issue during his US visit.

"He looks at the environment as a moral issue, where we look at it as a partisan political issue," said Ray Flynn, former Boston mayor and former US ambassador to the Vatican, who knew Benedict before he became Pope and met with him recently in Rome. "He believes the environment was given to us by God and it belongs to everybody, that people in political office have a responsibility as caretakers in that office, they cannot vote it away."

Global warming is another area where US foreign policy and the Vatican have diverged. Throughout most of his administration, Bush has resisted UN efforts to mandate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, although he has recently softened his stance.

But Benedict's belief in environmental stewardship as a religious duty was shared with his predecessor, Flynn said, recalling a passionate conversation on the topic that he witnessed between John Paul II and Vice President Al Gore, who gave the pope a copy of his book on the subject.

Since Benedict became pope in 2005, the Vatican has hosted a scientific conference on climate change, agreed to participate in a program that will plant a forest to offset its own carbon footprint, and fitted buildings in Vatican City with solar panels. Last month, the Vatican issued a statement including pollution among the list of modern sins.

In a New Year's message in January, Benedict warned that time is short to solve the environmental problems facing the globe said that "international agencies may need to be established in order to confront together the stewardship of this home of ours."

The Rev. Thomas J. Reese, a senior fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University, said Benedict has sought to make a case that world leaders should take stronger action to reduce greenhouse gases.

"He has been convinced by scientists that global warming is a reality," said Reese. "He may become the spiritual leader of the environmental movement."

Walter Grazer, the former director of the Environmental Justice Program at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, who now works with an interfaith environmental advocacy effort, said he was surprised by how much attention Benedict has given the issue.

Even if Benedict does not manage to persuade US policy makers that protecting the environment is their religious duty, Grazer said, the pope's beliefs are bound to have an impact on voters, who might begin to see the issue in a new light.

"His words are going to be paid attention to, and will be a focus for people to take this issue seriously in Catholic circles and I would hope broader than the Catholic community," said Grazer.

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**April 15, 2008**

The Globe and Mail (Canada)

April 15, 2008 Tuesday

SECTION: COMMENT; BENEDICT GOES TO WASHINGTON; Pg. A17

HEADLINE: Quiet crusader: The UN's the real test;  
He may go down in history as the Green Pope, and a wise one

BYLINE: MICHAEL HIGGINS, Vatican affairs specialist

BODY:

Pope Benedict XVI's first visit to the United States as Roman pontiff – he is scheduled to be in Washington and New York City this week – is officially billed as an "apostolic journey" and is replete with liturgical celebrations and "private time" with seminarians, deacons, priests, members of religious orders, as well as the now formulaic structured encounters with youth, the general mass of Catholics, and ecumenical and interfaith moments.

These are the kinds of things that enjoy regular status on a papal itinerary abroad. John Paul II established the template, and Pope Benedict appears content to run with the show, even if slightly truncated to accommodate for age (he will turn 81 during the trip) and personal predilection (he prefers the solitude of the library and the private pleasure of playing Mozart to a stadium-turned-sanctuary).

Clearly the highlights, from the perspective of the media and the public at large, will be found less in the demonstrations of devotion at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York and more in the visit with President George Bush at the White House, in his address to the presidents of Catholic universities and diocesan heads of education at the Catholic University of America in Washington, and in his speech to the United Nations.

Although the learning, polished culture and linguistic facility of the Pope stand in stunning contrast to the unimpressive intellectual credentials and folksy manners of the President, there are some clear commonalities of conviction and attitude: They both fear the morally fraught, pioneer territory of bioengineering, the anti-religious bias of prominent opinion-makers, and the

moral relativism and pragmatic atheism that allow little or no place for God in the affairs of humanity.

What is often missed, however, is the larger number of areas of disagreement that exist between the Pope and the President: Benedict remains opposed to continuing slaughter in Iraq (he condemned, as a cardinal and the Vatican's chief invigilator of doctrinal orthodoxy, the invasion of Iraq from the outset), remains strongly critical of the economic system that sustains U.S. prosperity at the cost of global justice, deplors the ravages of a consumption-driven society, and is increasingly vocal about global warming and the myriad threats to the environment that have yet to elicit bold and progressive leadership from the world's most powerful and wealthy nation.

In fact, as Thomas Reese, Jesuit Vaticanologist and sometime editor of New York's biweekly *America*, has rightly noted: "While Washington talks about alternative energy sources, [Benedict] has put solar panels on Vatican roofs and made it the first carbon neutral state. Benedict may go down in history as the green pope just as John Paul went down in history as the conqueror of communism."

Benedict's private conversation with Mr. Bush is not likely to lead to the latter's conversion to Catholicism, although the relationship of the Bush family with the Roman Catholic Church is not distant (Mr. Bush's father is a long-time friend of the now disgraced former archbishop of Boston, Bernard Law; Mr. Bush's brother Jeb, the former governor of Florida, is, in public perception if not in fact, a practising Roman Catholic).

The real test of Benedict's political savvy and moral leadership will not occur in the Rose Garden but in the UN, where, in the tradition of predecessors Paul VI and John Paul II, he will address issues of grander import than can be unearthed in the banal and courteous exchanges between two heads of state in a social encounter of rigidly fixed time.

And, yes, despite Benedict's pastoral visit as Bishop of Rome, he is also head of a sovereign state and an active if largely remote player in the international assemblies of power through his nuncios, special representatives and delegates. You can be sure there will be some in the United States who will view this visit with displeasure if not trepidation. America prides itself on separation of church and state - in theory.

And Benedict's visit is not without significance. First of all, he comes at a propitious moment - with a presidency in chronological wind-down and moral decline, an election year that does not have a Catholic in the running (there were half a dozen at one point, the most prominent of whom, Bill Richardson, Governor of New Mexico, has publicly declared for Barack Obama); a Supreme Court judiciary with a preponderance of Catholics, an unprecedented event that could result in some interesting and contested decisions; and rising anxiety that identifies religious fanaticism, whatever that is defined as, as a now perennial threat to national security.

Second, Benedict comes as a different style of pontiff. Entering into this particular U.S. political climate, this contemplative Pope's short stay could go a long way to inserting a modicum of sober judgment on the role of faith in political decision-making, the appropriate place of religion

in the public forum, the limitations of ecclesiastical censure when dealing with matters of private conscience, and the critical role of the papacy as "a voice of the ethical reasoning of humanity."

If he does so, he may well emerge not only as the Green Pope but as a wise one.

Michael W. Higgins is an author and president of St. Thomas University in Fredericton.

**April 15, 2008**

International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development

#### AGRICULTURE- THE NEED FOR CHANGE

WASHINGTON/LONDON/NAIROBI/DELHI - 15th April 2008. The way the world grows its food will have to change radically to better serve the poor and hungry if the world is to cope with a growing population and climate change while avoiding social breakdown and environmental collapse. That is the message from the report of the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development, a major new report by over 400 scientists which is launched today.

The assessment was considered by 64 governments at an intergovernmental plenary in Johannesburg last week.

The authors' brief was to examine hunger, poverty, the environment and equity together. Professor Robert Watson Director of IAASTD said those on the margins are ill-served by the present system: "The incentives for science to address the issues that matter to the poor are weak... the poorest developing countries are net losers under most trade liberalization scenarios."

Modern agriculture has brought significant increases in food production. But the benefits have been spread unevenly and have come at an increasingly intolerable price, paid by small-scale farmers, workers, rural communities and the environment.

It says the willingness of many people to tackle the basics of combining production, social and environmental goals is marred by "contentious political and economic stances". One of the IAASTD co-chairs, Dr Hans Herren, explains: "Specifically, this refers to the many OECD member countries who are deeply opposed to any changes in trade regimes or subsidy systems. Without reforms here many poorer countries will have a very hard time... "

The report has assessed that the way to meet the challenges lies in putting in place institutional, economic and legal frameworks that combine productivity with the protection and conservation of natural resources like soils, water, forests, and biodiversity while meeting production needs.

In many countries, it says, food is taken for granted, and farmers and farm workers are in many cases poorly rewarded for acting as stewards of almost a third of the Earth's land. Investment directed toward securing the public interest in agricultural science, education and training and extension to farmers has decreased at a time when it is most needed.

The authors have assessed evidence across a wide range of knowledge that is rarely brought together. They conclude we have little time to lose if we are to change course. Continuing with current trends would exhaust our resources and put our children's future in jeopardy.

Professor Bob Watson, Director of IAASTD said: "To argue, as we do, that continuing to focus on production alone will undermine our agricultural capital and leave us with an increasingly degraded and divided planet is to reiterate an old message. But it is a message that has not always had resonance in some parts of the world. If those with power are now willing to hear it, then we may hope for more equitable policies that do take the interests of the poor into account."

Professor Judi Wakhungu, said "We must cooperate now, because no single institution, no single nation, no single region, can tackle this issue alone. The time is now."

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**April 16, 2008**

Pope Benedict: Laying the Groundwork for a Sustainable Civilization?  
by Gary Gardner on April 15, 2008

Photo courtesy Jari Kurittu

Pope Benedict may address climate change during a United Nations speech. Rumor has it that Pope Benedict may address climate change during his visit to the United Nations this week. Whether he does or not, his young papacy can claim to be the "greenest" ever. Benedict has identified extensive common ground between sustainability concerns and a Catholic worldview - adding weight to the argument that the world's religions could be instrumental in nudging policymakers and the public to embrace sustainability. Now, the Pope has the opportunity to further develop the links between sustainability and religious values, markedly advancing thinking in both arenas.

Benedict's predecessor, John Paul II, made important environmental statements during his long papacy, but Benedict is the first "green pope." Last year, the Vatican installed solar panels on its 10,000-seat main auditorium building, and it arranged to reforest land in Hungary to offset Vatican City's carbon emissions, making it the world's first carbon-neutral state. And Benedict has repeatedly urged protection of the environment and action against poverty in a number of major addresses. His next encyclical (major papal teaching), due out this summer, is expected to further wrestle with environmental, social, and other themes of interest to the sustainability community.

As he embraces these themes, Benedict and the larger Catholic community could play an especially valuable role in helping to address two major influences on the environment that get too little attention today: consumption and population. (A third, technology, already receives high levels of policy focus.)

The consumption question should be comfortable ground for a modern Catholic pope, given the longstanding social and spiritual critique of consumerism in Catholic thought. For example, Pope Paul VI, in his 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, linked heavy consumption to injustice,



declaring that, "No one may appropriate surplus goods solely for his own private use when others lack the bare necessities of life.... The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich."

John Paul II added a spiritual dimension in *Centesimus Annus* in 1991, critiquing "a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards 'having' rather than 'being,'" and urging people to "create life-styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments." The Church's spiritual and social teachings are rich complements to modern environmental arguments against consumerism.

Benedict's challenge is to move longstanding Church teaching into concrete action. Despite the extensive archive of papal statements on the subject, there is no evidence that Catholics consume less or differently than anyone else. Yet given that 40 percent of the human family lives on less than \$2 a day while the prosperous among us consume casually and wastefully, Catholic leadership in redefining "the good life" away from accumulation and toward greater human wellbeing and solidarity with the poor cannot come soon enough.

Benedict will need to be creative in persuading the comfortable in his Church to take consumption teachings seriously. The dramatic equivalent of solar panels on a Vatican rooftop may be needed to move prosperous Catholics to critically assess their own consumption-and to find joy in consuming less.

The other issue, population, is more difficult for a Catholic leader to tackle, especially one with Benedict's reputation for doctrinal strictness. For Benedict and most Catholics, human reproduction is a domain infused with questions of deep personal morality. But a pontiff who appreciates the epochal nature of the sustainability crisis must surely also recognize the moral challenges raised when human numbers grow exponentially in a finite world.

How much of modern hunger, disease, poverty, and environmental degradation can be blamed on population sizes that have exceeded the carrying capacity of local, regional, and global environments? The share is unknowable, but surely not small. The challenge for Benedict will be to apply his formidable intellect to harmonize the personal and social ethics of population issues.

Benedict's interest in sustainability issues comes not a moment too soon. The sustainability crisis is civilizational in scope and depth-and therefore a natural concern for a global institution like the Catholic Church. Should Benedict raise the twin issues of consumption and population to the level of theological and spiritual attention they deserve, he would not only advance thinking on religious ethics-but also on how to create just and environmentally sustainable societies.

Gary Gardner is a senior researcher at the Worldwatch Institute, an environmental research organization based in Washington, D.C. He is the author of the book *Inspiring Progress: Religions' Contributions to Sustainable Development*.

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**April 18, 2008**

The Green Pope

Benedict XVI has embraced environmentalism. How he's using church teachings to urge Roman Catholics to take care of the earth.

Daniel Stone

NEWSWEEK WEB EXCLUSIVE

Updated: 1:17 PM ET Apr 17, 2008

It may be known for sending out iconic smoke signals when a new pope is elected, but the Vatican is actually the world's only sovereign state that can lay claim to being carbon-neutral. That means that all greenhouse gas emissions from the Holy See are offset through renewable energies and carbon credits. Last summer the city-state's ancient buildings were outfitted with solar panels intended to be a key source of electricity, and an eco-restoration firm donated enough trees in a Hungarian national park to nullify all carbon emitted from Vatican City, which takes up one-fifth of a square mile.

Both moves were embraced by Pope Benedict XVI, who not only oversees the global church, he serves as the chief administrator of the operation of the Vatican. And in both religious and secular circles Benedict has earned the title of "green pope." In addition to boosting efforts to make Vatican City more environmentally efficient, he also uses Roman Catholic doctrine to emphasize humanity's responsibility to care for the planet.

Benedict is not the first pope to address the issue of environmental degradation. His predecessor, Pope John Paul II, once described environmental concerns as a "moral issue" and noted as far back as 1990 that people have "a grave responsibility to preserve [the earth's] order for the well-being of future generations." However, the new pontiff has made being green a central part of his teachings and policy-making. Just months after being elected pope, Benedict stated in his first homily as pontiff that "the earth's treasures have been made to serve the powers of exploitation and destruction" and called on Catholics to be better stewards of God's creation. Last spring at a Vatican conference devoted to climate change, Benedict announced that global citizens have to "focus on the needs of sustainable development." That message was taken a step further when the church last month announced seven new sins that now require repentance. Number four on the list was "polluting the environment." Among the others were "causing social injustice" and "becoming obscenely wealthy," which are also both linked to taking care of the earth, says a Vatican spokesman.

Benedict may not be a typical environmentalist in the modern secular sense. The Vatican won't say whether he tries to save gas on the Vatican grounds or uses devices like energy-saving light bulbs. For him the green issue seems to be more about being a steward to God's creation. Speaking to the faithful, he stresses that taking care of the earth speaks directly to protecting what the Bible says was created in Genesis. He has also made a connection between how a greener lifestyle falls within the human responsibility to protect the world's poorest communities, which are often the first to feel a changing climate's ecological effects, such as floods or droughts, which can cause conflicts over resources. "When you have an issue getting so much attention, there are a lot of voices talking about it. Benedict knows that and he wanted a seat at the table," says Lucia Silecchia, a social law professor at Catholic University who published a

paper last year titled "Discerning the Environmental Perspective of Pope Benedict XVI." "He saw this as a way to push the values of the church in a new context."

Raymond Arroyo, news director of global Catholic network EWTN (and an occasional NEWSWEEK contributor), believes that the pope sees environmental consciousness as a link to Catholic doctrine and social teachings, most of all the value of life. "He's keeping his message about the earth consistent with other messages. He hears that people are saying, 'This is a big problem.' And he's saying, 'You're right, it is, but children suffering in that part of the world is a big problem too.' It's all the same argument. I don't think he loves the earth as an issue in itself, but he sees it as one thing of many that the creator designed. He's just emphasizing it."

Not surprisingly, then, the solutions Benedict proposes also value human life above anything else. In a 2005 address he gave to an audience in St. Peter's Square, he claimed that humans are "the only one of all creatures on this earth that can establish a free and conscious relationship with his creator." In other words, says Silecchia, the Vatican is unlikely to back environmental solutions that focus on reducing the human population or limiting the use of the earth's resources to support human livelihood.

So far the pope has not emphasized eco issues during his U.S. visit. However, that could change when he addresses the United Nations General Assembly on Friday. How he'll do that is anyone's guess, but odds are he won't scold government leaders for lack of action or misguided priorities. Instead he's expected to use the pulpit to underscore climate change's effect on global resources and, in effect, what an unstable ecosystem could mean for the future of world balance and peace. It's a far-reaching argument the green pope seems uniquely qualified to make.

URL: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/132523>

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### **April 18, 2008**

The Jewish Standard - <http://www.jstandard.com>  
Relating Passover to current environmental threats  
<http://www.jstandard.com/articles/4181/1/Relating-Passover-to-current-environmental-threats>  
Richard Schwartz

By Richard Schwartz  
Published 18- April 2008

This year, the fourth day of Passover and the annual Earth Day both occur on April 22. Hence, this is a good time to consider environmental messages related to Passover and the events and concepts related to the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt:

1. Today's environmental threats can be compared in many ways to the biblical 10 plagues:

- When we consider the threats to our land, water, and air, we can easily enumerate 10 modern "plagues." For example: 1. global warming; 2. Depletion of the ozone layer; 3. destruction of tropical rain forests; 4. Widening droughts; 5. soil erosion and depletion; 6. loss of biodiversity; 7. Water pollution; 8. air pollution; 9. an increase in the number and severity of storms and floods; and 10. negative effects of pesticides, chemical fertilizer, and other toxic chemicals.

- The Egyptians were subjected to one plague at a time, while the modern plagues are threatening us simultaneously.

- The Jews in Goshen were spared most of the biblical plagues, while every person on earth is imperiled by the modern plagues.

- Instead of an ancient Pharaoh's heart being hardened, many hearts today seem to have been hardened by the greed, materialism, and wastefulness that contribute to current environmental threats.

- God provided the biblical plagues to free the Israelites, while today we must apply God's teachings in order to save ourselves and our endangered planet.

2. The seder is a time for questions, including the traditional "four questions." Additional questions can be asked related to modern environmental threats. For example: Why is this period different from all other periods? (At all other periods only local regions faced environmental threats; today, the entire world is threatened.) How can we get greater involvement in the Jewish community in response to current environmental threats? What Jewish teachings can be applied toward the alleviation of environmental problems? (These teachings include bal tashchit, the Torah mandate not to waste or unnecessarily destroy anything of value, and the statement in Genesis 2:15 that humans are to work the land and also to guard it.)

3. Rabbi Jay Marcus, former religious leader of Young Israel of Staten Island, saw a connection between simpler diets and helping hungry people. He commented on the fact that "karpas" (eating of greens) comes immediately before "yahatz" (the breaking of the middle matzoh for later use as the "afikomen," dessert in the seder service). He concluded that those who live on simpler foods (greens, for example) will more readily divide their possessions and share with others. The consumption of animal-centered diets involves the feeding of 70 percent of the grain grown in the United States to animals destined for slaughter and the importing of beef from other countries, while an estimated 20 million of the world's people die of hunger and its effects. A simpler diet would also have positive environmental effects since modern intensive livestock agriculture uses vast amounts of water, fuel, chemical fertilizer, pesticides, and other resources, and contributes significantly to global warming, soil erosion and depletion, the destruction of tropical rain forests and other valuable habitats, and many other environmental problems. A 2006 U.N. Food and Agriculture report indicated that animal-based agriculture emits more greenhouse

gases (18 percent in CO2 equivalents) than all the cars, planes, ships, and other forms of transportation worldwide combined (13.5 percent), and that the number of farmed animals is increasing very rapidly and is expected to double in 50 years. If that doubling occurred, the increased greenhouse gas emissions would negate the effects of many positive changes, and make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to reach the reductions of greenhouse gas emissions necessary to prevent the worse effects of global climate changes.

4. A popular song at the seder is "Dayenu" (it would have been enough). The message of this song can perhaps be applied today, when many people seek to constantly increase their wealth and amass more possessions, with little thought of the negative environmental consequences.

5. An ancient Jewish legend indicates that Job's severe punishment occurred because when he was an adviser to Pharaoh he refused to take a stand when Pharaoh asked him what should be done with regard to the Israelite slaves. This story can be discussed as a reminder that if we remain neutral or silent and do not get involved in working for a better environment, severe consequences may follow.

6. The main Passover theme is freedom. While relating the story of our ancestors' slavery in Egypt and their redemption through God's power and beneficence, Jews might also want to consider the "slavery" of animals on modern factory farms. Contrary to Jewish teachings of "tsa'ar ba'alei chayim" (the Torah mandate not to cause unnecessary "pain to a living creature"), animals are raised for food today under cruel conditions in crowded, confined spaces, where they are denied fresh air, sunlight, a chance to exercise, and the fulfillment of their natural instincts. In this connection, it is significant to consider that according to the Jewish tradition, Moses, Judaism's greatest leader, teacher, and prophet, was chosen to lead the Israelites out of Egypt because as a shepherd he showed great compassion to a lamb (Exodus Rabbah 2:2).

With the world today arguably approaching an unprecedented catastrophe from global warming and other environmental threats, it is essential that these and other powerful Jewish messages be applied on Earth Day and, indeed, every day, to help shift our precious but imperiled planet to a sustainable path.

Richard H. Schwartz, professor emeritus of the College of Staten Island, is the author of "Judaism and Vegetarianism," "Judaism and Global Survival," and "Mathematics and Global Survival." The president of Jewish Vegetarians of North America and the Society of Ethical and Religious Vegetarians, he is associate producer of "A Sacred Duty," a documentary on current environmental threats and how Jewish teachings can be applied in responding to these threats. (To learn more about the film, go to [asacredduty.com](http://asacredduty.com).)

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**April 21, 2008**

'Green Faith' aiding the Earth  
By Lisa Chamoff

Staff Writer  
Stamford Advocate  
Article Launched:04/20/2008 01:00:00 AM EDT

The first book of the Bible tells of God creating the Earth in six days.

While there is no mention of climate change, energy efficiency or solar panels in Genesis, that has not stopped some religious leaders from embracing the ideals of environmentalism that were once reserved for the crunchy granola set.

Earlier this year, the Vatican included pollution in a list of seven new sins.

"Environmental problems are getting obvious and worse," said Rabbi Andrea Cohen-Kiener, director of the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network, a Hartford-based environmental advocacy group. "People feel that when they look outside."

One of the Eco-Justice Network's projects is Connecticut Interfaith Power and Light, which is part of a national campaign that promotes renewable energy, with more than 25 states participating.

Over the last two years, Connecticut Interfaith Power and Light has helped organize the program This Old House of Worship, which assesses the energy efficiency of churches, synagogues and other religious buildings. A new workshop will focus on homes.

"I think people are coalescing around it," Cohen-Kiener said. "We're building community with it."

Religious environmentalism is not new. The Interfaith Power and Light effort began 10 years ago. The New Jersey-based organization Green Faith has been around for more than 15 years.

But religion only recently began playing a major role, said John Grim, who teaches religion and ecology at Yale University with his wife, Mary Evelyn Tucker. They also co-founded the Forum on Religion and Ecology.

This partially stems from the efforts of religious leaders, such as Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, Grim said.

Religious groups and scientists also have started to express common opinions on environmental issues.

"There's a feeling of a shared ground now," Grim said. "They've put aside those differences and tried to realize that this common ground we share is this habitat we live in."

A conference at Yale University last month, "Renewing Hope: Pathways of Religious Environmentalism," drew dozens of people.

Yale Divinity School recently began offering a joint degree program with the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and there are many faculty members who work at both schools.

Willis Jenkins, who teaches social ethics at Yale, is one of three faculty members with a joint appointment. He teaches a class on the interaction between Christian theology and environmental problems.

While there are currently just four joint degree students at Yale, there are Divinity School graduates who work with faith-based environmental organizations, including Green Faith and Earth Ministry in Seattle.

Religious groups have found that the values they hold translate well to environmentalism, Jenkins said.

"Religious communities are much quicker to make the connections to human suffering," Jenkins said.

Locally, religious groups are latching on to the environmental movement. Various area churches have hosted screenings of former Vice President Al Gore's film "An Inconvenient Truth."

Others are finding small ways to help save the planet.

Yesterday morning, members of the Northeast Community Church, a new non-denominational church based on Knight Street in Norwalk, teamed with environmental group Save the Sound to clean Calf Pasture Beach in honor of Earth Day.

Pastor Thomas Mahoney said this is the church's first specifically environmental project, but that members intend to organize other initiatives.

"We do believe strongly that we have a responsibility to care for creation," Mahoney said. "We believe that's pretty well outlined in the first book of the Bible, in Genesis. We're working through what that means for us as a community and how we implement that. We definitely feel that it's not just an environmental issue, but it's a spiritual issue."

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**April 21, 2008**

The end justifies the green

Local group Floresta is evangelical and eco-conscious

By Sandi Dolbee

UNION-TRIBUNE RELIGION & ETHICS EDITOR

April 19, 2008

Before Bono's rock star campaign to eliminate global poverty, before former Vice President Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth" about global warming, and before mega-church master Rick Warren

became a born-again environmentalist, there was Tom Woodard and his dream about the power of a few good trees.

HOWARD LIPIN / Union-Tribune

As executive director of Floresta, Scott Sabin heads a Christian group that believes in the power of trees.

RACHEL CASTILLERO / Floresta

Floresta has staffs stationed around the world – including this one visiting farmers in the Dominican Republic.

In 1980, Woodard was living in Leucadia attending Mount Soledad Presbyterian Church when he and his wife, Teresa, volunteered to go to the Dominican Republic to help a Christian relief agency with hurricane rebuilding work.

Hurricane David, which struck in 1979 with wind gusts of more than 170 mph and torrential rains, had devastated the area. Hardest hit were the impoverished rural villages.

While he was there, Woodard says he became convinced that a root cause of the mounting poverty in those villages was the increasing deforestation.

He saw it as a desperate cycle. Farmers were slashing the land in an effort to eke out more crops and make charcoal. But removing the trees was ruining the land, leaving the soil depleted and communities vulnerable to deadly mudslides.

With the help of a researcher who had developed a line of fast-growing, hardy trees, Woodard planted 40,000 seeds. “On a return trip a year and a half later, the trees were 20 feet tall,” he says.

In 1984, while he was still in his 20s, Woodard founded Floresta, a Christian-based organization whose mission would be to reforest land, rehabilitate the local economy and rebuild hope.

Woodard, now 52, chuckles at the reception he often got early on among other evangelicals who thought he should be concentrating on winning souls, not planting trees. “At the time, we had a lot of explaining to do,” he says.

Congregations often saw Floresta as a social service project, not a Christian ministry. But Woodard would tell the doubters that this was a way of putting Jesus' teachings into action. “The reason we were doing it was because of our faith,” he says.

A new attitude

What a difference a couple decades make.

Led by a new wave of evangelical preachers like Warren, founder of Saddleback Church in Orange County, conservative Christians have embraced environmentalism with fervor. Just last month, Southern Baptist leaders called for a “unified moral voice” to combat global warming and care for the environment.



Woodard would like to think Floresta was one of the catalysts.

“Looking back, there's been an interesting metamorphosis in evangelical culture,” says Woodard, who continues to serve on Floresta's advisory board, although he now lives in Mexico, where he is developing eco-friendly resorts.

Floresta, meanwhile, is flourishing.

Scott Sabin, Floresta's executive director, estimates 3.5 million trees have been planted so far in five countries – Thailand, Mexico, Tanzania, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The organization recently added Kenya to its list.

But trees are only part of the rehab effort. The program also has made more than 4,500 micro-loans to residents so they could start small businesses, ranging from candy making to chicken farming. Sabin touts a repayment rate that would make U.S. mortgage companies swoon – a whopping 98 percent in Haiti alone.

The organization remains based in San Diego, working out of an unremarkable suite of offices in an industrial park off Interstate 5. There are 13 staff members here and about another four dozen in field offices. The lion's share of its \$2 million annual budget comes from donations from individuals, corporations and foundations (Charity Navigator, which evaluates nonprofit budgets, gives Floresta four stars, its highest rating).

The goal also remains unchanged: help both the people in the rural villages and the land they live on become self-sustaining. “We're trying to empower the local people to do for themselves,” Sabin says. “We don't want to do for the people. We want to empower them.”

Trees of life

Sabin argues that the connections between deforestation and poverty are “stunning.”

Trees nurture the soil, filter the water and combat global warming, he says. Some also provide food.

To listen to him, it's as if you can measure the economic and physical health of a people by the health of the land around them.

But he also concedes that reforestation is “too narrow by itself.” That's where Floresta's small business loans and agricultural training programs come into play. “I would say we use sustainable agriculture, reforestation and micro-credit to restore lives and lands,” Sabin explains.

In the villages, Floresta networks with churches to reach citizens. But Sabin, who coincidentally also attends Mount Soledad Presbyterian, prefers the term discipleship over evangelism when he talks about Floresta's faith-based connections.

“It's not about preaching to a crowd and having people make a one-time decision,” he says. “It's about a lifestyle. It's about how you relate with your neighbors.”

Board chairman Jeff Busby likes Floresta's emphasis on helping people help themselves. “The trend in the U.S. is just to throw money at something and it'll go away,” says Busby, who is the CEO of an investment company.

He's also impressed with how the organization relies on local people within each country. “Our society tends to enforce its standards and values on other cultures.”

Like founder Woodard, Sabin has noticed “a huge shift” in attitudes toward faith-based environmental work.

“For many years, I used to say, 'We're too Christian for the environmentalists and too environmental for the Christians,'” Sabin says. “Now I see we're being embraced more and more by both sides. It's just fantastic.”

As for Woodard, he says while it's been nice to see Floresta grow, he would like to see it expand even more. “The solution is a sound one, and there are a lot of places in the world that could solve their problems with this same solution,” he says.

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Find this article at:

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/features/20080419-9999-1c19floresta.html>

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## **April 22, 2008**

Winners of UNEP Champions of the Earth Awards 2008 Call for Urgent Action on Climate Change; Catalysts for the Global Green Economy Honored at Gala Evening in Singapore

Singapore/Nairobi, 22 April 2008 - Seven leading lights in the battle against global warming who are also catalyzing the transition to a greener and leaner global economy were today acknowledged as the 2008 Champions of the Earth.

The winners, ranging from His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco and the Prime Minister of New Zealand to a Sudanese climate researcher who has been successfully piloting climate-proofing strategies in some of the most stressed communities on Earth, received their trophies at a gala event in Singapore.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) who presented the awards which are hosted in conjunction with the annual Business for the Environment Summit (B4E) said: "The golden thread that links each one of tonight's winners is climate change, the challenge for this generation and the disaster for the next unless it is urgently addressed".

"Our winners for 2008 light an alternative path for humanity by taking responsibility, demonstrating leadership and realizing change across a wide range of sustainability issues. These include more intelligent and creative management of natural and nature-based resources from waste and water to biodiversity and agriculture," he added.

"Thus each one is living proof that the greening of the global economy is underway and that a transition to a more resource efficient society not only makes environmental sense but social and economic sense too. I am sure their leadership and their achievements will inspire many others to act as it inspired us at UNEP to name them the 2008 Champions of the Earth," said Mr Steiner.

The gala event was hosted by UNEP; the Singapore Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources and the Singapore Tourism Board with the support of various sponsors and partners including strategic partner Asia Pacific Resources International Holdings Limited (APRIL); corporate partners Arcelor Mittal, The Dow Chemical Company, OSRAM, Senoko Power, and Siemens. The event's international public relations partner is Edelman, and its global media partners are CNN and TIME.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco, the European winner, has become an international advocate for greater action on climate change and natural resource management.

In 2005 and 2006 he followed in the footsteps of his great, great grandfather Prince Albert I, by going to the Arctic witness at first hand the impacts. This inspired him to establish a foundation in his own name that currently supports close to 60 projects globally.

In thanking UNEP for awarding the prize, the His Serene Highness pledged to "carry out missions to raise the alarm and heighten awareness in the field. The world is facing an unprecedented threat. We must assume our responsibilities without delay and rise to the challenge that history has placed upon our path".

Abdul-Qader Ba-Jammal, the former Prime Minister of Yemen who was awarded the prize for West Asia, said it was vital to make the connection between improved management of nature and natural resources and the "upgrading of peoples quality of life".

A staunch advocate of more intelligent management of water resources and the need to address sustainable agriculture in dry-lands, he said the awarding of the UNEP prize was not only a personal delight but a "high responsibility".

Timothy E. Wirth of the United States, whose professional and public life has been shaped by climate change and fostering support in his home country for greater action to cut emissions, said: "With each passing month, each passing year we learn more about the urgency of the task".

The winner for North America added: " We still have some ways to go, but we still have time to act before chaos and catastrophe hit the globe".

Liz Thompson, the winner for Latin America and the Caribbean whose many achievements include inspiring and pioneering a response to a major challenge for small island developing

states-improved solid waste management-said: "You go to work every day and do something you are passionate about. But do not think anyone is taking notice at this level".

The former Minister of the Environment and Energy of Barbados said she was "gratified, overwhelmed and shaken" by being named a Champion of the Earth which will spur her on to get the world to take climate change issues more seriously.

Dr Atiq Rahman, the Champion for Asia and the Pacific, said the award would spur him on to ever greater "zeal and to work even faster and stronger" to tackle the issues facing his native Bangladesh and the world as a whole.

"I am impatient. Climate change as a man-made disaster is coming at a rapid rate. A one metre sea-level rise would lead to a fifth of my country under water. If we can't feed the people, there will be chaos," he said.

Dr Rahman, Executive Director of a leading South Asia sustainability think-tank, said everyone in the world would, in the final analysis "rise together and deliver a better future for this planet or we will all sink together. By integrating environment and development, we are trying to show that North and South and rich and poor do not have two different fates".

Dr Balgis Osman-Elasha, the winner for Africa, said: " I am trying to convey the message of climate change, to simplify the message, to make it reach the people who are going to be impacted".

The Sudanese researcher has worked on a range of research projects in her native Sudan, including Darfur demonstrating to vulnerable communities the feasibility of adapting to climate change and extreme weather events.

Also a leading author with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which last year co-won the Nobel Peace Prize, Dr Osman-Elasha added: "To be awarded the Champions of Earth is an honor. It gives you the feeling and the power to do more and I think the proudest moment is yet to come. We have no other planet-there is only one Earth: this is the message!".

The UNEP Special Prize for Champions of the Earth 2008 was awarded to Helen Clark, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, whose country has set the trail-blazing target of being climate neutral.

"We have launched the world's first, 100 per cent coverage and all sectors Emissions Trading scheme and we will meet the goal of 90 per cent renewable energy by 2025," she said.

Ms Clark said her vision was "sustain the biodiversity, the cultural diversity and environmental integrity that we have had in our world and which is very, very much under threat".

She described being awarded the Special Champions of the Earth prize from UNEP as "just an incredible boost" and a boost for her country's reputation: "You do get your critics. But we are making a difference and we will keep making a difference".

## Notes to Editors

For full details of the 2008 UNEP Champions of the Earth award winners please click [here](#)

Or the UNEP Champions of the Earth official web site <http://www.unep.org/champions/>

Champions of the Earth is an international environment award established in 2004 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The annual prize rewards individuals from around the globe who have made a significant and recognized contribution globally, regionally and beyond, to the protection and sustainable management of the Earth's environment and natural resources. Candidates are judged by a senior UNEP panel with input from UNEP's regional offices.

Past Champions of the Earth winners include among others: Ms. Massoudeh Ebtekar, the former Vice President of Iran; H.E. Mikhail Gorbachev of the Russian Federation; H.R.H. Prince Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan; Jacques Rogge and the International Olympic Committee; and Al Gore, the former Vice President of the United States.

The Champions of the Earth are invited to accept their award at an international ceremony which will be held in Singapore on 22 April 2008. The event will be hosted in conjunction with the Business for the Environment Summit (B4E), details of which can be found on the UNEP website.

No monetary reward is attached to the prize -each laureate receives a trophy made of recycled metal especially designed by the Kenyan sculptor Kioko and representing the fundamental elements for life on earth: sun, air, land and water.

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## April 23, 2008

### Biodiversity Loss - It Will Make You Sick

"Sustaining Life" Identifies Huge Losses to Medical Science from the Decline and Extinction of the World's Nature-Based Assets

Singapore/Nairobi, 24 April - A new generation of antibiotics, new treatments for thinning bone disease and kidney failure, and new cancer treatments may all stand to be lost unless the world acts to reverse the present alarming rate of biodiversity loss a new landmark book says.

The natural world holds secrets to the development of new kinds of safer and more powerful pain-killers; treatments for a leading cause of blindness- macular degeneration- and possibly ways of re-growing lost tissues and organs by, for example studying newts and salamanders.

But, the experts warn that we may lose many of the land and marine-based life forms of economic and medical interest before we can learn their secrets, or, in some cases, before we know they exist.

The new book, 'Sustaining Life', is the most comprehensive treatment of this subject to date and fills a major gap in the arguments made to conserve nature.

#### Promising Treatment for Peptic Ulcers Lost

A particularly illustrative example, highlighted by the book's authors, of what may be lost with species extinctions can be found in the southern gastric brooding frog

(*Rheobatrachus*) which was discovered in undisturbed rainforests of Australia in the 1980s.

The frogs raise their young in the female's stomach where they would, in other animals, be digested by enzymes and acid.

Preliminary studies indicated that the baby frogs produced a substance, or perhaps a variety of substances, that inhibited acid and enzyme secretions and prevented the mother from emptying her stomach into her intestines while the young were developing.

The authors point out that the research on gastric brooding frogs could have led to new insights into preventing and treating human peptic ulcers which affect some 25 million people in the United States alone.

"But these studies could not be continued because both species of *Rheobatrachus* became extinct, and the valuable medical secrets they held are now gone forever," say Eric Chivian and Aaron Bernstein, the key authors of the book based at the Center for Health and the Global Environment, Harvard Medical School.

The findings, announced during the Business for the Environment Summit in Singapore, come in the run up to the 9th meeting of the parties to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)-linked Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) taking place in Bonn, Germany later in May.

Here delegates from close to 190 countries; business leaders, academia and members of civil society will look to accelerate action to reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010.

(See Quotes by Key Players below)

'Sustaining Life', the work of more than 100 experts and published by Oxford University

Press, has been supported by UNEP; the Secretariat of the CBD; the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and IUCN.

At the heart of the book is a chapter dedicated to exploring seven threatened groups of organisms valuable to medicine, including amphibians, bears, cone snails, sharks, nonhuman primates, gymnosperms, and horseshoe crabs that underscore what may be lost to human health when species go extinct.

These losses include: promising new avenues of medical research and new treatments, pharmaceuticals and diagnostic tests.

Experts, including the authors, emphasize that the book's conclusions should not be construed as a license to harvest wildlife in a way that puts further pressure on already threatened, vulnerable and endangered species.

Instead they should be a spur for even greater conservation and improved management of species and the ecosystems they inhabit.

### Amphibians

The class Amphibians is made up of frogs, toads, newts, salamanders and caecilians-little known legless organisms that resemble giant earthworms. Nearly one third of the approximately 6000 known amphibian species are threatened with extinction.

These animals produce a wide range of novel substances, some of which are made only by amphibians living in the wild, not by those in captivity.

These include the:-

Pumiliotoxins, like those made by the Panamanian Poison Frog that may lead to medicines that strengthen the contractions of the heart and thus prove useful in treating heart disease.

Alkaloids made by species like the Ecuadorian Poison Frog, which could be the source of a new and novel generation of pain-killers.

Antibacterial compounds produced in the skin of frogs and toads such as the African

Clawed Frog and South and Central American leaf frogs.

Bradykinins and maximakinins, made in the skin glands of species like the Chinese

Large-Webbed Bell Toad; Mexican Leaf Frog, and North American Pickerel Frog that dilate the smooth muscle of blood vessels in mammals and therefore offer promising avenues for treating high blood pressure.

Frog glue, produced by species such as the Australian frog, could lead to natural adhesives for repairing cartilage and other tissue tears in humans.

Many species of newts and salamanders, such as the Eastern Spotted Newt, can re-grow tissues such as heart muscle; nerve tissue in the spinal cord and even whole organs. As we are in evolutionary terms relatively closely related to these species, they are vital models for understanding how we might someday harness our own dormant regenerative potential.

Some frogs, such as the Gray Tree Frog and the Chorus Frog can survive long periods of freezing without suffering cell damage-understanding how these frogs do this may yield key insights into how we might better preserve scarce organs needed for transplant.

## Bears

Nine species of bear are threatened with extinction including the polar bear; the Giant Panda, and the Asiatic Black Bear.

The threats to bears are similar to those amphibians face, but in addition many bears are at risk because they are killed for body parts, such as gall bladders, which can command high prices in black markets in places like China, Japan and Thailand.

Several medical benefits have already arisen from the study of bears, including the development of ursodeoxycholic acid, found in the gall bladders of some bear species such as polar and black bears, into a medicine.

The substance is used to prevent the build up of bile during pregnancy; dissolve certain kinds of gallstones; and prolong the life of patients with a specific kind of liver disease, known as primary biliary cirrhosis, giving them more time to find a liver transplant.

Some bear species, known as "denning" bears because they enter into a largely dormant state when food is scarce, are of tremendous value to medicine as they are able to recycle a wide variety of their body's substances.

Unlike people, who if 'bed-ridden' for a five-month period can lose up to a third of their bone mass, bears actually lay down new bone during the denning period.

Bears appear to produce a substance that inhibits cells that break down bone and promote substances that encourage bone and cartilage-making cells. Currently, 740,000 deaths a year are the result of hip fractures worldwide, a large number of which are caused by osteoporosis.

By 2050 there will be an estimated six million osteoporosis-linked hip fractures globally.

Denning bears can survive for a period of five months or more without excreting their urinary wastes, whereas humans would die from the build up of these toxic substances after only a few days.



An estimated 1.5 million people worldwide are receiving treatment for end-stage renal disease, and more than 80,000 die each year in the U.S. alone from this disease. By studying denning bears, we may be able to learn how to treat them more effectively and help large numbers to survive.

Denning bears may also hold clues to treating Type 1 and Type II diabetes as well as obesity. Worldwide there are an estimated 150 to 200 million cases of Type II diabetes.

When produced in a non-invasive and ethically acceptable way, without pushing already threatened species further towards extinction, these substances are of great value to medicine.

Gymnosperms including pines and spruces

Close to 1,000 species of Gymnosperms have been identified. Evolutionary they are among the oldest of any plants alive but many groups, such as the cycads, are classified as endangered.

Several pharmaceuticals, including decongestants and the anti-cancer drug taxol, have already been isolated from gymnosperms.

The researchers believe many more are yet to be discovered and may be lost if species of Gymnosperms become extinct.

Substances from one Gymnosperm, the Ginkgo tree may reduce the production of receptors in the human nervous system linked with memory loss. Thus they may play a role in countering Alzheimer's disease. They may also help in the treatment of epilepsy and depression.

Cone Snails

Around 700 species make up the cone snails, seven of which were identified only since

2004. While only four are now classified as vulnerable, no thorough assessment has been made in over ten years and thus current listings may underestimate the true number of endangered cone snail species.

For example almost 70 per cent of some 380 cone snail species surveyed had more than half their geographic range within areas where coral reefs, their main habitats, are threatened.

Cone snail species may produce as many as 70,000 to 140,000 peptide compounds, large numbers of which may have value as human medicines, yet only a few hundred have been characterized.

One compound, known as ziconotide, is thought to be 1000 times more potent than morphine and has been shown in clinical trials to provide significant pain relief for advanced cancer and AIDS patients. Another cone snail compound has been shown in animal models to protect brain cells from death during times of inadequate blood flow.

It could prove a breakthrough therapy for people suffering head injuries and strokes and may even contribute to therapy for patients with Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

Other potential developments from cone snail peptides include treatments for urinary incontinence and cardiac arrhythmias.

## Sharks

There are at least 400 species of sharks, which, as a group, evolved in ancient seas 400 to 450 million years ago.

Many species are now threatened, with some species, such as the Scalloped Hammerhead, White Shark and Thresher Shark, falling in numbers by as much as 75 percent over the past 15 years.

Over-fishing has been the main reason for the losses, and has been driven by: an increased demand for shark meat as a substitute for traditional commercial fish catches in foods like fish and chips; the rise in consumption of shark fin soup; increases in by-catch, for example, in tuna fisheries; and an increased market for shark cartilage products for a variety of unproved medical purposes.

?? Squalamine, a substance isolated from sharks such as dogfish, especially abundant in their livers, may lead to a new generation of antibiotics as well as treatments against fungal and protozoan infections.

?? Studies are also being undertaken with squalamine compounds as possible antitumor and appetite-suppressant substances.

?? Trials are now also underway to see if squalamine can treat age-related macular degeneration which can lead to severe vision loss. The shark substance may halt the growth of new blood cells in the retina, which is linked to a loss of retinal function and blindness in these patients.

?? The salt glands of some sharks are also being studied to gain insight into how the human kidney functions and how chloride ions are transported across membranes, which may shed light on two diseases-cystic fibrosis and polycystic kidney disease.

?? Sharks, having evolved as some of the first creatures with a fully functioning 'adaptive' immune system are irreplaceable models to help us understand human immunity. "What potential these creatures may still hold to further our knowledge of immunity is being rapidly depleted with the mass slaughter of sharks and the endangerment of sharks worldwide," say the book's authors.

## Horseshoe Crabs

There are four species of horseshoe crabs, with each organism possessing four eyes and six other light-detecting organs as well as blood that turns cobalt blue when exposed to the air.

Because only around ten offspring survive out of the estimated 90,000 eggs produced by a female, they are highly sensitive to overfishing.

Once harvested and processed to be used as fertilizer, they are now used as bait for eel and whelk fisheries. Horseshoe crabs are also important in the food chain, especially for birds like the Red Knott, which rely upon the eggs for fuel over their 16,000 km migratory journey

Horseshoe crabs also have tremendous value to medicine.

Several classes of peptides have been isolated from the creatures' blood that appear to kill a wide range of bacteria.

Another peptide from the horseshoe crab has been developed into a compound known as T140 which locks onto the receptor in humans that allows the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) to gain access into the body's immune cells. Preclinical trails indicate that the substance is at least as effective as the drug AZT at inhibiting the replication of HIV.

T140 has also shown promise in preventing the spread of certain cancers such as leukemia, prostate cancer and breast cancer, and as a possible treatment for rheumatoid arthritis.

Other cells in the blood of horseshoe crabs can, for example, detect the presence of key bacteria in the spinal fluid of people suspected of having cerebral meningitis.

The test is so sensitive it can detect at levels of 1 picogram per milliliter of solution- roughly the equivalent of finding one grain of sugar in an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Quote from Key Players

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said:

"Habitat loss, destruction and degradation of ecosystems, pollution, over-exploitation and climate change are among the powerful and persistent impacts that are running down the planet's nature-based capital, including the medical treasure trove of the world's biodiversity".

"The CBD has achieved a great deal but it needs to achieve much more if it is to meet the international community's goals and objectives. We need a breakthrough in Bonn on all three pillars of the convention-conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit sharing of genetic resources," he said.

Sigmar Gabriel, Minister of the Environment, Germany, said: "We are currently in the process of wiping nature's hard drive - at a tremendous pace and without any hope of restoring the data once it is lost. We have to comprehend the extent of the damage we are doing to ourselves so that we can bring about a change of course. In order to curb the ongoing destruction of biodiversity before 2010 and thus reverse the trend, we must finally adopt effective measures at international

level. This is our overriding goal for the upcoming 9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Bonn."

Ahmed Djoghlaif, UN Assistant Secretary General and Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity, said: "The Earth's biodiversity, much of which has yet to be discovered, provides a unique opportunity to improve not only the health of current but also that of future generations".

"However as species are lost so too are our options for future discovery and advancement. Thus "Sustaining Life" provides poignant evidence that biodiversity loss is not merely an environmental issue but one which affects us on a very basic, fundamental and personal level," he said.

Jeffrey McNeely, Chief Scientist at IUCN and a co-author of the book, says: "While extinction is alarming in its own right, this book demonstrates that many species can help save human lives. If we needed more justification for action to conserve species, this book offers dozens of dramatic examples of both why and how citizens can act in ways that will conserve, rather than destroy, the species that enrich our lives.

Kemal Dervis, Administrator of UNDP, said:

"People everywhere, and particularly the rural poor, depend on biodiversity for food, fuel, shelter, medicines and livelihoods. Unless we can slow down the rapid extinction rate, which is currently being greatly accelerated by climate change, biodiversity loss will seriously jeopardize our prospects for achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015."

Notes to Editors

'Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity' is published by Oxford University Press priced \$34.95 [click here](#) On 24 April 2008

A link to the Sustaining Life web site at Harvard Medical School Center for Health and the Global Environment <http://chge.med.harvard.edu/programs/bio/index.html>

The book can also be purchased online at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

The related resources can be accessed at [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)

The Convention on Biological Diversity including details of the Bonn meeting [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)

The UN Development Programme [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

IUCN [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)

Business for the Environment Global Summit 2008 [www.b4esummit.com](http://www.b4esummit.com)

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## **April 25, 2008**

### LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL

April 23, 2008

Church social activism is pledged; Presbyterians mark Earth Day

By Peter Smith  
[psmith@courier-journal.com](mailto:psmith@courier-journal.com)

An Earth Day service yesterday at the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) headquarters in downtown Louisville became an occasion for celebrating a new declaration of church social activism.

The heads of the Presbyterian Church and the National Council of Churches -- an interdenominational organization -- planted a plum tree on the values.

"The church is an instrument of God's purpose and is called to social transformation toward the day where God's will ... is more fully realized on earth," said the Rev. Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the church council.

He said many Christians "have valued nature only in a utilitarian way, for how it serves our purposes," but are learning to see that "for Christians, there can be no social creed which forgets that human society is part of a much larger purpose."

About 100 staff members and visitors attended the service.

Worshippers recited "A Social Creed for the 21st Century," which was drafted by Presbyterian and other church leaders. It was approved by the council of churches last fall and will be voted on by the Presbyterian General Assembly this summer. The creed calls for a range of reforms, many of them environmental.

It urges efforts to halt global warming, promote public transportation and alternative energy and "grace over greed" in economic life.

Other aspects of the creed call for more equality in wages, access to health care, and an end to the death penalty.

The Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), said he believed the General Assembly would adopt the creed even if members oppose some aspects.

Reporter Peter Smith can be reached at (502) 582-4469.

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## **April 25, 2008**

HALIFAX CHRONICLE-HERALD

Published: 2008-04-22

Message in a bottle

Pressure growing for North Americans to end love affair with designer water

By LOIS LEGGE Features Writer

THEY'RE PROPPED on workplace desks, tucked under arms heading for gyms and clutched by kids going to school.

Bottled water's everywhere.

But should it be quite so popular a drink?

Groups ranging from the environmentally to the ecclesiastically minded are asking that question. And some are telling the thirsty to turn on taps instead. The United Church of Canada has already called on its almost 600,000 members to boycott the bottles whenever possible. Groups like the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax are also asking consumers to think seriously about the social, economic and environmental implications of taking part in the skyrocketing trend.

And a major water filter company has recently jumped on the bandwagon, setting up FilterforGood.ca, which asks people to take online pledges to give up bottled water.

"It's not like a 'thou shalt not,' " Joy Kennedy says about the United Church's policy, adopted in 2006, to "discourage the purchase of bottled water" among members. But it is a "please don't" — a call to put the genie back in the bottle and stem a marketing tide that sees millions of the containers rolling regularly off store shelves.

The United Church's concern is both theologically and ecologically based, explains Kennedy, its program co-ordinator for poverty, wealth and ecological justice. The denomination sees water as "a gift of God to creation" and not something for sale. The crucial resource also plays a strong symbolic role within the church, many of whose parishes are now "bottle-free zones" with members using pitchers of tap water instead at various functions and events.

"One of our key liturgies, of course, is baptism," Kennedy says, "which really is an identifier for us about the value that we place on water as a sacred gift. It's very much in our psyche . . . but it's also about regaining our sense of responsibility and connectedness to the Earth." The health of the Earth is one of the main motivators behind the United Church's stance, given the energy used to produce the products and the waste they create, Kennedy says.

"We . . . are very concerned about the energy use in our society, the over-reliance on fossil fuels and, of course, plastic comes from guess what? Oil. So there are linkages. We're taking a holistic approach saying that this is really about looking at what kind of an ecologically sustainable society do we want to live in." For the Ecology Action Centre, a society that drastically reduces its use of bottled water is a step closer to sustainability. "We know enough about it to know that we're not in favour of bottled water," says the centre's internal director, Maggy Burns. "For a long time. . . we've avoided having bottled water in our centre or at our events."

Burns'd like other organizations and individuals to avoid it too.

And she lists a range of reasons, from the oil used to produce and transport the products to the volume of bottles worldwide that are never recycled.

"A lot of water actually is wasted in . . . putting water (in) those bottles and a lot of that is cooling water for the power plants . . . that create the bottles, put the water in the bottles, etc., and so there's that waste and there's also just a huge amount of plastic waste." But companies producing the bottled water have been masterfully marketing their products as convenient, as status symbols and as safe, Burns says. even though Canada's drinking water is overwhelmingly protected. Our water is safe, she says, despite devastating cases like the water-contamination deaths of seven residents in Walkerton, Ont., in 2000.

"There's more regulation in tap water than there is in bottled water so I mean, yeah, we've seen our governments make mistakes around the purity and health of our municipal water supplies but Canada has the best drinking water in the world," Burns says. "Large quantities of the bottled water that we're buying is only filtered tap water," anyway, she adds.

How much fear about contaminated municipal water supplies is driving the bottle boom isn't clear. But it is one of several factors, according to a Statistics Canada report.

Its 2006 Households and the Environment Survey of 28,000 people found almost one-third of Canadian households primarily drank bottled water that year (about 30 per cent in Nova Scotia), regardless of the source of their tap water. The remainder drank tap water but half of them somehow treated it. Most did so to improve the taste or the look of the water but 40 per cent cited concerns about bacterial contamination.

"Many factors can influence the extent to which households choose bottled water, such as past incidents involving public water supplies (e.g. Walkerton, or North Battleford, Sask., in 2001), the esthetic qualities — taste, odour and colour — of water, the convenience of bottled as a healthier choice over other beverages and ongoing marketing by the bottled water industry," the survey report says.

The bottled water industry has faced criticism on a number of fronts — from revelations certain brands are filtered municipal tap water to concerns bottles made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET) could leach chemicals.

But the Canadian Bottled Water Association's executive director, Elizabeth Griswold, says there's no need to worry.

As reported by The Canadian Press in 2006, Canadian scientist William Shotyk conducted a study that found the commonly used PET bottles leach potentially toxic chemicals such as antimony over time. But Griswold stresses that the amounts found were "so minute" that "it would be like putting a drop of water in a swimming pool."

She also points to the World Health Organization's guidelines for drinking-water quality that state antimony is not a carcinogen to humans if ingested (go to [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) and search for antimony).

"The only risk to human health is in the air and (if) you breathe it into your lungs," she says.

"So the amounts that could be leached out of the PET container are absolutely, positively not a risk to human health."

As for bottles that contain filtered tap water, Griswold describes a much more rigorous purifying process — she calls it a "multi-barrier approach" — than typically provided by home filtering systems.

And she points out that Health Canada's website (see the site's "questions and answers on bottled water" section) refers to bottled water's safety and recommends it for people with compromised immune systems.



Canada also has an excellent recycling rate, she says, adding 50 to 80 percent of the PET bottles are recycled. So far criticisms of bottled water haven't reduced sales, says Griswold, whose association represents about 100 manufacturers and others associated with the industry. In 2006, she says, Canadian sales of individualized and water cooler containers came in at \$731 million (that's 2.1 billion litres of water).

But groups like the action centre and the church may continue making waves, seeing a trend they think can be reversed. They point to everything from elimination of plastic bags in some grocery stores to recycling programs in municipalities like Halifax as evidence thinking can be changed.

"This is an easy thing that the average individual can make a change on," says Burns.

Kennedy sees using one of the refillable bottles sold by the United Church — hers quotes the Bible verse "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water" — as something she can do. It's an easy step, she says, considering many people across the globe still struggle daily just to find any clean drinking water.

"It really makes me weep," she says of the obvious irony.

"But norms can be changed ... Public pressure can change a situation, public awareness and choices in daily life can make a difference."

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## **April 28, 2008**

Clergy urged to speak on environment

BY YONAT SHIMRON, Staff Writer

The Rev. Sally Bingham is the godmother of the environmental movement in the religious community.

Back in the 1990s, when religiously based environmentalists were still viewed as nature worshippers, she founded Episcopal Power & Light. Now called Interfaith Power & Light, the nonprofit organization has 27 chapters across the United States, including North Carolina. The mission of the organization is to mobilize a religious response to global warming through the promotion of renewable energy and conservation.

Bingham, the president of Interfaith Power & Light and the environmental minister at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, met with 20 religious leaders at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Raleigh last week. She said religious communities have made remarkable strides in addressing the intersection of faith and global climate change, and she encouraged them not to give up.

"You clergy need to talk about it," she said. "I think it should be in every single sermon."

We caught up with her on the occasion of Earth Day on Tuesday to ask her about the progress religious people have made on the issue.

Q: How are churches becoming more active in environmental issues?

A: Environmental issues were once political issues. They didn't belong in the church. Now it's integral to mainstream religions in ways unimaginable five years ago. ... We're seeing changes in the liturgy to reflect care for creation. That's huge because in the Episcopal Church there's a deep tradition that resists change.

I am seeing clergy take this responsibility seriously enough to actually say that care for creation belongs with love, justice and peace. You hear the term "JPIC," or justice, peace and integrity of creation. It's putting care for creation on parallel with love, justice and peace ... We have a green mosque in Washington, D.C. We have hundreds of Protestant churches with solar panels on the roof. We have two large cathedrals with geothermal systems -- in Boston and in Cleveland, Ohio. The Catholic Cathedral in Los Angeles in solar.

Q: How has Interfaith Power & Light changed?

A: We now have an office in San Francisco and a staff of seven. We coordinate this national campaign. That means we help the state programs get started ... One of the important things we do is make sure the Interfaith Power & Light campaign doesn't get sidetracked. We don't want to be viewed as the Sierra Club at prayer. We're not political. We're not Republicans or Democrats. Our message is rooted in theology. It's different from an environmental organization. We want to be seen as conservative people coming from a theological perspective. We don't love trees more than people.

Q: What is the spiritual message you offer?

A: I see it as part of the commandment to love God and love your neighbor. If you love your neighbor, you don't pollute your neighbor's air. We are called to serve one another. If you see that your behavior is harming your neighbor and your neighborhood, other species, flora and fauna, or the next generation, it's a direct disobedience to the commandment. Jesus said what you do to the least of these you do to me. If vulnerable and poor communities are harmed by our behavior, we're insulting God.

Q: Would you call environmental degradation a sin?

A: If you knowingly drive a Hummer that gets 13 miles on the gallon and you don't care because you're big and important, that's a sin. These days, there are people who can afford to drive a Hummer but are buying a Toyota Prius. People want to do the right thing.

Q: How did Interfaith Power & Light get started?

A: I was on a mountaintop in Massachusetts with Steve MacAusland in 1996. We were both members of the Episcopal Ecological Network. We were on a trail walking, and frustrated that our committee never tackled any problems. We just talked about them. We knew that both California and Massachusetts were getting ready to deregulate electricity, and everybody would get to choose [their electric carrier]. We decided it was a great opportunity to show people where

their electricity comes from. In this conversation, we thought 'Let's get the Episcopal Church to buy renewable energy.' That's how it began.

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## **April 28, 2008**

Being green: A moral issue for churches

By JEFF STRICKLER, Star Tribune  
April 27, 2008

Emily Derke looked surprised when she was asked why she was attending church on Earth Day. In her mind, the question was not "why" but "why not?"

"I see Earth Day as a spiritual thing," said Derke, who drove from her home in Coon Rapids to St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral in downtown Minneapolis for an interfaith celebration. "God made the Earth, and now it's up to us to protect it. Everybody here [at the service] is here for the same purpose. It's all about the Earth."

Indeed, the faith community has become one of the major players in environmental issues. Coming from the standpoint of morals, religious groups are able to address green issues from a different perspective than the political or socioeconomic juggernaut.

The religious world "brings a sense of responsibility" to the ecological debate, said Ricky Nolan of Minneapolis, who also attended the service.

It's a movement that is growing by leaps and bounds that transcend denominational distinctions. Protecting the environment "truly has become a bridge issue," said the Rev. Mark Peterson, executive director of the Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy. "There might be minor differences of opinion over details, but everyone agrees on the main issues."

For proof of that unity, one need look no farther than the St. Mark's service, which included prayers by Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and American Indians. (A rabbi had to cancel because of a death in the family.)

"The act of faith for this age is to love the whole Earth," said the keynote speaker, the Rev. Peg Chamberlin, executive director of the Minnesota Council of Churches and president-elect of the National Council of Churches.

It hasn't always been that way. In 1991 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America sent Peterson out to talk to member churches about the environment. A dozen people would show up, and "we'd talk about turning off the lights when you left the room," he said. "That was about as sophisticated as it got."

Now he measures his audiences in the hundreds, and the topics are global in nature.

"Church environmental programs are becoming institutionalized, and I mean that in the best sense of the word," Chamberlin said. "Churches are giving their programs a staff, office space and an agenda. It wasn't that way 10 years ago."

And they are organizing. About 200 Minnesota churches have joined an interdenominational group called Congregations Caring for Creation. The Rev. Wanda Copeland, who served as director of the organization until stepping down recently to help launch an energy-conservation plan for the churches of downtown Minneapolis, said that congregations are a logical place for such a movement to begin.

"Churches are places where people with a natural affinity come together," she said. "They already have a common sense of values. The church is a natural place for them to start talking about these issues."

The fact that all religions include a God or higher power that created the Earth gives faiths a shared interest in protecting that Earth, said Cecilia Calvo, coordinator of the environmental justice programs for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"By showing respect for the creation, you also show respect for the creator," said Calvo, a native of Minneapolis. There also are numerous Bible passages calling on people to be good stewards of the Earth, including Genesis 2:15 when God instructs Adam and Eve to "tend and care for" the Garden of Eden.

No limits

Being able to work outside normal channels also is a plus, she said. Church membership supersedes political loyalties or business ties.

"We have a unique position," she said. "The church has the ability to play a convening role by bringing together government offices, scientists, environmental groups and labor groups. We can create a dialogue that is an important part of the process."

Nor is the movement limited by national borders. Last year the Church of England created a list of the 10 green commandments and published them in a booklet titled, "How Many Lightbulbs Does It Take to Change a Christian?"

And don't overlook the power that can be wielded by church leaders who are willing to rally their followers to the cause. Pope Benedict has devoted so much attention to environmental issues that Calvo dubbed him "the green pope" in an article she wrote.

In his very first homily as pope, she noted, Benedict warned of the danger in using the Earth's treasures "to serve the powers of exploitation and destruction."

A reinterpretation

It used to be argued that such behavior was condoned by the book of Genesis when it said that humans exercise "dominion" over Earth. But that reasoning has fallen out of fashion.

"It's based on a misinterpretation of 'dominion' as 'domination,' " Peterson said. "That's not what it means. It means 'caring for' the world."

And it's no longer an optional endeavor, said Rabbi Kenneth Cohen, a chaplain at American University in Washington, D.C., and author of "But Is It Jewish? A Reflection on Environmentalism and Justice."

"If the mandate given to Adam and Eve was once a matter of noblesse oblige, it is now a matter of survival," he said. "We are poisoning ourselves with pollution and squandering scarce resources, violating the Deuteronomic injunction to 'choose life.' "

One thing the faith community can bring to the environmental struggle is a positive attitude, said Ingrid Vick, Creation Care Coordinator for Peterson's group.

"A lot of the environmental talk focuses on the doomsday message," she said. "As part of the faith community, one of the things we can bring is hope. There are things people can do to make things better. We believe in that."

Jeff Strickler • 612-673-7392

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## **April 30, 2008**

NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO  
ALL THINGS CONSIDERED 28-4-08  
Anglican Leader Brings Climate to the Pulpit  
by Christopher Joyce

Listen Now [7 min 33 sec]

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89947582>

All Things Considered, April 28, 2008 · One thing climate experts often say is that people need to change their behavior to slow climate change. And they also acknowledge that they still have a lot of convincing to do before that will happen.

One man, Martin Palmer, argues that religion is a better messenger than science and politics — that it can do things the others cannot.

Palmer is the founder of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, a small group working out of Bath, England. Its credo is that religions from Buddhism to Zoroastrianism are the perfect groups to become climate activists.

## Power to Do Good

For one thing, these religions are in for the long haul. So they can tackle long-lasting problems like climate change. They also know how to talk to people — and not with scientific data.

"There are tens of thousands of scientists who do that perfectly well," Palmer says. "What we want to bring is the passion, the commitment ... and the interpretation of meaning that religion brings to that data."

Palmer says faiths can be very different on the subject of nature. Some see humans as stewards of the earth, while others believe the opposite — that nature protects humans. But Palmer's group has found messages about nature in nearly every faith they've examined.

With these messages, Palmer and his colleagues at the Alliance travel the globe, cajoling religious leaders to learn about climate change and take the message to their followers. And those leaders bring more to the table than faith — Palmer says they control as much as seven percent of the world's forests, forests that help curb global warming. The various official churches are, taken as a single institution, the world's third largest investor.

The Alliance advises church leaders to use this financial power to do environmental good. They instruct churches in investing in green projects and logging their forests in a more environmentally friendly way. For instance, they've helped Sikhs in India find alternatives to fossil fuel for their network of kitchens for the poor.

## Keeping Promises to the Earth

Palmer found his own faith as a child. He grew up in a working-class public housing project and when he was about ten years old, he had a fight with his parents and he ran off. He ended up at Wells Cathedral, one of England's finest cathedrals.

"I needed to be in a place of beauty," he says. At the cathedral he listened to Evensong, admired the vaulting architecture, and decided then that the little voice he'd heard in his head was a call to faith.

These days, Palmer brings his view of earth and heaven into the pulpit of his own church, just 200 yards from his house. On one April morning there are about a dozen parishioners in the pews, bundled up in winter coats. The church is humble, several hundred years old, and freezing.

"As you all know we're a carbon neutral church," he reminds them, laughing. "We rely on thermal underwear and body heat."

Palmer says priests and rabbis and imams know how to explain complicated, abstract ideas by using parable and metaphor. On this day, he tells a creation story from the ancient Jewish text, the Talmud.

"The Talmud says that the angels went to God and said, 'You just created this wonderful world and now you've created these human beings who will only go and mess it up. Are you start staring mad?' And God says, 'I know what I'm doing. I know what I'm doing.' And then the earth spoke, and the earth was afraid. And the earth said, 'These creatures, they will only rebel against me and harm me.' And God answers, 'I promise you that they will never be allowed to destroy you.'"

Palmer sees it as his job to help God keep that promise.

### Approaching Climate Change from the Heart

After church, Palmer laces up his muddy boots and walks an old Roman path to his home. When Romans lived here, and the climate was warmer, they grew grapes along this path. Experts say the climate will become warm like that again. But Palmer says experts usually don't know how to get people to do anything about it.

"The predominant model [of] the environmental movement ... is sin and guilt, topped by a good dollop of end-of-the-world language," he says with some disdain.

The better model, he says, is for people to celebrate nature and their place in it. That's a message that resonates with the United Nations, which is collaborating with the Alliance to organize world faiths around the issue of climate change. U.N. officials say they need people who can speak about climate change straight from, and to, the heart.

Palmer says that's a job he can do — with help from monks, priests, ministers and clerics of all faiths.

"My understanding of my God — and I work with many, many different religious traditions — is that my God is not there to solve the problems," Palmer says. "My God is there to say, 'You are co-creators with me, now... work out what that means.'"

"It is not about, if we pray hard enough to God, he will end climate change. Yes, we should pray to God. We should also get off our backsides, get out there, and do something about it," he says.

Radio piece produced by Rebecca Davis

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**May 1, 2008**

Saving 'God's creation' unites scientist, evangelical leader

By Billy Baker, Globe Correspondent | May 1, 2008

A Nobel laureate scientist and a leader of the evangelical Christian movement walk into a restaurant.

It sounds like the setup for a joke, a scenario that is screaming for a punch line that plays off the seemingly endless disagreements between faith and science.

But this is a true story, and Dr. Eric Chivian and the Rev. Richard Cizik have come up with a zinger no one could expect. They went to lunch together to agree on something - the need to curb negative human impact on the Earth. And the partnership they formed that afternoon in 2005 has led this odd couple of the environmental movement to be named, today, to Time Magazine's list of the 100 most influential people in the world.

"I must admit I approached that meeting with some anxiety," said Chivian (pronounced chih-vee-an), director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School, "I'm involved in evolutionary biology. I support stem cell research. I have gay friends who are married. I felt I had positions that would be at odds with his."

Cizik (pronounced sigh-zik), vice president for governmental affairs for the 45,000-church National Association of Evangelicals in Washington, D.C., had similar reservations. But, as they point out, they were not there to discuss their differences. What brought them together is what Chivian calls "a deep, fundamental commitment to life on earth."

Together, they formed the Scientists and Evangelicals Initiative, which aims to unite the two communities to help bring an environmental message into the large and powerful evangelical movement.

The problem, according to Cizik, is that many in the evangelical community have built a barrier between themselves and the scientific community because of the way they have been treated for their belief in creation over evolution. As a consequence, many have made what Cizik calls the illogical decision to turn a deaf ear to what science has to say about climate change.

"It's God's creation that is at stake," he said. "If we don't address this problem, history will not forgive us, and God won't either. He's given us a mandate to care and protect His creation. When we die, He's going to ask us what we did with what He created. That's the question that every one of us has to answer."

The two have organized a retreat for religious and scientific leaders, delivered a statement to the National Press Club calling for Evangelicals and environmentalists to come together - a move that led 25 religious leaders to write a letter calling for Cizik to be "silenced or fired," he said - and led a joint expedition to Alaska to witness the effects of climate change.

In the Time Magazine issue, which hits newsstands tomorrow, Chivian and Cizik are referred to as an unlikely pair. That's putting it mildly: Their current collaboration is deeply ironic when you consider that these new friends both made their names on the opposite sides of another frightening global issue: nuclear arms.

Cizik, now 56, drafted the letter that invited President Reagan to address the National Association of Evangelicals in 1983 about the US-Soviet nuclear standoff. That address was Reagan's famous "evil empire" speech.



Chivian, a professor of psychiatry at Beth Israel-Deaconess, shared the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize for his work as a founder of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, an organization that brought US and Soviet doctors together to make clear the horrific medical reality of nuclear war.

For Chivian, his work with Cizik is in many ways a continuation of what he began during the nuclear standoff. "It's another case of bringing together communities that are at great odds to speak as one on an issue of enormous importance," he said.

On the whole, both Chivian and Cizik said their scientist-evangelical partnership has gone smoother than either anticipated. Before bringing both sides into the same room, Chivian consulted with conflict resolution specialists; they never needed them. The scientists have agreed to refer to the natural world as the creation, and evangelicals have painted the broader issue under the umbrella term "creation care." (Chivian, personally, thinks "Armageddon in slow motion" is a more apt description.)

Chivian, 56, said that the initial success has left him with no other position than to be optimistic about the future.

"Pessimism is a recipe for inaction," Chivian said. "We have to believe that all people want to do the right thing. Through this partnership, it's become clear that there is no such thing as a liberal environment or a conservative environment or a secular or spiritual environment. It's all the same environment.

"Whether you believe God created life on earth, or that it evolved over billions of years, it doesn't matter. We all feel that life, however, it came to be, is sacred. And it is our shared duty to protect it."

[http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/05/01/saving\\_gods\\_creation\\_unites\\_scientist\\_evangelical\\_leader?mode=PF](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/05/01/saving_gods_creation_unites_scientist_evangelical_leader?mode=PF).

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**May 6, 2008**

Indonesians use Koran to teach environmentalism

By Peter Gelling

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

BANTUL, Indonesia: Sitting cross-legged in the dirt beneath a canopy of jungle vegetation, Nasruddin Anshory, with his Koran open in front of him, was telling a group of visitors about their ordained responsibility to protect the environment.

"As a Muslim," he said, "you have to do something."

His visitors were a mix of people from universities and mosques all over the island of Java, seeking to broaden their understanding of Islam. Off to the side were several students from Gajah Mada University nearby, eagerly taking notes in preparation for their dissertations, all of which will focus on promoting conservation through Islam.

Nasruddin founded Ilmu Giri, an Islamic school devoted to environmentalism, five years ago. But in the past couple of years, as global awareness of climate change and related problems has increased, interest in the school has swelled.

During the Islamic holy month of Ramadan last year, Nasruddin said, thousands visited Ilmu Giri. At the United Nations conference on global climate change in Bali last December, Nasruddin was something of a star. One local newspaper called him a "hero."

His school, however, represents just the latest manifestation of an important strain within Islamic education in Indonesia. Koranic environmental principles form the core tenet of many schools here.

This belies a common perception abroad that pesantren, as Islamic boarding schools are called in Indonesia, are mostly extremist breeding grounds. Only a few hours away from Ilmu Giri is Pesantren al-Mukmin, some of whose graduates are associated with the Southeast Asian terrorist network Jemaah Islamiyah.

But Ahmad Suaedy, executive director of the Wahid Institute, an organization based in Jakarta that promotes peaceful and pluralistic Islam, said pesantren are more often than not involved in positive social and economic development. Environmentalism, he said, is just the most recent pesantren cause.

"Environmental awareness is growing more and more among the pesantren community," he said. "This is partly because there is more attention to the environment in Indonesia in general and the recent United Nations conference in Bali."

The first environmental pesantren in Indonesia, however, was founded long before the United Nations or anyone else took notice of climate change.

On the island of Madura off northeastern Java is Pesantren Guluk-Guluk, also called Al Nuqayah, which was established in 1887. Its founder, Muhammad Syarqawi, who had traveled to Mecca, originally opened the school to spread Islam on an island that was then a lawless place, often a violent one.

He soon concluded that the fundamental problem was the small island's devastated environment. It was desperately dry, and fresh water was scarce.

So Syarqawi shifted his focus to teaching the island's villagers, with the help of the Koran, about conservation.

The Koran, Suaedy says, contains numerous references to environmental protection, including the line: "Don't do destruction upon this earth." At one point, the Koran equates a human life with that of a tree: "Do not kill women, elders, children, civilians or trees."

Saleem Ali, associate dean of graduate studies at the Rubenstein School for the Environment at the University of Vermont, says Islamic environmentalism can be traced back to the religion's origins in the seventh century.

"The advent of Islam as an organized religion occurred in the desert environment of Arabia, and hence there was considerable attention paid to ecological concerns within Islamic ethics," he said. "There is a reverence of nature that stems from essential pragmatism within the faith."

Guluk-Guluk, which is coeducational and whose students range from elementary to university age, has won several prestigious local and international awards, yet it remained the only one of its kind for decades.

Attendance in the past 20 years, however, has ballooned to more than 6,500 from 1,200, and a number of its graduates have gone on to open schools all over Indonesia.

But it is the much smaller Ilmu Giri near Yogyakarta, in central Java, that is drawing the most attention these days. That might owe something to Nasruddin's sprawling network of friends across the globe.

He is a former researcher for several private organizations, work that took him to more than 60 countries. He also produces television soap operas and is an award-winning poet. His writings are mostly protests against government neglect of economic and social needs.

"It makes me tremble to see average Indonesians suffer as their government ignores their problems," he said in an interview at the school.

The school itself resembles a sort of tiny outdoor summer camp, complete with cabins and a makeshift volleyball court, in a hillside hamlet made up mostly of farmers. The few buildings, including the small mosque, are open structures of bamboo, but many of the discussions take place outside anyway. Trees seem to be slowly swallowing up the buildings. Chickens, cows and other animals roam freely.

In the school's first days, he taught only adults, mostly farmers from the vicinity. He gave them seedlings, and within several years hillsides that had been stripped by logging were green.

Last year, Nasruddin organized the planting of another 1,000 trees.

"I remember stories of landslides destroying crops and houses," said Wardoyo, a young Ilmu Giri student who grew up in the same village. "Now, if we have to cut down one tree, we plant two more."

<http://www.iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=12604743>.

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**May 9, 2008**

Germany Hosts Global Conference on Biological Diversity - Promoting a Global Response for Addressing the Unprecedented Loss of Biodiversity

Nairobi/Montreal / Bonn, 8 May 2008 - "Renewing agricultural diversity of crops and livestock backed by a functional natural support system is the international community's best long-term solution to meet the global food challenge," said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity prior to the start of the global conference on biodiversity on 19 May 2008 in Bonn, Germany.

The meeting of 191 countries takes place at a time when the international community is faced with one of the most severe food crisis of modern history. The prices of basic staples-wheat, corn, rice-are at record highs, and global food stocks are at historical lows. Indeed, one of the most important challenges facing mankind is to feed a growing population in an increasingly urbanized world confronted with the combined impacts of climate change and the unprecedented loss of biodiversity.

The renewal of agricultural biological diversity, including ways to address the adverse effects of climate change, is among the main issues for discussion at the two-week conference.

"Agriculture is considered a prime example of how human activities profoundly impact the ecological functioning of the planet," said Dr. Djoghlaif. "During the past 50 years, humans have altered ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any other period in human history. Indeed, more land was converted to cropland during the last fifty years than in the previous two centuries. This is why the issue of biodiversity and agriculture is on the agenda of the Bonn conference and is the theme for this year's International Day for Biological Diversity, which will be celebrated throughout the world on 22 May."

Since the dawn of history, humans have used more than 7,000 plant species to satisfy their needs. During the last 100 years, seventy-five per cent of the food-crop varieties we once grew are no longer cultivated. Today, we rely on just three-wheat, rice and maize-for over two thirds of our calories. This increased dependency on limited biological diversity drastically escalates the global risk that it may be impossible to sustain future food supplies for a growing population in a warmer planet. As stated by Mr. Djoghlaif, "The unfolding food crisis is a symptom of a much more profound problem."

The Bonn biodiversity meeting will also address the accelerated rate of deforestation. According to Mr. Djoghlaif, "Every minute, 20 hectares of forests are disappearing. Every year more than 10 million hectares of forests are destroyed. However, 80% of biodiversity is found in forests, especially tropical forests."

The conference takes place two years before the deadline for achieving the 2010 biodiversity target, adopted in 2002 by 110 Heads of State and Government, of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss at the global and national level by 2010, as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. The participants will also agree on a road map to finalize, by 2010, the negotiation of an agreed set of rules on access to genetic resources and sharing of the benefits derived from their utilization. The "International regime on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of their utilization" will be a major tool for ensuring the successful implementation of the Millennium development Goals and eradicating poverty.

Achim Steiner, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), said: "Our planet has witnessed five mass extinctions over the millions of years of life on Earth. A sixth is currently under way, driven for the first time in history by mainly human impacts. Over the coming decades the pace of loss of species could rise to 1,000 to 10,000 times the background rate. This is nothing less than asset-stripping of the globe's natural and nature-based capital—from forests and coral reefs to river systems and soils."

"There are many shining examples of intelligent management of the planet's nature-based resources. The time has come to accelerate and replicate them across the globe backed by sufficient finance, creative market mechanisms, the strengthening of efforts to achieve the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, including access to genetic resources and benefit sharing, and a new sense of urgency. In Bali, we had a breakthrough on climate change. In Bonn, we need nothing less than a breakthrough on biodiversity," he said.

Brunei Darussalam, one of the richest countries in terms of biodiversity, will be welcomed by the expected 6,000 participants to the Bonn biodiversity meeting as the 191st Party to the Convention.

The meeting will also be attended by Heads of State and Government, and an unprecedented number of ministers of the environment are also expected, together with representatives of Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, indigenous and local communities, youth, mayors, parliamentarians, and the scientific, media and business communities. The proceedings of the meeting will be broadcast live over the Web and can be accessed through the CBD website ([www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)).

The Bonn meeting will be concluded by the convening of a Global Ministerial Forum with the expected participation of more than 100 ministers. This meeting will be opened by German Federal Chancellor Ms Angela Merkel with the participation of other Heads of State and Government. At this session, the German Government is expected to announce a specific commitment for preserving biological diversity and ecological systems titled the "Life Web Initiative." This will be followed by an invitation to all Governments for making similar concrete commitments. "Germany has established a Nature Alliance, and we hope that the Bonn meeting will be remembered as the cradle of a universal global alliance for protecting life on Earth," said Mr. Djoghlaif.

"The purpose of this initiative is to match voluntary commitments for the designation of new protected areas and improved management of existing areas with commitments for dedicated financing of these areas," said Mr. Sigmar Gabriel, Germany's Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

He added that: "Progress in establishing a global network of protected areas is, in our view, one of the key topics of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The network of protected areas is one of the central instruments for halting the dramatic global loss of species and habitats and for providing a solid basis for the conservation of natural resources. Intact habitats such as forests, wetlands and coral reefs are also

important sinks for climate gases and play a fundamental role in the natural regulation of the climate. Conserving habitats is active climate protection."

The Convention describes protected areas as a geographically defined area managed primarily to achieve specific conservation objectives, and considers them an important stock of natural and cultural capital, yielding flows of economically valuable goods and services that benefit human populations.

In the words of Marina Silva, President of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in Curitiba, Brazil, in 2006 and Minister of the Environment of Brazil: "Two years ago in Curitiba, a new phase of enhanced implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity was born. The Bonn biodiversity meeting should be a milestone in a new phase of enhanced commitment to the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention, including tangible progress in the negotiations towards the Bonn compact for the adoption of an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing"

#### The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from utilization of genetic resources. With 191 Parties, the CBD has near-universal participation among countries committed to preserving life on Earth. The CBD seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The headquarters of the Secretariat of the Convention are located in Montreal,. For additional information, please contact Marie Aminata Khan at +1 514 287 8701; email: marie.khan@cbd.int

#### Information for journalists

To access the live webcast, please visit the home page of the CBD website, [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int), and follow the links indicated.

<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=535&ArticleID=5805&l=en>.

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**May 12, 2008**

#### UNEP/CBD NEWS RELEASE

Largest international gathering on Biosafety meets in Bonn to finalize arrangements for the Cartagena Protocol

Bonn, May 12 2008- Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety opened their fourth meeting today at the Maritim Hotel in Bonn, in

Germany. More than 3000 participants from 147 countries assembled to fulfill their commitment to ensuring the safe use of modern biotechnology, including reaching an agreement on international rules on liability and redress for potential damages caused by LMOs. Their discussions will continue until 16 May 2008.

One of the main issues of this five-day meeting is the elaboration of international rules and procedures on liability and redress with respect to damage resulting from the transboundary movements of living modified organisms (LMOs), commonly referred to as genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Discussions will be based on the report of the working group, established in 2004 at the first meeting of the Parties, which was mandated to elaborate the options.

The importance of reaching agreement on international rules and procedures on liability and redress, Article 27 of the Protocol, was also emphasized by Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity. "I urge you to seize the moment" he said. "Postponing action on Article 27 is no longer an option."

"You are mandated to fulfill the requirement, set out in Article 27 in 2000, when the Protocol was signed," said Mr. Djoghlaif. "In doing this, you will ensure the effective implementation of the Protocol."

Ambassador Raymundo Magno of Brazil, speaking on behalf of the chair of the third meeting of the Parties, Environment Minister Marina Silva, reminded delegates of the successes at MOP-3 in forging a common vision with regard to documentation requirements under Article 18. "Now we have the opportunity to put in place another key element of the Protocol - rules and procedures on liability and redress." he said.

Ursula Heinen, the deputy minister for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection for Germany, the president for this meeting also referred to liability and redress and said "I feel very confident, therefore, that constructive and successful talks on this subject will ensue this week." She called for delegates to "show readiness to compromise." She also thanked the government of Brazil for its work in the previous presidency.

Delegates to the meeting will discuss a variety of other issues, including ways to finance the continued work of the Protocol, the socio economic impacts of LMOs on biodiversity, new developments for the Biosafety Clearing-House and further guidance on specific aspects of risk assessment and risk management.

Coinciding with the opening of the meeting, was a festival and

demonstration organized by civil society organizations. Organized in the context of the Planet Diversity conference, it drew over 6,000 people. "Civil society is another important actor for implementation of the Protocol" said Ahmed Djoghlaif, addressing the audience. "We welcome your voice of support."

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#### Notes for Journalists

1. The Protocol entered into force on 11 September 2003 and to date 147 States as well as the European Community have ratified it, the latest to do so being: Suriname, Guyana, Myanmar and Guinea.
2. Since the coming into effect of the Protocol on 11 September 2003, the COP-MOP has held three meetings-in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004; in Montreal in June 2005; and in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2006.
3. In accordance with Article 34 of the Protocol, the COP-MOP has adopted procedures and mechanisms on compliance with the Protocol and established a Compliance Committee to promote compliance, to address cases of non-compliance, and to provide advice or assistance. To date, the Committee has held four meetings, the last being held in Montreal from 21 to 23 November 2007.
4. Article 27 of the Protocol states that: "The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Protocol shall, at its first meeting, adopt a process with respect to the appropriate elaboration of international rules and procedures in the field of liability and redress for damage resulting from transboundary movements of living modified organisms, analysing and taking due account of the ongoing processes in international law on these matters, and shall endeavour to complete this process within four years."
5. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Liability and Redress in the context of Protocol held five meetings. The first four were held in Montreal, as follows: 25-27 May 2005, 20-24 February 2006, 19-23 February 2007 and 22-26 October 2007, and the fifth was held in Cartagena, Colombia, 12-19 March 2008.
6. Details about the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties including procedures for media accreditation can be found at: <http://www.cbd.int/mop4/>
7. For access to the live webcast of the proceedings of the meeting, please visit <http://www.cbd.int/mop4/webcast/>



8. Additional information about the Protocol is available at the following websites:

CBD Web site: <http://www.cbd.int/biosafety>  
and the Biosafety Clearing-House: <http://bch.cbd.int>.  
Frequently asked questions are also available at:  
<http://www.cbd.int/biosafety/faqs.asp>  
For further information, please contact [David.Ainsworth@cbd.int](mailto:David.Ainsworth@cbd.int)  
Mobile: +49 0170 558 5819

International Day for Biological Diversity

22 May 2008 - Biodiversity and Agriculture

[www.cbd.int/ibd/2008](http://www.cbd.int/ibd/2008)

COP9 MOP4

Bonn Germany May 2008

[www.cbd.int/cop9](http://www.cbd.int/cop9)

[www.cbd.int/mop4](http://www.cbd.int/mop4)

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**May 12, 2008**

Evangelicals press to fight global warming

By Jonathan J. Cooper

POST-DISPATCH WASHINGTON BUREAU

Friday, May. 09 2008

WASHINGTON — When the Senate takes up legislation next month to confront global warming, environmental groups will have some fervent new allies: evangelicals and other Christian activists.

Concerned about what they see as a moral and biblical issue, religious groups from the right are joining with environmental organizations from the left in supporting strong measures to fight global warming.

Some Christian leaders are using the clout they have built up in Republican circles to lobby conservatives in Congress to support regulations on greenhouse-gas emissions.

"When evangelicals speak, Republicans listen," said Richard Cizik, vice president of government affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals. "And Republicans, frankly, are listening to what we're saying."

For many religious groups, global warming isn't a political or environmental issue. It's a threat to God's creation.

"It's not a blue state, red state, scientific, or even a green issue," said Cizik, whose organization represents 45,000 churches. "It's a spiritual issue. And that, above all else, is why evangelical Christians should be concerned."

The once-tiny Christian environmental movement began accelerating quickly in 2006, when 85 prominent evangelical leaders signed on to the Evangelical Climate Initiative calling for action on global warming. The number has climbed to more than 100.

"It's a bit out of the ordinary for evangelicals to be involved with this issue," said Jim Jewell, chief operating officer of the Evangelical Environmental Network, a group that educates and mobilizes Christians on environmental issues. "The evangelical involvement with climate has kind of shaken the political landscape a bit."

In March, dozens of prominent Southern Baptist leaders called on followers to acknowledge human contributions to global warming, and demanded bold action to address climate change.

They said the church's cautious approach was "too timid" in promoting stewardship of God's creation.

"To abandon these issues to the secular world is to shirk from our responsibility..." they declared. "The time for timidity regarding God's creation is no more."

Jonathan Merritt, the 25-year-old seminary student from Atlanta who organized the Baptist environmental declaration, said younger Baptists in particular were relieved to see church leaders take a bold public stance.

Young religious voters aren't abandoning opposition to abortion and gay marriage — issues usually associated with the religious right — but they seem more willing than their parents to look at a broader spectrum of political positions, Merritt said.

"Younger Christians are finding it more pressing to live a life that is consistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ ... rather than toe a party line," Merritt said.

The Rev. Larry Rice, director of the New Life Evangelistic Center in St. Louis, has been an outspoken advocate for global warming legislation. The left-leaning minister said Missouri is "in the dark age when it comes to renewable energy" and has argued for years that Christians have an obligation to protect the environment.

"There's an ethical principle that runs the whole thread of Christianity here," Rice said. "You can't just say that you love your neighbors as yourself and yet be totally indifferent to how your use of fossil fuels is directly contributing to global warming around the world."

#### 'CAP-AND-TRADE'

Evangelicals will join an army of lobbyists and lawmakers now suiting up for battle over the most sweeping environmental legislation in years, which the Senate intends to debate early in June.

The bill, sponsored by Sens. Joseph I. Lieberman, I-Conn., and John W. Warner, R-Va., would create a program known as "cap-and-trade" to limit harmful carbon dioxide emissions.

Under the bill, companies, individuals and government agencies would see their greenhouse gas emissions capped at an annually decreasing level, with the goal of setting emissions in 2050 at 30 percent of 2005 levels.

Entities that come in below their cap could sell their remaining credits to others that pollute beyond their limits. The effect is a sort of carbon tax that encourages pollution reduction.

The bill is already the subject of intense political gamesmanship. Some business lobbyists fear the costs of complying with pollution caps and the penalties for exceeding them. Some environmental groups say the standards are too weak.

Backers of the bill hope support from the religious right will help pressure some Republicans to support the legislation.

"There's a good deal of interaction with folks at traditionally religious organizations, who have joined with environmental organizations to begin work on this," said David Sandretti, a spokesman for the League of Conservation Voters, an environmental interest group.

#### FOCUS ON MISSOURI

As the action unfolds on Capitol Hill, Missouri's two senators are likely to

play important roles.

Sen. Christopher "Kit" Bond, a Republican, has for years been one of the loudest critics of the science behind global warming and is a key opponent of the Lieberman-Warner bill.

The Environmental Defense Fund identified Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., as one of 10 "senators to watch." McCaskill is undecided on the cap-and-trade bill, saying she favors the concept but worries about how it might affect utility costs for poor people.

McCaskill's staff has discussed cap-and-trade with religious leaders urging her to support the initiative.

"We're paying special attention to Senator McCaskill," said the Rev. Jim Ball, a national spokesman for the Evangelical Climate Initiative.

McCaskill's staff also has talked about the issue with religious leaders working with the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, a broad coalition of religious groups that includes Catholic, Jewish and other organizations.

"This is far and away the single highest environmental priority for the American religious community," said Paul Gorman, the partnership's executive director. "There's isn't a single state in the union where people of faith and religious leaders aren't communicating their support for this bill."

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<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/washington/story/BA9AA349B96E759886257444000A4D14?OpenDocument>

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**May 13, 2008**

Billion Tree Campaign to Grow into the Seven Billion Tree Campaign

Grassroots Initiative Hits Two Billion Mark -Target Raised to Over One Tree Per Person by Crucial 2009 Climate Convention Meeting

Nairobi, 13 May 2008 - A unique worldwide tree planting initiative, aimed at empowering citizens to corporations and people up to presidents to embrace the climate change challenge, has now set its sights on planting seven billion trees.

It follows the news, also announced today, that the Billion Tree Campaign has in just 18 months catalyzed the planting of two billion trees, double its original target.

The campaign, spearheaded by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), was unveiled in 2006 as one response to the threat but also the opportunities of global warming, as well as to the wider sustainability challenges from water supplies to biodiversity loss.

To date the initiative, which is under the patronage of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Kenyan Green Belt Movement founder Professor Wangari Maathai and His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco, has broken every target set and has catalyzed tree planting in close to 155 countries.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director, said today: "When the Billion Tree Campaign was launched at the Climate Convention meeting in Nairobi in 2006, no one could have imagined it could have flowered so fast and so far. But it has given expression to the frustrations but also the hopes of millions of people around the world".

"Having exceeded every target that has been set for the campaign, we are now calling on individuals, communities, business and industry, civil society organizations and governments to evolve this initiative onto a new and even higher level by the crucial climate change conference in Copenhagen in late 2009," he said.

"In 2006 we wondered if a billion tree target was too ambitious; it was not. The goal of two billion trees has also proven to be an underestimate. The goal of planting seven billion trees ? equivalent to just over a tree per person alive on the planet ? must therefore also be do-able given the campaign's extraordinary track record and the self-evident worldwide support," he added.

The Billion Tree Campaign has become a practical expression of private and public concern over global warming.

Heads of State including the presidents of Indonesia, the Maldives, Mexico, Turkey and Turkmenistan as well as businesses; cities; faith, youth and community groups have enthusiastically taken part. Individuals have accounted for over half of all participants.

? In a single day in Uttar Pradesh, India, 10.5 million trees were planted.

? 35 million young people in Turkey have been mobilized to plant trees.

? 500,000 schoolchildren in sub-Saharan Africa and the United Kingdom have become engaged.

It has also attracted the support of multilateral organizations including the Convention on Biological Diversity whose new Green Wave initiative was launched in advance of its important conference being held in Bonn, Germany later this month, and which supports the Billion, now Seven Billion, Tree Campaign.

Tree planting remains one of the most cost-effective ways to address climate change. Trees and forests play a vital role in regulating the climate since they absorb carbon dioxide ? containing an

estimated 50% more carbon than the atmosphere. Deforestation, in turn, accounts for over 20% of the carbon dioxide humans generate, rivaling the emissions from other sources.

Trees also play a crucial role in providing a range of products and services to rural and urban populations, including food, timber, fiber, medicines and energy as well as soil fertility, water and biodiversity conservation.

"The Billion Tree Campaign has not only helped to mobilize millions of people to respond to the challenges of climate change, it has also opened the door, especially for the rural poor, to benefit from the valuable products and services the trees provide," said Dennis Garrity, Director General of the Nairobi-based World Agroforestry Centre. "Smallholder farmers could also benefit from the rapidly growing global carbon market by planting and nurturing trees," he said.

The two billionth tree was put into the ground as part of an agroforestry project carried out by the UN's World Food Programme (WFP). It now planted 60 million trees in 35 countries to improve food security. This news comes as the United Nations calls for resolute action to end the global food crisis which affects an estimated 73 million people in 80 countries around the world.

In announcing the agency's contribution to the Billion Tree Campaign, WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran said: "WFP is concerned about rising costs of food and fuel which inevitably hit the 'bottom billion' hardest. More people will require WFP assistance at a time when WFP's current programmes are reaching fewer due to the critical funding gap created by rising costs."

In terms of geographic distribution, Africa is the leading region with over half of all tree plantings. Regional and national governments organized the most massive plantings, with Ethiopia leading the count at 700 million, followed by Turkey (400 million), Mexico (250 million), and Kenya (100 million).

The campaign has also generated significant appeal in post-conflict and post-disaster environments. In acting upon the words of the campaign's patron Wangari Maathai "when we plant trees, we plant the seeds of peace and seeds of hope," communities in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq, Liberia and Somalia contributed to the global effort with over 2 million trees.

Furthermore, mangrove plantings were organized by Planète Urgence in Banda Aceh and other Indonesian provinces recovering from the December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, while Replant New Orleans initiative in the United States sponsored a planting of fruit-bearing trees to breathe new life into a community struggling in the aftermath of the 2005 Hurricane Katrina.

The private sector pitched in as well, accounting for almost 6% of all trees planted. Multinational corporations including Bayer, Toyota, Yves Rocher, Accor Group of Hotels and Tesco Lotus supported the campaign, as did hundreds of medium and small-sized enterprises the world over.

The Billion Tree Campaign has further highlighted the cultural and spiritual dimension of trees with groups as diverse as the International Olympic Committee, the World Scouting Movement, SOS Sahel Initiative or yet "Geiko and Maiko for Forests" ? Japanese geishas from the hometown of the Kyoto Protocol ? actively participating in the initiative.

"The Billion Tree Campaign is UNEP's call to the nearly 7 billion people sharing our planet today to take simple, positive steps to protect our climate. It is a defining issue of our era that can only be tackled through individual and collective action. I am convinced that the new target will be met ? one tree at a time," concluded Executive Director Steiner.

Notes to Editors

The Billion Tree Campaign web site with pledges, plantings and news is at

[www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign](http://www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign)

<http://www.worldagroforestry.org/billiontreecampaign/>

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is at

<http://unfccc.int>

The Copenhagen 2009 Climate Change Conference is at

[www.cop15.dk/en/](http://www.cop15.dk/en/)

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is at

<http://www.cbd.int/>

The CBD's Green Wave is at

<http://greenwave.cbd.int/>

The CBD's COP 9 website is at

[www.cbd.int/cop9/](http://www.cbd.int/cop9/)

The World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) is at

[www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/](http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/)

The World Food Programme (WFP) is at

[www.wfp.org/](http://www.wfp.org/)

The Nature Conservancy is at

[www.nature.org/](http://www.nature.org/)

UNEP's climate change pages are at

[www.unep.org/themes/climatechange/](http://www.unep.org/themes/climatechange/)

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<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=535&ArticleID=5806&l=en>.

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## May 16, 2008

May 16, 2008

National Baptist group gets Inhofe's support

By Chris Casteel

Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Sen. Jim Inhofe joined religious leaders from the Southern Baptist General Convention and other groups on Thursday in asking Christians to sign a petition against global warming proposals that they say would hurt the poor.

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The "We Get It!" campaign launched Thursday encourages Christians to sign a statement that says stewardship of the environment should be based on biblical principles and "factual



evidence.” It says "environmental policies must not further oppress the world's poor by denying them basic needs.”

Barrett Duke, vice president of the Ethics and Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, said the "science isn't settled” on global warming.

He also said that "the poor will be hit hardest if we make energy and food more expensive.”

Inhofe, R-Tulsa, and others at a news conference, said evangelicals aren't as divided over the issue of global warming as the public might think.

But, clearly, there are some divisions, including on how best to serve the poor.

Other evangelicals support initiatives

Inhofe has clashed with a top leader of the National Evangelical Association, Richard Cizik, who has advocated for evangelicals to become active on environmental issues.

A group called the Evangelical Climate Initiative supports legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and last week praised Sen. John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee for president, for proposing a plan to reduce emissions.

The Evangelical Climate Initiative contends that global warming will hurt the poor, while others contend the remedies would be more harmful since restrictions on emissions would raise the price of energy.

What's next?

The Senate is expected to take up legislation early next month aimed at curbing emissions.

Inhofe, the leading skeptic in Congress that human activity is causing climate change, predicted Thursday that the bill would fail.

<http://newsok.com/national-baptist-group-gets-inhofes-support/article/3244282>.

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## May 22, 2008

**BIODIVERSITY NEEDED TO FEED THE WORLD THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY 22 MAY 2008** Bonn, 22 May 2008—Against a background of rising food prices, and with pressures from climate change affecting fields and orchards, celebrations of the International Day of Biological Diversity (IBD) will stress the need to properly protect and manage the world's biodiversity in order to ensure a secure supply of food for a growing world population. "Agriculture can promote biological diversity if it shows due respect for nature. But agriculture can also become a danger for biological diversity, e.g. through the excessive use of pesticides or by creating monocultures. However, one thing is beyond doubt: agricultural production is directly dependent on the resources and services provided by the diversity of nature", said German Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel, President of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity which is taking place in Bonn, Germany, until 30 May. "The protection of the world's biodiversity is

essential to the world's food supply," Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, noted that: "If current extinction rates continue, it will be hard to provide sufficient food for a global population that is expected to reach nine billion by mid-century." Mr. Djoghlaif went on to say "Biodiversity will become even more crucial in the future as climate change is creating uncertainty over which plant and livestock species will remain viable under changing conditions. For example, farmers in the Andes guard against crop failure from heat or frost by planting a number of different varieties of potatoes. Access to these varieties protects their livelihoods." In his message for the International Day, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that "Of the 7,000 species of plants that have been domesticated over the 10,000-year history of agriculture, only 30 account for the vast majority of the food we eat every day. Relying on so few species for sustenance is a losing strategy." At the ongoing meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Bonn, delegates are reviewing the Convention's work on agricultural biodiversity and identifying ways in which countries can work towards more sustainable methods in agriculture. Government representatives, along with nongovernmental organizations, are deciding on a series of measures that would move the world closer to the globally-agreed goal of reversing the loss of biodiversity

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by 2010. It is estimated that human activity is causing species to become extinct at a rate of 100-1000 times the natural rate of extinction. "Agriculture and nature conservation must find ways to work together hand in hand to significantly reduce the global loss of biodiversity", Mr. Gabriel said, adding that "This is a very ambitious task that the delegates of 191 States have to solve within the next few days in Bonn." Later today, delegates will listen to remarks from the Environment Minister of Germany, the United Nations Secretary-General, a video message from Jacques Diouf, the Director-General of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and a keynote address by Robert Watson, on the International Assessment on Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), among others. Mr. Djoghlaif said that a major long-term goal in confronting the current global food crisis is to organize agriculture in a manner that both protects and supports surrounding ecosystems. "We can ensure a secure food supply if we take the necessary measures to use our resources properly," Mr. Djoghlaif said. "We need to ensure that we use our water resources efficiently. We need to use the right mix of fertilizer. We need to keep our soils fertile and we need to keep our forests and wetlands intact." Biodiversity, Mr. Djoghlaif said, will also play a major role in providing a balanced diet for more people. Greater diversity provides for a more varied diet, which permits people to strike a proper balance between growing and raising the right kinds of foods. "We need to promote the idea that our nutrition should be based to a large extent on the land's ability to support a certain diet." Through the Convention on Biological Diversity, countries are working on guidelines for agricultural practices. In particular, there are a series of initiatives under the Convention to protect soil biodiversity, curb the loss of pollinators, and maintain the variety of foodstuffs needed to ensure proper food and nutrition. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from utilization of genetic resources. With 191 Parties, the CBD has near-universal participation among countries committed to preserving life on Earth. The CBD seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools,

incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The headquarters of the Secretariat of the Convention are located in Montreal. For additional information, please contact Marie Aminata Khan at +1 514 287 8701; email: [marie.khan@cbd.int](mailto:marie.khan@cbd.int) or David Ainsworth at +49 0170 558 5819; email: [david.ainsworth@cbd.int](mailto:david.ainsworth@cbd.int).

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The International Day for Biological Diversity

The United Nations proclaimed 22 May the International Day for Biological Diversity (IBD) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. For more information go to [www.cbd.int/ibd/2008/](http://www.cbd.int/ibd/2008/)

Go to: <http://www.cbd.int/doc/press/2008/pr-2008-05-22-ibd-en.pdf>.

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## May 24, 2008

More Iowans draw link between faith, protecting God's creation

By MARY STEGMEIR, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

POSTED: May 24, 2008

Article Photos

### AP PHOTO

People examine energy use charts printed after the Cool Congregation presentation and energy audit interviews in Waterloo. Two years ago, Sarah Webb and fellow St. Luke's Episcopal Church members Ann Eastman and Kate Dunning, developed Cool Congregations, an energy efficiency program designed especially for church-goers.

WATERLOO — Elizabeth Becker's ponytail whipped in the wind last weekend as the teen dug her spade into the grass outside First Congregational United Church of Christ.

Soon, with help from members of two other downtown church youth groups, the 18-year-old was ready to plant a white pine sapling in the exposed soil.

"I believe in God, and this is God's creation," the East High School senior said, after carefully arranging mulch around the young tree. "We have to step up and keep it the way he wants it."

To Becker, who spent her morning planting trees near other downtown churches, the link between faith and the natural world is clear. It is a view that is gaining traction in churches, synagogues and mosques across the country and in the Cedar Valley. As pollution and global warming have gained increasing attention in secular society, a growing number of faith communities have added environmental stewardship to their ministries.

"Every faith tradition has an ethic that calls us to care for creation, but we've ignored that for hundreds and hundreds of years," said Sarah Webb, a member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Cedar Falls. "The environmental crisis is calling us to action, and people are now looking to their faith traditions for inspiration."

A recent poll by Phoenix-based Ellison Research found 41 percent of Americans believe harming the environment is a sin.

On March 10, the Vatican made that proclamation official, listing pollution — along with drug use, genetic manipulation and social and economic injustice — as areas of sinful behavior for today's believers. Later that day, leaders from the Southern Baptist Convention released a statement saying: “There is undeniable evidence that the Earth — wildlife, water, land and air — can be damaged by human activity, and that people suffer as a result.”

## GREAT AWAKENING

Although environmental preservation efforts have been greeted with lukewarm public support since the 1970s, local religious leaders hope preaching sustainability from the pulpit will have a lasting effect on Cedar Valley churchgoers and their neighbors.

For evangelical Christians, one of the first steps is removing the issue from the political sphere, said Tri Robinson, founder of “Let's Tend the Garden,” an environmental stewardship ministry based in Boise, Idaho.

“It's been an interestingly controversial topic among evangelicals,” Robinson said in a March speech at the University of Northern Iowa. “When people think about Christians, especially evangelicals, they think of a group of people that is antagonistic toward anything that is green. And a lot of evangelicals still think that way themselves.”

Here is the logic: Since the 1960s, the environmental movement has been the turf of left-wing liberals, who also support abortion rights and gay marriage — causes most evangelicals consider abhorrent.

“Two camps emerged out of Roe v. Wade, a conservative camp and a liberal camp,” Robinson said, referring to the landmark 1973 Supreme Court case that struck down state laws restricting a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy. “The environment fell in with the liberal group. It was therefore equated by many Christians as a liberal agenda (item), and they pushed it away.”

But recent scientific findings have made it impossible for Christians to continue to ignore environmental stewardship, said Robinson, who was in the Cedar Valley last month to present a “God is Green” conference at Heartland Vineyard Church in Cedar Falls.

In November, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change for the first time called the evidence for global warming “unequivocal.” Trends of increasing air and water temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising ocean levels all point to a permanent change in the Earth's climate spurred by human activity, the report states.

In response, Cedar Valley churches scheduled tree-planting outings, added long-lasting light bulbs to their sanctuaries and encouraged members to bike or carpool to Sunday services.

Sermons and Scripture study sessions have also focused on the environment.

“We’ve started talking about how God’s heart for people is really revealed in how we honor and care for our earth,” said Chris Reeves, executive pastor of Heartland Vineyard. “We talk about it spiritually, but we also talk about it practically, like the importance of recycling and how to cut down the energy we use.”

Making changes as a faith community is easier than making changes alone, said St. Luke’s member Webb.

Two years ago, Webb and fellow St. Luke’s members Ann Eastman and Kate Dunning, developed Cool Congregations, an energy efficiency program designed especially for church-goers. They started the initiative by asking 25 families from their home parish to reduce energy use by 10 percent via simple lifestyle changes, such as using compact fluorescent light bulbs, washing clothing in cold water and weather-proofing their homes. Over one year, the participants reduced their carbon dioxide emissions by 67 tons, the equivalent of removing 12 cars from Iowa’s roads.

“Americans represent about 5 percent of the world’s population, but we contribute about 25 to 30 percent of the world’s CO2 emissions,” said Webb, who uses a computer program to help Cool Congregations participants measure their family’s “carbon footprint.” “We try to help people make the connection that their actions here affect people elsewhere and are having a very real impact on our planet.”

Since 2006, Webb and her cohorts have introduced the Cool Congregation program to roughly 100 churches in the Midwest.

“We are reaching a lot of people, and it feels fantastic,” said Webb, whose work is supported by Iowa Interfaith Power & Light. “During our workshops we go to Scripture, we talk about how God tells Adam and Eve to tend the garden in Genesis.”

## BIBLE STUDY

Most faith traditions call on adherents to care for the earth, according to Harvard University’s Forum on Religion and Ecology.

Muslims believe the earth is subservient to man, but that humans have a responsibility to not exploit the environment. Jewish texts teach that God renews his creation daily, and that humans are both a part of nature and separate from it. Christians believe the biblical figure Noah agreed to a holy covenant that would ensure nature’s gifts belong to the human race as long as we

respect the earth and each other. One of the guiding principles of Unitarianism is an interdependent web of existence.

Today, religious leaders are increasingly calling on those tenets when preaching a “green” message.

“It’s become a concern because when we look around we know that something is happening with the environment that is not good,” said Dave Cushing, director of adult faith formation for Waterloo’s four Roman Catholic parishes. “We’ve always known in some theoretical sense that our faith spoke to environmental stewardship, but when you come face-to-face with it as an issue of survival, you have to pay attention.”

From 1990 to 2005, total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions have risen by 16.3 percent, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. If greenhouse gases continue to increase, scientists predict the average temperature at the Earth’s surface could raise 3.2 to 7.2 degrees above 1990 levels by the end of this century. Although those numbers may seem small, researchers believe the change would dramatically alter the earth’s ecosystem and affect plant, animal and human health.

This spring, Waterloo’s Catholic churches offered a Bible study course on humankind’s responsibility to care for the earth. Last month the parishes co-sponsored a Cool Congregations session with First Congregational United Church of Christ members.

For Catholics, climate change is also a social justice issue. Impoverished Americans are hit hardest by rising energy costs, and developing nations are already feeling the effect of food shortages and environmental disasters linked to global warming, Cushing said.

“This isn’t a political issue anymore,” he said. “It’s a moral issue, an ethical issues and a justice issue.

“From that perspective, we can’t ignore it.”

Find at: <http://www.timesrepublican.com/page/content.detail/id/506547.html?nav=5002>.

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## **May 28, 2008**

Entrepreneurs of the Natural World Showcase Their Groundbreaking Solutions to the Environmental Challenges of the 21st Century  
Nature's 100 Best Initiative Publishes Preliminary Findings on How to Green the Global Economy  
Ninth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity 19-30 May

28 May 2008, Bonn/Geneva/Nairobi - A super-small pacemaker modeled on the wiring of the humpback whale's heart and pigment-free colour coatings from the light-splitting structures of a peacock's feather are among a range of extraordinary new eco-breakthroughs emerging from mimicking nature.

Other commercially-promising advances, inspired by natural world and its close to four billion year-old history of "research and development" include:

- Vaccines that survive without refrigeration based on Africa's 'resurrection' plant.
- Friction-free surfaces suitable for modern electrical devices gleaned from the slippery skin of the Arabian Peninsula's sandfish lizard.
- New antibacterial substances inspired by marine algae found off Australia's coast that promise a new way of defeating health hazardous bugs without contributing to the threat of increasing bacterial resistance.
- Toxic-free fire retardants, based on waste citrus and grape crops inspired by the way animal cells turn food into energy without producing flames - the so called citric acid or Krebs cycle.
- A pioneering water harvesting system to recycle steam from cooling towers and allowing buildings to collect their own water supplies from the air inspired by the way the Namib Desert Beetle of Namibia harvests water from desert fogs.
- Biodegradable, water-tight packaging and water-repellant linings for pipes to tents that mimic the Australian water-holding frog.

These are just some of inventions, innovations and ideas at the centre of a new collaborative initiative called Nature's 100 Best.

The initiative is the brainchild of the Biomimicry Guild and the Zero Emission Research and Initiatives (ZERI) in partnership with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and IUCN-the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

It is aimed at showcasing how tomorrow's economy can be realized today by learning, copying and mimicking the way nature has already solved many of the technological and sustainability problems confronting humankind. According to Janine Benyus and Gunter Pauli, co-creators of the Nature's 100 Best project, "Life solves its problems with well-adapted designs, life-friendly chemistry, and smart material and energy use. What better models could there be?"

The Nature's 100 Best List, a mixture of innovations at various stages of commercialization from the drawing board to imminent arrival in the marketplace, is set to be completed by October 2008 in time for the IUCN Congress in Barcelona, Spain. The Nature's 100 Best book will be published in May 2009.

Today the collaborators and partners unveiled some of the preliminary projects and products being included on Nature's 100 Best from an original list over 2,000.

It coincides with the ministerial part of the Convention on Biological Diversity meeting taking place in Bonn, Germany where up to 6,000 delegates and over 190 governments are meeting to slow the rate of loss of biodiversity.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "Biomimicry is a field whose time has come. Anyone doubting the economic and development value of the natural world need only sift through the extraordinary number of commercially promising inventions now emerging-inventions that are as a result of understanding and copying nature's designs and the superior way in which living organisms successfully manage challenges from clean energy generation to re-using and recycling wastes".

"There are countless reasons why we must accelerate the international response and the flow of funds to counter rapidly eroding biodiversity and rapidly degrading ecosystems: Nature's 100 Best gives us 100 extra reasons to act and 100 extra reasons why better managing biodiversity is not a question of aid or an economic burden but an issue of investing in the non-polluting businesses, industries and jobs of the near future," he said.

Janine Benyus, head of the Biomimicry Guild added, "Biomimicry is science at the cutting edge of the 21st century economy and based on 3.8 billion years of evolution. Indeed the way nature makes novel substances; generates energy and synthesizes unique structures are the secrets to how humans can survive and thrive on this planet."

Gunter Pauli, head of the Zeri Foundation based in Geneva, added: "Steam and coal transformed the 19th century; telecommunications and electronics, the 20th. We are now on the edge of a biologically-based revolution and in some of the inventions showcased under this new initiative will undoubtedly be the business models for the new Googles, Welcomes, Unilevers and General Electrics of the modern age. With over one billion Euros already invested in the most important technologies this is a trend in innovation for industry to follow" he said.

### Humpback Heart Pacemakers

Over 350,000 people in the United States alone are fitted with new or replacement pacemakers annually. The cost of fitting a new device is up to \$50,000 per patient.

Enter Jorge Reynolds, Director of the Whale Heart Satellite Tracking Program in Colombia, whose research is unraveling the mysteries of how the Humpback's 2,000-pound heart pumps the equivalent of six bath tubs of oxygenated blood through a circulatory system 4,500 times as extensive as a human's.

The work is also pinpointing how this is achieved even at very low rates of three to four beats a minute and how the electrical stimulation is achieved through a mass of blubber that shields the whale's heart from the cold.

The researchers have, through listening devices called echocardiographs and via autopsies on dead whales, discovered nano-sized 'wires' that allow electrical signals to stimulate heart beats even through masses of non-conductive blubber.



The scientists believe the findings could be the key to allowing the human heart to work without a battery-powered pacemaker and to stimulate optimal heart beats by by-passing or 'bridging' dead heart muscle via special whale-like wiring.

The world-wide market for pacemakers is expected to reach \$3.7 billion by 2010. The new invention could cost just a few cents to make; reduce the number of follow-up operations because it avoids the need to install new batteries and thus supplant the traditional pacemaker.

#### "Resurrection Plant"

Two million children die from vaccine-preventable diseases like measles, rubella and whooping cough each year. By some estimates, breakdowns in the refrigeration chain from laboratory to village means half of all vaccines never get to patients.

Enter *Myrothamnus flabellifolia* - a plant found in Central and Southern Africa whose tissues can be dried to a crisp and then revived without damage, courtesy of a sugary substance produced in its cells during drought.

And enter Bruce Roser, a biomedical researcher who along with colleagues recently founded Cambridge Biostability Ltd to develop fridge-free vaccines based on the plant's remarkable sugars called trehaloses.

The product involves spraying a vaccine with the trehalose coating to form inert spheres or sugary beads that can be packaged in an injectable form and can sit in a doctor's bag for months or even years.

Trials are underway with the Indian company Panacea Biotech and agreements have also been signed with Danish and German companies.

The development, based on mimicking nature, could lead to savings of up to \$300 million a year in the developing world while cutting the need for kerosene and photovoltaic powered fridges.

Other possibilities include new kinds of food preservation up to the storage of animal and human tissues that by-pass storage in super cold liquid nitrogen.

#### Slippery Lizard

The two main ways of reducing friction in mechanical and electrical devices are ball bearings and silicon carbide or ultra nano-crystalline diamond.

One of the shortcomings of silicon carbide is that it is manufactured at temperatures of between 1,600 and 2,500 degrees F - in other words it is energy intensive involving the burning of fossil fuels.

The synthetic diamond product can be made at lower temperatures and coated at temperatures of 400 degrees F for a range of low friction applications. But it has drawbacks too.

Enter the shiny Sandfish lizard that lives in the sands of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula and enter a team from the Technical University of Berlin.

Studies indicate that the lizard achieves its remarkable, friction-free life by making a skin of keratin stiffened by sugar molecules and sulphur.

The lizard's skin also has nano-sized spikes. It means a grain of Sahara sand rides atop 20,000 of these spikes spreading the load and providing negligible levels of friction.

Further tests indicate that the ridges on the lizard skin may also be negatively charged, effectively repelling the sand grains so they float over the surface rather like a hovercraft over water.

The researchers have teamed up with colleagues at the Science University of Berlin and a consortium of three German companies to commercialize the lizard skin findings.

The market is potentially huge, including in micro-electronic-mechanical systems where a biodegradable film made from the relatively cheap materials of kerotene and sugar and manufactured at room temperature offers an environmentally-friendly "unique selling proposition."

Superbugs and Bacterial Resistance - Australian Red Algae to the Rescue?

Seventy per cent of all human infections are a result of biofilms.

These are big congregations of bacteria that require 1,000 times more antibiotic to kill them and are leading to an 'arms race' between the bugs and the pharmaceutical companies.

It is also increasing antibiotic resistance and the rise of 'super bugs' like methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* that now kills more people than die of AIDS each year.

Enter *Delisea pulchra*, a feathery red alga or seaweed found off the Australian coast and a team including researchers at the University of New South Wales.

During a marine field trip, scientists noticed that the algae's surface was free from biofilms despite living in waters laden with bacteria.

Tests pinpointed a compound - known as halogenated furanone - that blocks the way bacteria signal to each other in order to form dense biofilm groups.

A company called Biosignal has been set up to develop the idea which promises a new way of controlling bacteria like golden staph, cholera, and legionella without aggravating bacterial resistance.

Products include contact lenses, catheters, and pipes treated with algae-inspired furanones alongside mouthwashes and new therapies for vulnerable patients with diseases like cystic fibrosis and urinary tract infections.

The bacterial signal-blocking substance may also reduce pollution to the environment by reducing or ending the need for homeowners and companies to pour tons of caustic chemicals down pipes, ducts and tanks and onto kitchen surfaces to keep them bug-free.

### Beetle-Based Water Harvesting

By 2025, the United Nations forecasts that 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with water scarcity and two thirds of the world's population could be under conditions of water stress.

Climate change is expected to aggravate water problems via more extreme weather events. Many intelligent and improved management options can overcome these challenges and one may rest on the extraordinary ability of the Namib Desert beetle.

The beetle lives in a location that receives a mere half an inch of rain a year yet can harvest water from fogs that blow in gales across the land several mornings each month.

Enter a team from the University of Oxford and the UK defense research firm QinetiQ. They have designed a surface that mimics the water-attracting bumps and water-shedding valleys on the beetle's wing scales that allows the insect to collect and funnel droplets thinner than a human hair.

The patchwork surface hinges on small, poppy-seed sized glass spheres in a layer of warm wax that tests show work like the beetle's wing scales.

Trials have now been carried out to use the beetle film to capture water vapour from cooling towers. Initial tests have shown that the invention can return 10 per cent of lost water and lead to cuts in energy bills for nearby buildings by reducing a city's heat sink effect.

An estimated 50,000 new water-cooling towers are erected annually and each large system evaporates and loses over 500 million litres.

Other researchers, some with funding from the US Defense Advanced Research Agency, are mimicking the beetle water collection system to develop tents that collect their own water up to surfaces that will 'mix' reagents for 'lab-on-a-chip' applications.

### Notes to Editors

Nature's 100 Best is a compilation of 2,100 of the most extraordinary technologies and strategies found in nature that are being mimicked or deserve mimicking.

The 100 Best List will be launched at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, Spain in October 2008.

At the same time the Biomimicry Institute will unveil AskNature.org, an online database of biological knowledge organized by engineering function in order to engage and inspire entrepreneurs and investors.

Zeri [www.zeri.org](http://www.zeri.org)

Biomimicry Guild and Institute [www.biomimicryguild.com](http://www.biomimicryguild.com), [www.biomimicryinstitute.com](http://www.biomimicryinstitute.com)

UNEP [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)

IUCN [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)

Ninth Conference of the Parties to the Convention for Biological Diversity in Bonn [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)

Case studies from today's preliminary launch and more details on Nature's 100 Best at [www.n100best.org](http://www.n100best.org)

The book will be available through [www.chelseagreen.com](http://www.chelseagreen.com)

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## June 1, 2008

### THE ECOLOGICAL SPIRIT

After centuries in which Christian leaders taught that humans should exploit the Earth, theologians have a new message: Think green

Douglas Todd  
Canwest News Service

Tuesday, June 03, 2008

CREDIT: Handout/Valerie Sanguinetti

The Rev. Michael Batten blesses solar panels at St David's Anglican Church in Vancouver. 'The Earth is not a hotel. It's our home.'

That's the message one of the world's leading Christian theologians sent to B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell and 125 members of diverse religions at a recent Vancouver gathering.

It was the latest effort by Canadian-American theologian Sallie McFague, author of *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World and Global Warming*, to counter centuries in which Christian leaders taught that humans should exploit the Earth for their own ends.

McFague was speaking at a conference organized by Langara College and the Multi-Faith Action Society on April 28, at which the B.C. premier spoke about joining Western provinces and states to reduce the carbon emissions that cause global warming.

For McFague, formerly of Vanderbilt University's divinity school and now of the Vancouver School of Theology, her talk was just the latest in a decades-long campaign by ecologically tuned-in religious thinkers to convince individuals, governments and businesses to cease devastating the planet.

Anglicans, Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Pentecostals, Sikhs, aboriginal spiritual leaders and others at the Vancouver interfaith conference talked about how they were conducting "energy audits" on their sanctuaries, installing solar panels, providing more bike racks, double-glazing stained-glass windows, adding insulation and encouraging transit use to worship.

"We didn't want to continue the litany of doom. We wanted to outline things that have been done and can be done" to help spiritual communities show it's possible and necessary to make more environmentally sustainable choices, said organizer Robert Worcester, a Langara College psychology instructor and Anglican.

Vancouver's Faith and the Environment conference occurred the same week the 700,000-member United Church of Canada, the country's largest Protestant denomination, released a how-to guide on ways congregations could waste less energy, including by using LED lights, weather-stripping, reducing the use of lawn mowers, pesticides and exchanging old stoves and refrigerators for more efficient ones.

Inspired by Seattle's Earth Ministry, which mobilizes the city's congregations to act on environmental issues, Worcester said, the Multi-Faith Action Society thought it would be remarkably helpful if Metro Vancouver's roughly 2,000 religious congregations reduced their ecological footprint, including with government encouragement.

The B.C. premier, like many religious leaders, appears to have become a recent convert to the environmental cause, says David Hallman, a Canadian who headed the 550-million-member World Council of Churches' climate-change commission for 16 years, beginning in 1991.

However, Hallman says the late Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and most U.S. evangelical leaders have lagged far behind notable Christian and other religious ecological thinkers, some of whom have been raising environmental alarms since the 1970s.

Some of these far-sighted religious thinkers began urging repentance in response to a devastating 1967 essay by Lynn White published in *Science Magazine*, titled "The Historical Roots of the Ecological Crisis."

In his famous essay, White, of Stanford University, said early Jewish-Christian leaders colluded with the Industrial Revolution and capitalism to "morally sanction" environmental destruction.

Many senior Christian and Jewish clergy, White argued, based their anti-nature worldview on a dubious reading of the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, in which God is said to give humans "dominion" over nature.

In response to White's critique, pioneering Protestant theologians such as John Cobb, Jurgen Moltmann, Canada's Douglas John Hall and McFague began emphasizing that the Bible also teaches that humans are intimately interconnected with nature and need to be responsible stewards, or gardeners, of the Earth. (See sidebar on seminal books.)

"These eco-theologians were beginning a revolution in religion," said Hallman.

But, in the early years, they were mostly voices crying in the wilderness.

Throughout most of the 1980s and '90s, most major Christian denominations and leaders resisted, or even denounced, eco-theology.

"There was real skepticism and theological antagonism. Many church leaders wondered what ecology had to do with the church. They thought the focus of piety should not be on this world, but on preparation for the next world," Hallman said.

Most of the opposition to the environmental movement came from major U.S. evangelical leaders, while the Vatican was non-committal or critical.

The Catholic hierarchy in Rome rebuffed Catholic then-radical eco-theologians such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, Matthew Fox and Leonardo Boff, who went on to become icons of the environmental movement.

However, even while Hallman says the Vatican was resisting efforts by Protestant and Orthodox leaders to support the 1997 Kyoto Protocol to limit greenhouse-gas emissions, out-of-the-limelight Catholic leaders were quietly doing what they could.

In 1997, for instance, Catholic bishops from Cascadia, which includes B.C., Washington, Idaho and Oregon, began an educational program to protect the Columbia River and its watershed from pollution, overfishing and dams.

One major religious figure who has long showed dedication to the environment has been Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who since 1991 has been the spiritual leader of the world's 300-million Eastern Orthodox Christians.

Based in Istanbul, Bartholomew has been tagged "the Green Pope" or "the Green Patriarch." Bartholomew has particularly emphasized cleaning up the Black Sea and Danube River, in regions inhabited by many Eastern Orthodox.

Another major religious leader who has taken strong stances on the environment is Welsh theologian Rowan Williams, who in 2003 became the Archbishop of Canterbury, making him titular head of the world's 700 million Anglicans.

Hallman, a prominent Canadian eco-theologian in his own right, said he's proud the denomination for which he has long worked on climate change, the United Church of Canada, formally changed its official creed in 1995, asking adherents to commit "to live with respect in Creation."

It has only been in the past few years, Hallman says, that the Vatican and senior North American evangelicals, such as Rick Warren, have stood up for the planet - including by challenging President George W. Bush's controversial ties with the oil industry - leading to a clash between green evangelicals and the religious right.

In North America, Vancouver has become known for the way it is launching an interfaith response to the ecological challenge, says Hallman.

Even though key organizers of Langara College's "Faith and the Environment" conference are Christians, Worcester said the Multi-Faith Action Society event drew wide support from members of dozens of religious traditions, from Mennonites to Quakers, Baha'is to Mormons.

Jewish, Muslim, United Church, Anglican and Buddhist leaders in late May teamed up with the Sierra Club to urge the B.C. premier to do more to protect threatened animals, saying Victoria was safeguarding only five per cent of the province's more than 1,300 endangered species.

B.C. Unitarians, meanwhile, have created an interspiritual coalition to try to stop the B.C. government's Gateway program, which they say will harmfully expand the city's suburban highway network and endanger Burns Bog.

Another interspiritual network called "Be the Change Earth Alliance" has also taken root in Vancouver in recent months, working with Greenpeace to encourage tens of thousands to reduce energy consumption, auto use and meat consumption by 20 per cent.

"There is a lot of stuff happening," said Worcester. "It's clear some spiritual people are getting off their duffs and showing leadership."

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<http://www.canada.com/topics/news/features/story.html?id=ffec418d-e365-4871-8706-0779921d7023>.

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**June 1, 2008**

Clergy: Environmental fixes a matter of faith, not technology

Monk: 'Spiritual malaise' caused our climate crises

By Peter Smith

psmith@courier-journal.com

TRAPPIST, Ky. -- Global warming and pollution seemed far away on a pristine spring afternoon at the Abbey of Gethsemani in rural Nelson County.

But ecological crises were very much on the minds of 50 Buddhist and Catholic monks and nuns from throughout North America who gathered here last week to talk about their role in helping to avert environmental disaster.

On one level, participants acknowledged that they seem unlikely candidates to do more than perhaps reduce their own carbon footprints.

Yet several echoed the thought of Buddhist speaker Ajahn Punnadhammo, who said he was "skeptical of any technological fix to the problem."

"The manifestation of the problem may be technological, but the underlying causes and conditions are a spiritual malaise, and until that is addressed, the problem will not go away," said Punnadhammo, abbot of Arrow River Hermitage in Ontario, Canada.

Leading by example

Sister Judith Sutera, a Catholic Benedictine nun, said that even though many monks and nuns live largely cloistered lives, they still can set an example for their neighbors by using greener technologies such as windmills and demonstrating a simple lifestyle that shuns the collection of energy-hungry gadgets.

Other monks and nuns, she added, exert influence as teachers, counselors, chaplains and pastors.

"People look to their faith communities for leadership," said Sutera, from the abbey of Mt. St. Scholastica in Kansas. "We just have to get more motivated about preaching it in our schools, monasteries and neighborhoods. The first thing we do is set an example."



The conference is the third in a series of dialogues held every six years at Gethsemani between Buddhist monks and those in the Benedictine monastic tradition, which is oriented around prayer and contemplation.

The first conference in 1996 became a media extravaganza with the participation of the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists, whose affection for the abbey stems from his friendship with Thomas Merton, the late author-monk from Gethsemani who was a pioneer in Catholic-Buddhist relations.

The latter two conferences have been more low-key affairs focused on particular themes.

The Gethsemani Encounters, as they are known, don't involve a debate over theology, but rather a "dialogue at the level of spiritual experience," said the Rev. William Skudlarek, executive director of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue.

Seeking spiritual solutions

Yet at the conference, participants did seek to plumb the depths of their theological traditions to find a doctrinal basis for environmental preservation, as well as to avoid past errors.

Both Buddhists and Catholics acknowledged their religions have at times spoken negatively of the physical world as something from which to escape toward a spiritual paradise.

The Rev. James Wiseman, a professor of theology at the Catholic University of America, also acknowledged that some Christians have justified plundering the environment on the grounds that God gave humans dominion over a planet that would be replaced in the end anyway.

But he noted that parts of the world barely touched by Christianity also have suffered severe environmental problems.

While Buddhists don't believe in an original creator of the universe as Christians do, "we think that as humans we have very close relationship with the environment," said Heng Syun, a Buddhist monk from Avatamsaka Monastery in Calgary, Canada.

Those seeking to live a life of contemplative prayer have a "wonderful opportunity" to help others discover "the causes of all the difficulties environmentally," added Thubten Semkye, a novice at Sravasti Abbey in Newport, Wash., which follows the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

"From a Buddhist view, so much of what is going on in the world has a lot to do with our minds and hearts that are pretty much addicted to the 'I want what I want when I want it' culture, which is what the Western culture is all about," she said.

She said both religions have prayers and spiritual disciplines to help people pursue spiritual rather than material goals.

"We have a great opportunity to share what we know," she said. "We want to just give that away to the world."

Sister Renee Branigan of Sacred Heart Monastery in North Dakota noted that Americans seem to be urged as a patriotic duty to spend their tax rebates on new gadgets to stimulate the economy.

But on the other hand, she said, it doesn't help to scold people for their consumerist habits.

Punnadhammo agreed, saying people need to hear a positive message that "spiritual happiness that comes from within is more profound than anything you can buy at Wal-Mart."

Reporter Peter Smith can be reached at (502) 582-4469.

<http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080601/NEWS01/806010463/1008/NEWS01>.

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**June 4, 2008**

Bringing Renewable Energy to Remote Communities: Projects from Peru and Lao PDR Share Prestigious Environment Award  
United Nations Environment Programme announces winner of the 2008 Sasakawa Prize  
Nairobi/Wellington, 4 June 2008 -Two projects bringing renewable energy to villages in Peru and Lao People's Democratic Republic have been awarded the UNEP Sasakawa Prize 2008. The two winning projects are Sunlabob Rural Energy Ltd (Lao PDR) and Practical Action (Peru). Both projects are bringing clean power ? solar and hydro ? to remote rural communities that do not have access to grid electricity, on the Eastern slopes of the Andes and in the farthest-flung regions of Lao PDR.

The UNEP Sasakawa prize, worth \$200,000, is awarded yearly to individuals or institutions who have made a substantial contribution to the protection and management of the environment. The winners, who will each receive \$100,000, were chosen by a five-member jury from a shortlist of six projects at a meeting in Tokyo.

The Prize acts as an incentive for grassroots environmental efforts that are sustainable and replicable. It recognizes extraordinary initiatives from around the world that make use of innovation and groundbreaking research and ideas and empower people at the local level.

This year's theme for the award was 'Moving towards a low carbon economy', the theme of World Environment Day 2008. The shortlist included four other outstanding projects bringing clean energy to thousands of people, from families in the Philippines to rural households in South India and prisons in Rwanda.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "Addressing the monumental energy challenge of the 21st century involves practical projects at ground level that bring tangible changes to the way people live. Sunlabob and Practical Action are showing tremendous leadership in bringing clean energy to remote communities in Peru and Lao PDR, and in doing so they are setting further examples of the energy alternatives available to the developing but also the developed world."

## The Winners

Sunlabob Rural Energy Ltd., set up in 2001, is bringing energy to remote rural communities in Lao PDR, a country where just 48 per cent of the population has access to grid electricity, mostly in cities and town. Through Sunlabob, over 1,800 solar-home-systems (SHS) and 500 solar lanterns are being rented to families in 73 different villages across Lao PDR.

In an area where most people rely on highly polluting kerosene lamps, the initiative rents out solar lighting at a lower price than kerosene, providing families with a real incentive to switch to the cleaner energy. The cheapest solar systems costs 35,000 kip per month (3.80\$) to rent, while households typically spend 36,000 to 60,000 kip per month (4 to 6.60\$) on kerosene for lighting. As well as being far less sustainable than solar energy, kerosene lamps can be dangerous, causing burns, starting fires and polluting the air indoors.

The equipment is rented through Village Energy Committees (VEC) selected by the whole community: this puts the community in control of setting prices, collecting rents and performing basic maintenance.

The potential for growth in the use of solar PV in Lao PDR is huge: Sunlabob is installing systems at a rate of 500 per year, and a new investment this year will allow it to scale up to 2,500 systems per year, and 5,000 per year after that. The project is also highly replicable: Sunlabob is already starting work in Cambodia and Indonesia, and is exploring possibilities with interested potential partners in Bhutan, East Timor, Eastern Africa and Latin America.

Practical Action, founded in 1966, is working in Peru's eastern Andes where 68 per cent of the population - around 5 million people - do not have access to electricity. The project makes use of the region's vast potential for hydroelectricity: to date, 47 micro-hydro schemes have been installed in the area through Practical Action, bringing clean power to about 30,000 people.

Through this project, Practical Action is also boosting local industry, as most of the turbines are manufactured by small companies in Peru to Practical Action designs ? with each company making three or four turbines a year. Practical Action says it sees local manufacture as a key step towards widespread use of renewable energy.

The electricity supply is boosting the development of the remote communities. Previously, people moved away to start businesses in places where the infrastructure was better, but the electricity from the micro-hydro schemes has brought them back. Some villages have doubled in size, with people returning and others starting or expanding businesses including restaurants, bakeries, furniture makers, welders and internet cafes.

## Notes to editors

The UNEP Sasakawa Prize is sponsored by the Japan-based Nippon Foundation, an independent, non-profit grant-making organization that supports both Japanese and international philanthropic projects. The UNEP Sasakawa Prize was originally created in 1982 by the late Ryoichi

Sasakawa. The Prize was re-launched in its current format in 2005, and is currently chaired by Mr. Sasakawa's son, Yohei Sasakawa.

The five members of the 2008 UNEP Sasakawa Prize jury are UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner, Nippon Foundation Chairman Yohei Sasakawa, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Professor Wangari Maathai, 1995 Nobel Chemistry Prize Laureate Professor Mario Molina, and Ms Wakako Hironaka, Member of Japan's House of Councillors.

As well as the two winning projects, the 2008 shortlist also included four other projects bringing renewable energy to remote communities in Africa and Asia. The Kigali Institute of Science, Technology and Management has brought biogas power to six prisons in Rwanda, halving the need for firewood and improving sanitation for 30,000 prisoners. The Alternative Indigenous Development Foundation is installing hydro-powered water pumps for poor communities in the Philippines. The Mwanza Rural Housing Programme is training villagers in northern Tanzania to make high-quality bricks from local clay, fired with agricultural residues rather than wood. And SKG Sangha has set up a biogas programme in southern India to replace fuelwood with biogas for cooking in rural households, and also to increase household income by making a saleable fertilizer from biogas residue and other unmanaged agricultural organic waste.

For more information, please visit the UNEP Sasakawa Prize website at: [www.unep.org/sasakawa](http://www.unep.org/sasakawa) or e-mail: [sasakawaprize@unep.org](mailto:sasakawaprize@unep.org)

To find out more about World Environment Day, go to: [www.unep.org/wed/2008/english](http://www.unep.org/wed/2008/english)

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## **June 10, 2008**

Environmental Change Re-Draws Atlas of Africa

Glacial Retreat to Rapid Urbanization Chronicled in Landmark Satellite Report to Africa's Environment Ministers

Johannesburg/Nairobi/London, 10 June 2008-Africa's rapidly changing environmental landscape, from the disappearance of glaciers in Uganda's Rwenzori Mountains to the loss of Cape Town's unique "fynbos" vegetation, is presented today to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment(AMCEN).

The Atlas, compiled on behalf of the ministers by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), underlines how development choices, population growth, climate change and, in some cases, conflicts are shaping and impacting the natural and nature-based assets of the region.

The nearly 400-page long publication was launched today by President Thabo Mbeki of the Republic of South Africa who is hosting the AMCEN meeting in Johannesburg.

Africa: Atlas of Our Changing Environment features over 300 satellite images taken in every country in Africa in over 100 locations. The 'before' and 'after' photographs, some of which span a 35-year period, offer striking snapshots of local environmental transformation across the continent.

In addition to well-publicized changes, such as Mount Kilimanjaro's shrinking glaciers, the drying up of Lake Chad and falling water levels in Lake Victoria, the Atlas presents, for the first time, satellite images of new or lesser known environmental changes and challenges including:

- Disappearing glaciers in Uganda's Rwenzori Mountains, which decreased by 50 per cent between 1987 and 2003.

- The widening corridors of deforestation that have accompanied expanding roads in the northern Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1975. New roads threaten to bring even greater traffic to this biologically rich rainforest and further fuel the bushmeat trade.

- The disappearance of a large portion of Madagascar's South Malagasy spiny forest between 1973 and 2003 as a result of farming and fuelwood gathering.

- The northern edge of Cape Town, which has seen much of its native 'fynbos' vegetation replaced with farms and suburban development since 1978. 'Fynbos' make up 80 per cent of the plant varieties in the Cape Floristic Region, an area with over 6,000 plant species which are found nowhere else in the world and are an economic asset for tourism.

- The loss of trees and shrubs in the fragile environment of the Jebel Marra foothills in western Sudan as a result of population growth due in part to an influx of refugees fleeing drought and conflict in neighbouring Northern Darfur.

- The dramatic expansion of Senegalese capital Dakar over the past half century from a small urban centre at the tip of the Cap Vert Peninsula to a metropolitan area with 2.5 million people spread over the entire peninsula.

The Atlas, compiled in cooperation with researchers and organizations in Africa and elsewhere, offers a sobering assessment of thirty-six years of environmental change, including: "The swell of grey-coloured cities over a once-green countryside; protected areas shrinking as farms encroach upon their boundaries; the tracks of road networks through forests; pollutants that drift over borders of neighboring countries; the erosion of deltas; refugee settlements scattered across the continent causing further pressure on the environment; and shrinking mountain glaciers".

The satellite images also highlight positive signs of management that is protecting against and even reversing environmental degradation, say the authors.

-Action on overgrazing in the Sidi Toui National Park, southeastern Tunisia has produced a dramatic rebound in the natural ecosystem. The park has seen the reintroduction of the Scimitar-horned oryx (*Oryx dammah*) which is currently on the verge of extinction.

-A new management plan for the Itezhi-tezhi dam in Zambia has helped to restore the natural seasonal flooding of the Kafue flats, as shown in the 2007 satellite image.

-The expansion of wetlands resulting from a restoration project in and around Diawling National Park is helping to control flooding and improve livelihoods in Mauritania.

-New policies and improved enforcement have significantly reduced unsustainable exploitation of the forests of Mount Kenya, which is a crucial area for water catchment and hydro-power generation.

-Farmer initiatives focusing on the planting and protection of trees have led to significant land revitalization in Tahoua Province, Niger. A recent study revealed that there are now 10 to 20 times more trees across three of Niger's southern provinces than there were in the 1970s.

-A review of forest concessions in Liberia has helped protect the forest in Sapo National Park from logging as well as illegal mining and poaching.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "As shown throughout the Atlas, there are many places across Africa where people have taken action- where there are more trees than thirty years ago, where wetlands have sprung back, and where land degradation has been countered. These are the beacons we need to follow to ensure the survival of Africa's people and their economically important nature-based assets."

"The Atlas also however clearly demonstrates the vulnerability of people in the region to forces often outside their control, including the shrinking of glaciers in Uganda and Tanzania and impacts on water supplies linked with climate change. These underline the urgent need for the international community to deliver a new climate agreement by the climate change convention meeting in Copenhagen in 2009?one that not only delivers deep emission reductions but also accelerates the flow of funds for adaptation and the climate proofing of economies," he added.

### Main Findings and Key Concerns

Between 1990 and 2004, many African countries achieved some small but promising environmental improvements, mainly in the field of water and sanitation, according to the Atlas. A few countries have expanded protected areas?currently numbering over 3,000 across the continent.

However, loss of forest is a major concern in 35 countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Nigeria and Rwanda, among others. This is closely followed by biodiversity loss which is occurring in 34 countries such as Angola, Ethiopia, Gabon and Mali.

Land degradation, similarly, is a major worry for 32 countries in Africa including Cameroon, Eritrea and Ghana. Other problems include desertification in Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya and Niger among others as well as water stress, rising pollution and coping with rapid urbanization.

Africa is losing more than four million hectares of forest every year—twice the world's average deforestation rate, says the Atlas. Meanwhile, some areas across the continent are said to be losing over 50 metric tonnes of soil per hectare per year.

The Atlas also shows that erosion and chemical and physical damage have degraded about 65 per cent of the continent's farmlands. In addition, slash and burn agriculture, coupled with the high occurrence of lightning across Africa, is thought to be responsible for wild fires.

Over 300 million people on the continent already face water scarcity, and areas experiencing water shortages in Sub-Saharan Africa are expected to increase by almost a third by 2050.

Climate change is emerging as a driving force behind many of these problems and is likely to intensify the already dramatic transformations taking place across the continent.

Although Africa produces only four per cent of the world's total carbon dioxide emissions, its inhabitants are poised to suffer disproportionately from the consequences of global climate change.

Africa's capacity to adapt to climate change is relatively low, with projected costs estimated to reach at least 5-10 per cent of GDP.

Finally, transboundary issues are a key feature of Africa's environment, from international river basins to cross-border air pollution.

Refugee migrations are also causing further pressure on the environment, with major population movements due to conflict but also increasingly as a result of food and water shortages. Cooperative approaches involving several bordering countries are becoming essential for the conserving and enhancing of shared ecosystems if they are to remain productive into the 21st century.

Taking advantage of the latest space technology and Earth observation science, including the 36-year legacy of the US Landsat satellite programme, the Atlas serves to demonstrate the potential of satellite imagery data in monitoring ecosystems and natural resources dynamics. This in turn can provide the kind of hard, evidence-based data to support political decisions aimed at improving management of Africa's natural resources.

Notes to Editors

Africa: Atlas of Our Changing Environment contains 316 satellite images taken in 104 locations in every country in Africa, along with 151 maps and 319 ground photographs and a series of graphs illustrating the environmental challenges faced by the continent.

All the materials in the Atlas are non-copyrighted and available for free use.

Individual satellite images, maps, graphs and photographs, can be downloaded from <http://na.unep.net/AfricaAtlas>

or [www.unep.org/dewa/africa/AfricaAtlas](http://www.unep.org/dewa/africa/AfricaAtlas)

The Atlas can also be purchased at [www.earthprint.com](http://www.earthprint.com)

The digital version of the Atlas will also be released on Google Earth and other websites.

The book is the fruit of collaborative work between UNEP and partners including the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), the US Geological Survey, Global Earth Observations (GEO) Secretariat, United States Agency for the International Development (USAID), the World Resources Institute (WRI), Belgian Development Cooperation, the University of Maryland, South Dakota State University, the Southern African Development Community, the African Association for Remote Sensing of the Environment(AARSE), Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development(RCMRD), EIS-AFRICA, Environmental Systems Research Institute(ESRI), DigitalGlobe and GeoEye.

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UNEP News Release - June 2008

<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.Print.asp?DocumentID=538&ArticleID=5834&l=en>

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**June 12, 2008**

ENGLAND: England's church leaders call for worshippers to make 'Time for God's Creation'



June 06, 2008 [Lambeth Palace] Church leaders in the United Kingdom have called upon Christians to use the period from September 1 until October 4 as an opportunity to put the environment at the heart of their worship.

The 'Time For God's Creation' initiative, which would run annually, follows a resolution made at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in 2007, which was attended by representatives of Europe's Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant churches, that the period "be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change."

At a meeting on June 3 the four co-presidents of the ecumenical body 'Churches Together in England' -- Archbishop Rowan Williams, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Commissioner Elizabeth Matear, and Bishop Nathan Hovhanissian -- affirmed together their shared commitment to making the environment and collective responsibility for tackling climate change a fixed annual feature of the worship and shared witness of all the churches in England.

'Time for God's Creation' incorporates several existing dates related to Creation themes in the different church calendars. In 1989 the Ecumenical Patriarch invited all Christians to observe September 1 as a day of thanksgiving for Creation and an occasion for petitions for its preservation and healing. The period also incorporates Harvest festival, celebrated by Anglican and Protestant churches and concludes on October 4 with St. Francis' Day, when Roman Catholics reflect on Creation themes.

Commending the initiative, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams said, "Every Sunday in the creed, Christians confess their faith in God who created the world we inhabit. It's his gift. As stewards of that gift, each of us has a responsibility, both to God and to the generations to come, to ensure that this remains a sustainable world. Placing environmental concerns at the heart of our Christian worship for this fixed time each year, demonstrates our shared commitment to that end."

The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Cormac Murphy O'Connor, said, "In his World Day of Peace message for 1990, Pope John Paul II draws our attention to the figure of St. Francis, and reminds us that 'he offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation.'

"I have always been struck by the witness of St Francis for he helps us to see that the beauty and goodness of creation are a reflection of God's own Beauty and Goodness," the cardinal said.

"'Time for God's Creation' is a sobering reminder of our obligation to respect and care for our world. Inspired by St Francis we pray and work together for the common good."

Moderator of the Free Churches of England and Wales, Commissioner Betty Matear, said, "We believe that God is our Creator and humanity, created in his image, has been given responsibility for the care and stewardship of the world's resources. We are accountable to those who will follow us, to leave behind a world that would please its Creator but our lifestyles also affect the lives of others -- today. 'Time for God's Creation' will be an opportunity for us all to look at our

choices, to reflect on how our lives impact on others and to allow God to challenge us to become positively involved in caring for His world."

Bishop Nathan Hovhannisian, Primate of the Armenian Church of Great Britain, who is co-president representing England's Orthodox, Black Majority, Lutheran, Quaker and other churches, quoted Genesis, saying, "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." (Gen 1:28[a])

Hovhannisian continued, "Our Creator has entrusted us with this planet as a gift: may we always treasure it, and ensure that we are its good stewards, so that we remain also worthy of it. "

For more information on Churches Together in England, visit <http://www.churches-together.net/> Other resources will be available online at <http://www.ctbi.org.uk/BAB/295>.

[http://www.episcopalchurch.org/81808\\_97693\\_ENG\\_Print.html](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/81808_97693_ENG_Print.html).

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## **June 17, 2008**

### Child activists tell their story

UN children's environment conference to create change around the world

Stavanger/Nairobi, 16 June 2008-A young Australian film maker, an Indian child combating water waste, a 13-year-old organizing clean-ups in Cameroon, and a teenage American recycler are among 700 children from around the world attending a UN environment conference in Stavanger, Norway.

One of the largest international children's conferences in the world, the biannual Tunza International Children's Conference, organized by the United Nations Environment Programme(UNEP), takes place on 17-21 June, on the theme 'Creating Change'.

This year, in partnership with the UN Children's Fund UNICEF, UNEP will show the inspiring initiatives of dozens of children from around the world through 'My Story', a series of short video clips that will be posted on the UNEP website [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org).

Remarkable examples include a 13-year-old in Australia who is making a documentary called 'A Kid's Guide to Climate Change', for which he interviewed a local indigenous leader, visited a wind farm and a wave generator, and built a model solar car. Meanwhile a 14-year-old in India is campaigning against water waste in his community, a 13-year-old in Cameroon is running clean-up campaigns and tree plantings, and a 13-year-old in the United States has helped organize a recycling drive and collect 100,000 pounds of e-waste.

The Conference, organized by UNEP in partnership with the Norwegian NGO Young Agenda 21 with Bayer AG as one of the main sponsors, brings together children aged between 10 and 14 from more than 100 countries who are engaged in environmental issues. The aim is to increase their environmental awareness and equip them with skills to promote environmental projects in their communities. .

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "The 700 children attending the Tunza conference are a powerful sign of the creativity, energy and dynamism that children are capable of to protect our planet. We can all learn from them, and we should all take heart in the fact that increasing numbers of children are becoming a force for positive change as we move towards greener lifestyles."

The participants will present their environmental projects, debate green issues, go on field trips and learn about energy, climate change and fair trade. Hands-on workshops will be held on topics such as becoming an eco journalist, photographing the environment, planning practical environmental projects, and food and climate change.

Delegates will also plant trees in support of the UNEP Billion Tree Campaign. Separate workshops will be held for chaperones on how to support the children's environmental projects.

Anne-Kari Aas Eielsen, chair of the board of Young Agenda 21, said: "Tunza 2008 is an excellent opportunity for children to voice their concerns and to share their ideas, and we are very proud to host this conference. These dedicated young people are the leaders of tomorrow, and their wonderful involvement and achievements at young age will follow them through their lives. If anyone should be able to create change, it must be them!"

Michael Schade, Senior Vice President of Bayer AG, said: "At Bayer we appreciate highly children's commitment to environmental protection. It is very inspiring and wonderful to know that even at a very young age people are personally engaged in taking action to safeguard our planet Earth. The international children's conference is one of the important projects under the UNEP-Bayer partnership. Sustainable development is an integral element of Bayer's corporate policy and with our social commitment we strive to contribute to a good future for ourselves, our children and the coming generations."

This is the seventh edition of UNEP's Tunza International Children's Conference-previous hosts have included Malaysia, Japan and Canada. In the last several years, the conference has motivated hundreds of children to go out and take action on the environment.

The conference in Stavanger will also allow the participants to elect a new Junior Board, made up of children from each region of the world who will help organize the 2010 children's conference. Every delegate will also make individual commitments on the individual actions he or she will undertake after going home.

Notes to editors:

The Tunza International Children's Conference takes place every two years to increase children's environmental awareness and equip them with skills to promote environmental projects in their communities. Children from an unprecedented 106 countries are taking part in this year's conference.

The 2008 conference is hosted at the University of Stavanger. Sponsors include the Norwegian Government, the City of Stavanger, Rogaland County Council, Statoilhydro, Sparebank1, Lyse AS, City of Sandnes, Skretting AS, Norad and KNH Harald Haarfagre among others.

For more information on the children's conference, including a full programme, visit:

[www.ua21.no/tunza](http://www.ua21.no/tunza)

There will be opportunities for media to interview children from their countries during the conference.

To organize interviews during the conference, and for more information, please contact:

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To book interviews with conference participants, call: +4747501131 or +4747518440

<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=538&ArticleID=5838&l=en>.

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## **June 18, 2008**

The 'pope' of hope

Can religion help prevent eco-catastrophe? The leader of the Orthodox Church thinks so - and as the spiritual guide for 300 million people, he has more influence than most politicians. Riazat Butt reports

Riazat Butt

The Guardian, Wednesday June 18, 2008

Article history

For the many pilgrims who stream into the lavishly decorated Church of St George, Istanbul, it is the crystal chandeliers, incense clouds, iconography and sombre, chanting, enigmatic bishops dressed in black that are the main attraction of a little-known district in the throbbing Turkish metropolis.

Yet this cathedral holds far greater significance than photo opportunities and a sliver of Christendom in a Muslim-majority country. Around the corner from dusty cafes and tat shops, up a cobbled street, you come to the office of one of the most influential figures in the fight against climate change and world poverty.

His All Holiness, Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, is the spiritual leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians and 270th successor to the Apostle Andrew. He is also extremely green, taking heads of church and state to areas beset with environmental problems - the Amazon and Arctic among them - and confronting them with the best science.

After announcing, on an Aegean island, that attacks on the environment should be considered sins, he called pollution of the world's waters "a new Apocalypse" and led global calls for "creation care".

The 68-year-old archbishop, sitting behind his desk, popping artificial sweetener into a grainy espresso, is modest about his achievements, which, through the annual environmental symposia attended by the great and the good, include pressuring Brazilian soya traders into declaring a moratorium on crops from newly deforested land in the Amazon, and lobbying the Albanian government to clean up toxic waste dumped in Porto Romano on the Adriatic coast.

"We have succeeded so far," he says. "The Ecumenical Patriarchate has received awards because of this activity. It means our efforts are recognised internationally. At the beginning, we were talking about eco problem, then eco crisis, and now we are talking about eco catastrophe."

A decade ago, he says, people were puzzled by the links he was trying to establish. Religious people were indifferent, or even hostile, to science. Scientists and ecologists could see little relationship between their world and the world of faith. But there is hardly a religious leader in the world now, he says, who is not preoccupied by problems of pollution and climate change. "Every product we make and enjoy - from the paper we work with, to processed meat and the soy beans that sustain its industry, every tree we fell, every building we construct, every road we travel - definitively and permanently alters creation. This alteration - or perhaps we should characterise it as abuse - of creation is a fundamental difference between human, natural and divine economies."

Human economy, he explains, wastes and discards, while natural economy is cyclical and replenishes, and God's economy is compassionate and nurturing.

#### Guide the flock

As serious as he is about spreading the message of his environmental work, Bartholomew I is a genial, benign man who inspires warmth and attention. But being the Patriarch is an exacting job, especially in Turkey, where laws prevent him from appearing in his flowing robes on the streets. Despite this constraint, and the difficulties that come with being part of a minority religious group, he is ahead of his time, using his influence to campaign for change. The sense of urgency and commitment running through his message sits well with current thinking that religious leaders are in a better position to make an impact on their congregations than politicians or celebrities.

According to an Environment Agency wishlist of actions to save the planet, published last year, an ecological coalition of faith leaders was deemed more effective than a new Kyoto protocol-

style agreement to regulate emissions. Indeed, the agency placed such faith on a holy alliance that it ranked the idea number two in its list of 50 things that would save the planet - above more conventional ideas such as flying less, an expansion of solar and renewable power, and the introduction of green taxes.

Nick Reeves, the executive director of the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management, who helped the agency to draw up the list, says the world's faith groups had been silent for too long. "It is time they fulfilled their rightful collective role in reminding us that we have a duty to restore and maintain the ecological balance of the planet."

He adds that while most faith groups have environmental policies, they need to be more vociferous in getting their message across. "They speak for millions of people. There needs to be a stronger campaigning aspect to their work."

For the last five years, Bartholomew I has hired cruise ships on which he has staged major environmental symposiums involving church leaders of all denominations, scientists and politicians. The next symposium is scheduled for April 2009, on the Nile, under the patronage of the Patriarch, UN secretary general Ban Ki-Moon, and Jose Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission.

#### War on water

The brochure warns that ecological disaster in Africa could "mortally damage" the global ecosystem... Pasture land gives way to desert. Lake levels fall, animal and bird migrations change, fish stocks dwindle. River waters grow polluted and aquifers are drained for 'development'. Gigantic conurbations discharge untreated waste far beyond the capacity of the environment. High dams on major rivers block the natural supply of silt to downstream communities."

Asked why the symposiums focus on seas and waterways, the Patriarch points out that 70% of the planet consists of water, and 70% of the human body does too. "We are not in favour of having big meetings in places of the world - for example, Geneva, London or New York - that are not relevant for the topic, to discuss the problems of the rainforest or the melting of the ice in Greenland. It is much more important to bring relevant people directly to the areas in question, to the endangered bodies of water."

He plays down his role as a pioneer. "I don't think I'm so strong to change the face of the globe. We shall continue our humble efforts. We are all culpable. Each one of us has a smaller or greater contribution to the deliberate degradation of nature."

#### Holy eco warriors

Pope Benedict XVI used his Christmas homily to speak out against selfishness and the degradation of the environment as he celebrated midnight mass at St Peter's Basilica in 2007. "Man is so preoccupied with himself, he has such urgent need of all the space and all the time for his own things, that nothing remains for others," he said. Recalling Christmas homilies of the

4th-century Bishop Gregory of Nyssa, who lamented a "universe torn and disfigured by sin", The Pope also spoke of the environment. "What would He say if He could see the state of the world today, through the abuse of energy and its selfish and reckless exploitation?"

The Archbishop of Canterbury has pledged to fly less in his role as head of the Anglican Communion. He says: "I'm trying to move our bishops on to environmentally friendly cars, and the Bishop of London and myself have been trying to do our little bit by travelling slowly and conveniently - and rather enjoyably - across Europe to meetings that we would have otherwise have flown to in the last couple of years. I came back by train from Rome on Saturday, and very nice it was too! You can't quite do it with Singapore, but ... one step at a time!"

The 14th Dalai Lama says a clean environment is a basic human right. "Taking care of our planet is like taking care of our houses. Since we human beings come from nature, there is no point in our going against nature. It is ... part of our responsibility towards others to ensure that the world we pass on is as healthy, if not healthier, than we found it."

Fazlun Khalid, director of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, is recognised as an expert on ecology from an Islamic perspective. He has also worked as the director of training at the Alliance of Religions and Conservation and as a consultant for World Wildlife Fund. Khalid believes that protecting the environment is a form of worship, and that humans have a basic right to the benefits of a healthy planet. "As the guardians of Allah's creation we have a responsibility to protect the environment. In our eagerness to 'progress' and 'develop' we have lost sight of the finite and delicate nature of planet Earth and of humanity's place in it."

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/jun/18/activists.environment>

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## **June 18, 2008**

Oil prices fuel fury from the pulpit

Some clergy question the car's role in society as gasoline costs keep some of the faithful away from services.

By Ronald D. White

Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

June 17, 2008

Record gasoline prices have been painful, but now they have begun to test the limits of faith.

In houses of worship nationwide, preachers are railing against the forces of energy evil, and congregations are praying for lower fuel prices.

So far, no results.

The Energy Department's weekly survey Monday showed U.S. pump prices hitting a fresh record of \$4.08 a gallon. Oil neared \$140 a barrel, but then retreated.

The problem is affecting even the holy business, driving down attendance at churches, synagogues and mosques. Religious leaders are struggling to help their members cope, spinning new themes about a society that has become almost sinfully reliant on motorized transport. Others are viewing the energy-price squeeze as a test of the way they serve God and their communities.

Pastor Matthew Barnett is spending nearly \$11,000 a week to power a fleet of aging trucks and buses that ferry members to his megachurch at the historic Angelus Temple in Echo Park.

The buses also are used to give teens in troubled neighborhoods an all-day respite at the church's Dream Center and to deliver food and medical care to the poor. Financial advisors and other church leaders have suggested diverting the money spent on the fleet to a television ministry.

Barnett doesn't think so.

"I know a lot of churches that are folding up their bus ministries, but when you're called to do God's work, you have to weather the hard times," Barnett said. "The way to impact a community is to keep showing up and being consistent. We have to be a positive force, and there's no amount that gas prices can go up to that will stop that."

Some economists say Americans are spending more on foreign oil as a percentage of gross domestic product -- 3% -- than at any time since the oil shortages of the 1970s.

"Between 1987 and 2002, the percentage was below 1%, then came the recent rise in energy prices," said Edward Leamer, head of the UCLA Anderson Forecast. "This weekly slap in the face we get at the gas pumps is a symptom of an annoying reality: Americans are not as wealthy as they used to be."

Or as morally focused, some church leaders believe. One pastor, Ed Black of Arena Christian Church in Lincoln, Calif., told his flock on his blog Sunday that the car -- and the fuel it rode in on -- might be one of the roots of modern society's ills.

"With the invention of the car," Black wrote, "young men would change the dating scene, picking up girls, and taking them away from their parents, without supervision, dropping [them] off later after who knows what went on."

Fuel's expense is cutting across cultural and religious beliefs.

At the Islamic Center of Southern California, it was common before the surge in gasoline prices to see people visit five times a day to find fellowship and pray.



Now, coordinator Ahmed Mohamed says, many people come "just two or three times a day and sometimes less. They can't afford to drive here as often. I've never seen anything like it."

High oil prices remain the primary driver behind rising gasoline prices. But California's gas has taken several unusually large jumps in recent weeks, in part because of refinery glitches. Few facilities outside California make the state's super-clean gasoline formula.

California's average gas price jumped 15.5 cents in the last week to \$4.588 a gallon, the Energy Department said. In the last month, California's average has increased nearly 64 cents a gallon while the U.S. average has risen 29 cents. A year earlier, the average was \$1.35 lower in California and \$1.07 lower nationwide.

The volatile oil gauge soared to a record \$139.89 a barrel early Monday despite weekend reports that Saudi Arabia would boost production. But the commodity couldn't break the \$140 mark and lost steam, closing at \$134.61, down 25 cents.

Although gas is cheaper in other states, the \$4 mark is being seen in most of the country.

At the First Baptist Church of Snellville, Ga., a sign proclaims "Free Gasoline," referring to the raffle of two \$500 gas cards during a recent church revival.

At the St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church in Valley City, Ohio, Pastor D. Murawski's message Sunday was simple. By all means, cut back on your driving but not your driving to church.

"Yes, it may be more difficult at the end of the month to pay our bills and fill our tanks," he wrote on the church's website, "but one thing that hasn't diminished one iota is the commitment of God to love you, forgive you, and watch over you."

But one place of worship's cause for concern is another's apparent opportunity.

Chuck Warnock, pastor of Chatham Baptist Church in Chatham, Va., said the leap in gas prices "bodes well for small neighborhood churches, and badly for those who have a long commute to church."

"Small churches that position themselves to minister to their community will be attractive as our country refocuses on small, local, sustainable experiences from food production to education to work to worship," Warnock said on his blog, titled "Confessions of a Small-Church Pastor."

Back in Los Angeles, Barnett said he was looking for ways to improve his bus fleet.

"Some of them are 10 years, 15 years, 20 years old," he said of the church's vehicles. "We're open to any idea to keep them rolling."

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<http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-gas17-2008jun17,0,2540727.story>

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**June 20, 2008**

Anouar Majid  
Two Faiths, One Planet

A remarkable event took place in Washington this week. The National Association of Evangelicals hosted a delegation of six Moroccans—including this writer, who is Moroccan-American—to discuss the pressing problem of the environment and the “future of our planet.” In the language of faith, Christians and Muslims alike are called upon to care for God’s creation. The message that came across from the very start is that if Christians and Muslims cannot come together to do something about environmental degradation, both communities will have, in essence, forfeited their missions, if not abdicated their faiths altogether.

This is quite a twist in Christian-Muslim dialogue, one that should be broadened not only to include Muslims and Christians from other nations but also representatives of every possible faith, including atheists. I could well imagine a United Nations-like assembly meeting for two days or so and issuing an interfaith proclamation on the sacredness of the creation and our God-mandated duty to protect it. Such a measure, however, may not be enough. It is our faiths, as Rev. Richard Cizik, the co-convenor of the event, suggested, that need to be rethought. But how does one begin to do so in a hyper-consumer global society, one in which people are divided into the super-fed and super-entertained few and huge masses living on the edge of starvation? We may ache for our embattled planet and the losers among us, but we are way too embedded in our long-dysfunctional economic and political structures to see our way out to natural safety.

This is what I thought, at any rate, as I listened and talked to various participants. I imagined Christianity and Islam as cities upon crumbling hills and having only themselves to blame for their obsolescence. Obviously, the meeting brought to mind John Winthrop’s 1630 sermon, one that is often invoked by politicians in Capitol Hill. For more than any other Christian in American history, it is Winthrop’s vision that has issued a warning to the ages, one that Christians (and Muslims) would ignore at their own peril. Faith, I remembered Winthrop saying, is sharing and forgiveness. It is unconditional love. Faith is community, above all, not the maniacal pursuit of private wealth, redeemed by charitable donations to worthy but, ultimately, futile causes. The first governor of Massachusetts failed to keep his comrades in the fold of Christian love, and so we today stand on the hill of perdition. We stand as helpless sinners, as the fire-and-brimstone Puritan preacher Jonathan Edwards would say more than two centuries later, “in the Hands of an angry God.”

If nothing else comes out of this historic encounter, then the least it could do is, in fact, broaden the reach of our faiths. Creation care requires unconditional love for God’s whole creation, including our fellow humans, without regard to their religions. One could imagine this approach leading to more trust and, even, love, thereby tempering the destructive (but equally human) drive for accumulation and conquests. Families tend to fight strangers more than they do themselves. And so this inauspicious Christian-Muslim encounter could very well lay the

foundations of a world closer to divine intent than all our traditional expressions of faith have so far been able to do.

Anouar Majid is author, most recently, of "A Call for Heresy: Why Dissent is Vital to Islam and America." He is Chair and Professor of English at the University of New England.

[http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2008/06/many\\_faiths\\_one\\_planet.html](http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2008/06/many_faiths_one_planet.html)

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## **June 27, 2008**

Global TV Campaign on Public Transport and Climate Change Awarded by Advertising Industry  
The TV advertising campaign conducted by the International Association of Public Transport (UITP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) won a prestigious award from the European Association of Communications Agencies (EACA). The award was handed out yesterday evening at the European Parliament in Brussels.

The 'CARE Awards' were introduced for the first time this year by EACA to highlight the most successful and creative social marketing campaigns, and to recognise excellence in promoting care for people, resources and the environment.

The UITP/UNEP ad-produced by McCann Erikson and animated by Tandem-won an award in the 'Non profit organisations and non governmental bodies' category. Other short-listed campaigns in the category came from organisations like Greenpeace, Amnesty International, the World Health Organisation and UNICEF.

The prizes were awarded by Ruth Hieronymi, MEP, and judges included a mix of media, the advertising industry and politicians.

The advertisement, called 'The voice of reason (Aged 6)', is in the style of a child's drawing and gives a little girl's perspective on how our mobility choices affect the planet. "This ad is so powerful because it manages to transmit a very serious message in a simple, clear and positive way," commented UITP Secretary General, Hans Rat.

The ad, which has some 20 language versions, was aired on BBC World, CNBC, CNN, EuroNews, Sky News, E Entertainment, TV5 and Bloomberg. In addition about 60 organisations have integrated it in their own national or local communications campaigns in countries such as Australia, Belgium, China, Denmark, Greece and Iran.

The internet version of the advertisement is available on [www.uitp.org/theworldisyourhome](http://www.uitp.org/theworldisyourhome). It is also available on a free-to-air basis for local adaptation and use.

-UITP is the international network for public transport authorities and operators, policy decision-makers, scientific institutes and the public transport supply and service industry. It is a platform for worldwide co-operation, business development and the sharing of know-how between its 3,100 members from 90 countries. UITP is the global advocate for public transport and

sustainable mobility, and the promoter of innovations in the sector. For more information on UITP and public transport, visit [www.uitp.org](http://www.uitp.org).

-UNEP is the voice for the environment within the United Nations system. UNEP acts as a catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the global environment. [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)

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<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=538&ArticleID=5847&l=en>

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## July 5, 2008

Launching a spiritual war on global warming

An approach that provides the inner strength to tackle the worst effects of the changing climate patterns

By Douglas Todd  
Vancouver Sun

"i thank you god for most this amazing  
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees  
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything  
which is natural which is infinite which is yes."  
-- e.e. cummings

Does global warming pose a spiritual problem? Those who do not believe in any form of divinity would probably say No.

And even some who believe in a transcendent reality might think global warming basically needs to be fought through political, scientific and economic means.

But perhaps a spiritual response is also needed to global warming -- to provide the inner strength necessary to face and combat the worst effects that are to come from the Earth's erratically changing climate. You don't have to go to a church, synagogue or temple to be "spiritual" (although it doesn't often hurt). Spirituality can be broadly defined as the attempt to respond meaningfully to life's existential challenges.

And if you believe last year's Nobel Peace Prize co-winners -- Al Gore and the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change -- the greenhouse gas buildup caused by fossil fuels is definitely one of those existential predicaments.

Those who feel they don't have to do anything about global warming, or are in denial, might have to draw on some deeper resources, including transcendent ones, to help them face the difficult music.

And for those who have accepted scientific arguments the world is growing hotter at the fastest rate in recorded history as a result of human actions, a spiritual stand could help overcome a sense of helplessness and despair.

A spiritual response would also include accepting the western world's contribution to environmental disruption -- and not just pointing the finger of blame; scapegoating, say, China, for turning into the planet's newest, biggest reckless polluter.

Spiritual wisdom can also be helpful for those who are just old-fashioned afraid.

They've heard the warnings that global warming could lead to themselves, or more likely their children and grandchildren, struggling in a dystopia of global conflict over depleted natural resources. They need help being brave.

I have been re-convinced of the necessity of a spiritual response to environmental problems by the powerful just-released book, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World and Global Warming* (Fortress), by B.C.'s Sallie McFague.

"Climate change will demand much of us," writes McFague, who had a prominent career at Vanderbilt Divinity School in Tennessee before coming in 2000 to the Vancouver School of Theology on the UBC campus, where she is considered by many the globe's most important eco-theologian. At a time when Canadians, especially British Columbians, are debating the pros and cons of a new carbon tax, McFague shows she's entirely up to speed on the science of global warming.

She also believes climate change is a more clear and present danger to the globe than Naziism was prior to the Second World War. As such, she picks up an idea philosopher William James would have been suggesting back in 1906 when he wrote his famous essay, *The Moral Equivalent of War*. It maintained citizens need to muster the dedication, sacrifice and virtue brought to launching a military campaign to fighting peaceful causes, in this case saving the ecosystem.

McFague believes we need to adopt a radical war footing against the common enemy of global warming, whose insidious consequences she first noticed 20 years ago while hiking in the Rockies -- in the decline of once-magnificent glaciers.

McFague makes it clear that vigorous legislation, which sets limits on consumption and emphasizes communitarian values over individualistic ones, is necessary to combat global warming.

Citizens are invited to reflect on such values as they weigh the current B.C. Liberal government method of tackling global warming through a "revenue-neutral" surcharge to all fuels, or the provincial NDP or Danish approach, which lean to targeting industrial polluters while financially encouraging energy-saving innovation. Even though McFague understands politics and especially the science of global warming, the unique contribution of her book to the debate is theological and philosophical.

In making her case, McFague recognizes in a postmodern world influenced by the "deconstructive" philosophy of Jacques Derrida (in which the word "God" is virtually forbidden) she must offer what she calls a "minimalist theology." It should be acceptable to virtually all.

Her stripped-down theology centres on feeling gratitude for the planet and a sense of interconnectedness with all creatures.

A New Climate for Theology does not define spiritual "salvation" as select individuals obtaining eternal life, but rather, as the early theologian Irenaeus put it, "The glory of God is every creature fully alive."

Convinced the flourishing of all living things should be our ultimate spiritual goal, McFague offers an understanding of God that might seem novel to many.

Even though McFague is a Christian, she says she goes beyond "neo-classical" western theology to "evolutionary" theology.

God is not a "being," she says. Instead, God is the source of life, love and hope.

She sets out a mystical vision of the universe as God's beloved body, even suggesting we all metaphorically exist within "God's womb." And even though humans are beginning to destroy the tiny portion of God's body that is Earth, she maintains the divine is always ready to work with humans to redeem this planet.

Echoing e.e. cummings in the poem above, A New Climate for Theology spells out a spiritual attitude of gratitude and praise toward the natural world, upon which she emphasizes we all rely.

It's a sense of thankfulness available not only to the explicitly spiritual, but also to a "secular" gardener who simply marvels at the rite of growing flowers and vegetables.

Fighting a spiritual war against global warming will demand that we live differently, McFague says. But our motivation for coming together in the military-like campaign should not be fear, or even duty.

It can be gratitude and love.

"We stand with our feet firmly on the earth," she writes, "and exclaim, 'I thank you god for most this amazing day.' And then we get to work."

To read Douglas Todd's blog, go to [www.vancouver.sun.com/blogs](http://www.vancouver.sun.com/blogs)

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<http://www.canada.com/vancouver/columnists/story.html?id=e9b2beb6-de2b-42f1-9db4-0b74302619fd&p=2>

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## July 7, 2008

### India's Temples Go Green

By Madhur Singh

The Tirumala temple, in the south Indian city of Tirupathi, is one of Hinduism's holiest shrines. Over 5,000 pilgrims a day visit this city of seven hills, filling Tirumala's coffers with donations and making it India's richest temple. But since 2002, Tirumala has also been generating revenue from a less likely source: carbon credits. For decades, the temple's community kitchen has fed nearly 15,000 people, cooking 30,000 meals a day. Five years ago, Tirumala adopted solar cooking technology, allowing it to dramatically cut down on the amount of diesel fuel it uses. The temple now sells the emission reduction credits it earns to a Swiss green-technology investor, Good Energies Inc.

Like Tirumala, dozens of holy places across India are moving quietly towards green energy. Muni Seva Ashram, in Gujarat, which combines spiritual practice with social activism, is working to make its premises entirely green by using solar, wind and biogas energy. A residential school for 400 students is already running exclusively on green energy. Starting this year, the ashram will also sell three million carbon credits. A similar movement is afoot at the revered Sai Baba Temple in Shirdi, Maharashtra. "Our aim is to avoid pollution in every way," says Raghunath Aher, the temple's chief engineer. "A holy place should be pure and completely in harmony with nature."

It's not surprising that religious groups are in the vanguard of India's green movement: India is the birthplace of four of the world's largest religions — Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, all of which revere nature and preach conservation. But the country's environmental practice hasn't always matched that preaching, leaving its air and water woefully polluted. According to the World Bank, emissions increased 57% in the decade following the India's economic liberalization.

Now, however, religious groups, keen to marry spirituality with sustainability, are leading the push to reverse that trend. Deepak Gadhia, founder of Gadhia Solar Energy Systems, which provided solar cooking technology to Tirumala temple, says more and more religious organizations have approached him in recent years. "With most businesses, the first question is of economics," he says, "But spiritual organizations look at larger issues. They want energy that is spiritually positive."

Art of Living, for instance, a 25-year-old spiritual organization that claims nearly 30 million followers in India, focuses on returning to "the way of life espoused in the ancient Hindu scriptures," according to spokesperson Mamta Kailkhura. The group is working with the government of Uttaranchal state to clean up the Ganges River and devise a waste disposal system for the holy city of Rishikesh. In the villages near Art of Living's ashram in Bangalore, a program to teach farmers organic methods and ancient water harvesting techniques is afoot. The ashram itself uses biogas for part of its lighting requirements, and recycles all of its water. Of course, it all makes sound economic sense: with the government subsidizing up to 50% of the costs of installing green technology, temples like Tirumala can make steady returns selling the resulting carbon credits.

And India's faith-based organizations are also helping spread the gospel of green. The UK-based Alliance of Religions and Conservation, which works with the UN to involve religious groups in environmental outreach, is working on a conservation campaign in the holy city of Vrindavan, as well as pushing India's 28,000 Sikh temples to convert their kitchens to green technology. The combined potential of such efforts is limitless. India's religious groups have sizable incomes, own vast amounts of land, and have enormous influence on public opinion through their educational institutions. Indeed, with 99% of Indians professing to one faith or another, the country's green movement might not have a prayer without them.

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1820844,00.html>

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**July 9, 2008**

Missed Opportunity for G8 Leaders on Climate Change

Nairobi



As the G8 Summit wrapped up in Japan, Achim Steiner, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, said the world's richest countries had shown insufficient leadership on climate change.

"We are under pressure to act. We have no time left to waste," said Mr Steiner. " However I think the G8 leaders missed an opportunity to provide the kind of signal that would accelerate the international negotiation process," he added.

Mr Steiner noted that the G8 countries' agreement to reduce carbon emissions by at least 50 per cent by 2050 is a positive outcome of the summit.

"I think the G8 delivered what it could. But in terms of what the world needs, what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has asked for and what is necessary in view of the Copenhagen meeting in 2009 the results fall short," he said. "The South African Minister of the Environment called it empty slogans - where is the substance?"

"The G8 Summit has not delivered enough leadership. We have some 500 days until we meet in Copenhagen to reach a global agreement," the UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director said. "We have less than seven years to stabilize emissions globally. The absence of short- and medium-term targets and commitments by the leading industrialized nations is a shortfall of the summit."

"We are beyond the rhetoric of climate change. We must now put numbers on the table. We must also give developing nations the clear conviction that industrialized nations are taking their responsibilities seriously," he said.

Mr Steiner noted that a number of countries including Germany, Norway and the UK as well as South Africa and Indonesia are now committing to targets.

"But when we look at the implementation of emission reduction targets under the current Kyoto Protocol, a number of industrialized nations are not even delivering on these relatively small targets. So what incentive is there for developing nations to make major investments if developed nations are not willing to take these significant steps forward?"

"We will continue to be stuck until all industrialized nations commit to firm targets - ones to be met by 2020 not in 42 years time," he said.

<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=540&ArticleID=5864&l=en>

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**July 12, 2008**

Pope expresses worry about climate change

By Victor L. Simpson  
Associated Press Writer

Pope Benedict XVI said Saturday he wants to wake up consciences on climate change during his pilgrimage in Australia.

Benedict also told reporters while flying to Sydney to start a 10-day visit that he would work for "healing and reconciliation with the victims" of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy there "just as I did in the United States" earlier this year.

Less than an hour after the pope's flight took off from Rome, Benedict walked back to the section where journalists sat and met with them for about 15 minutes. He called on five journalists to ask questions that had been submitted to the Vatican earlier in the week.

One asked about climate change following discussions on the environment during this month's G-8 summit in Japan.

There is a need to "wake up consciences," Benedict responded. "We have to give impulse to rediscovering our responsibility and to finding an ethical way to change our way of life."

Benedict said that politicians and experts must be "capable of responding to the great ecological challenge and to be up to the task of this challenge."

"We have our responsibilities toward Creation," Benedict said, stressing, however, that he had no intention of weighing in on technical or political questions swirling around climate change.

Benedict said he would address the problem of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy.

He reiterated his view that sexual abuse is "incompatible with the behavior" required of priests. At the start of his U.S. pilgrimage, Benedict had said he was "deeply ashamed" of the abuse scandal and pledged to work to make sure pedophiles do not become priests.

Benedict acknowledged in comments to reporters Saturday aboard the plane that the Church in the West was "in crisis" but insisted it was not in decline. "I am an optimist" about its future, he said.

The Australia pilgrimage is the longest in his three-year-old papacy and will test the 81-year-old pontiff's stamina. Tens of thousands of young pilgrims are awaiting him in Sydney.

Although aides say the pope is in fine health, the Vatican appeared to be taking no chances to ensure Benedict is fit for the church's World Youth Day festival.

With little advance notice, it canceled Benedict's weekly public audience this past Wednesday as well as most other meetings to give him as much rest as possible.

It even put on hold a much-awaited audience with Ingrid Betancourt, who was recently freed after more than six years as a hostage in the Colombian jungles and expressed a desire to see the pope.

Upon the pope's arrival in Sydney after more than 20 hours of flying -- interrupted only by a 90-minute refueling stop -- he will spend three days resting in a Roman Catholic study center in Kenthurst, in the countryside outside Sydney.

After he succeeded John Paul three years ago, Benedict said he doubted he would make many long trips. But invitations keep coming in from world leaders and officials of his global 1-billion member flock.

Benedict himself has said that being pope is "really tiring" and, in an interview with German television in 2006, said he does not feel strong enough to take many long trips.

He visited Brazil last year, made a pilgrimage to the United States in April and will travel to France in September.

Benedict will be greeted at Sydney Harbor on Thursday by a group of Aborigines and other young people from the Pacific Basin and deliver what is expected to be an important address. In 2001, John Paul issued a formal apology to the indigenous peoples of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific islands for injustices perpetrated by Catholic missionaries.

Australia's senior Catholic leader, Cardinal George Pell has been accused of badly handling a sexual abuse claim and this week agreed to reopen investigations into the 25-year-old case.

World Youth Day will culminate July 20 with an open-air Mass expected to draw some 250,000 pilgrims before Benedict heads back to Rome.

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080712/ap\\_on\\_re\\_eu/vatican\\_pope;\\_ylt=Ao5jOqHE4q8w8X7qomL0o\\_dbbBAF](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080712/ap_on_re_eu/vatican_pope;_ylt=Ao5jOqHE4q8w8X7qomL0o_dbbBAF)

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## July 14, 2008

How the pope is saving Earth

Benedict's Hungarian forest plan will cut emissions and power Vatican City.

By Glenn Hurowitz

Pope Benedict XVI, like many world leaders, has spoken passionately about the urgent need to protect the planet from climate catastrophe. But unlike his fellow heads of state, the pontiff has actually created a carbon-neutral economy -- and done it cheaply and quickly.

The Vatican announced last year that it would restore 37 acres of forest in Hungary that had been cut down in the Middle Ages. Those growing trees will absorb enough carbon dioxide to offset all the pollution from the fossil fuels used to power Vatican City.

The reason this "Vatican model" succeeded while other countries struggle to achieve even modest emissions reductions is because of the unique qualities of forest conservation and restoration. Compared with other methods of reducing climate-changing pollution, such as switching to wind, solar or geothermal power, it's fast and relatively cheap. That's true on a small, Vatican City scale as well as a massive American scale.

It's particularly true when it comes to the carbon-rich tropical forests that act as the Earth's lungs, breathing in carbon dioxide and breathing out oxygen. These forests are being logged and burned at a terrifying pace by big agricultural, biofuels and mining companies. Between August 2007 and April 2008, for instance, big ag and its cohorts destroyed a whopping 2,300 square miles of the Amazon, releasing 300 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> into the air in the process. Compounding that disaster, the treeless land generally loses its capacity to absorb the greenhouse gases produced by the world's fossil fuel consumption.

The good news is that stopping that destruction -- by purchasing the land outright or paying landowners and others to conserve it -- is a bargain. Because of the low cost of tropical land, protecting these forests can cost as little as \$1 per ton of CO<sub>2</sub> saved and almost never more than \$10 a ton. (For comparison, cleanups based primarily on energy now trade for more than \$40 a ton on European markets.)

As a result, the World Bank and others estimate that global deforestation could be completely halted for the relatively tiny sum of \$11 billion to \$15 billion a year. That one move alone would eliminate 20% of total global warming pollution.

Despite the urgency of the problem -- and the ease of the solution -- forest conservation has, until

recently, been the forgotten stepchild of climate legislation. For many years, policymakers (particularly in Europe) were nervous that polluters would abuse the system by using low-cost overseas forest conservation projects as an excuse to avoid cleaning up industrial pollution at home.

But forest conservation needn't be an end. It should be a beginning. Again, we can look to the Vatican as a model. The pope didn't stop with his Hungarian forest. This year, he's planning to unveil an array of solar panels atop the huge Paul VI Audience Hall, which will provide enough electricity to light, heat and cool the building year-round. The pontiff is using forest conservation the right way: not as a method to avoid a clean-energy revolution but as a way to achieve immediate gains while other progress is underway, including the greening of Catholic Church operations around the world.

That should be the model for the United States (and other industrialized nations too). Although comprehensive climate change legislation is considered dead for this year, it's likely that Congress and President Bush could cobble together a consensus to authorize the \$11 billion necessary to halt worldwide deforestation for 2009. That would keep 6 billion tons of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere -- equivalent to the United States' entire annual emissions -- and save 30 million acres of forest from destruction for the foreseeable future. It would send a clear signal to American voters (and the world) that although the details still have to be figured out, the federal government can deliver real action on climate change.

This isn't as pie-in-the-sky as it might seem. Bush already has approved several significant tropical forest conservation projects in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama and elsewhere. With this deal, Bush could legitimately claim that he'd done far more, far sooner, for far less money to stop global warming than either the Kyoto Protocol or the failed congressional climate bill would have.

By following the pope's example, even Bush might qualify for a bit of eco-sainthood.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/sunday/commentary/la-oe-hurowitz14-2008jul14,0,5390201.story>

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## July 17, 2008

Pope Benedict Preaches Environmental Protection at World Youth Day

SYDNEY, Australia

Pope Benedict XVI opened the official portion of his first visit to Australia today by reminding everyone at the Government House welcoming ceremony of "the need to protect the environment."

"With many thousands of young people visiting Australia at this time, it is appropriate to reflect upon the kind of world we are handing on to future generations," the Pope said. "In the words of your national anthem, this land "abounds in nature's gifts, of beauty rich and rare."

"The wonder of God's creation reminds us of the need to protect the environment and to exercise responsible stewardship of the goods of the earth," he said. "In this connection I note that Australia is making a serious commitment to address its responsibility to care for the natural environment."

The pope is here on the occasion of the 23rd World Youth Day, the largest youth event in the world, which opened in Sydney on Tuesday and continues through Sunday. Organized by the Catholic Church, World Youth Day gathers young people from around the globe to celebrate and learn about their faith.

In his welcoming statement, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd acknowledged "the first Australians on whose land we meet and whose cultures we celebrate as among the oldest continuing cultures in human history," and welcomed the pontiff on their behalf at their request.

One in every four Australians is Catholic and there are 1,300 parishes across the continental country, in each of which the pope would be most welcome, the prime minister said.

"It is fitting that his holiness's first visit to Australia is for the occasion of World Youth Day," said Rudd, "in part because Australia itself is a young country, although as this young country we inhabit this vast and ancient land."

Later in the day at Barangaroo, a waterfront renewal area in Sydney Harbour, Pope Benedict returned to his environmental message.

Addressing an estimated crowd of over 150,000 pilgrims who traveled to Sydney for World Youth Day '08, the pontiff told of his feelings of awe while traveling from Europe to Australia by air.

"The views afforded of our planet from the air were truly wondrous," he said. "The sparkle of the Mediterranean, the grandeur of the north African desert, the lushness of Asia's forestation, the vastness of the Pacific Ocean, the horizon upon which the sun rose and set, and the majestic splendour of Australia's natural beauty which I have been able to enjoy these last couple of days; these all evoke a profound sense of awe."

"It is as though one catches glimpses of the Genesis creation story - light and darkness, the sun and the moon, the waters, the earth, and living creatures; all of which are "good" in God's eyes," said the pope. "Immersed in such beauty, who could not echo the words of the Psalmist in praise of the Creator: "how majestic is your name in all the earth?"

But Pope Benedict also called attention to environmental degradation.

"Perhaps reluctantly we come to acknowledge that there are also scars which mark the surface of our earth: erosion, deforestation, the squandering of the world's mineral and ocean resources in order to fuel an insatiable consumption," he said.

"Some of you come from island nations whose very existence is threatened by rising water levels; others from nations suffering the effects of devastating drought," said the pope.

"God's wondrous creation is sometimes experienced as almost hostile to its stewards, even something dangerous. How can what is "good" appear so threatening?"

The planet is in urgent need of caring stewardship, the pontiff emphasized, saying, "My dear friends, God's creation is one and it is good. The concerns for non-violence, sustainable development, justice and peace, and care for our environment are of vital importance for humanity."

The World Youth Day events began on Tuesday with an opening Mass at Barangaroo celebrated by Cardinal George Pell and bishops from around the world.

On Friday afternoon, there will be a live theatrical and devotional re-enactment of the Stations of the Cross, the last days of Jesus' life against the backdrop of the Sydney Harbour.

On Saturday, there will be an evening vigil and candlelight ceremony with the pope at Southern Cross Precinct.

And on Sunday, World Youth Day, Pope Benedict celebrate Mass for what organizers predict will be the largest gathering of people in the history of Australia at Southern Cross Precinct.

The pope will fly over the precinct in a helicopter and then drive through the precinct in the pope-mobile, a bullet-proof vehicle designed for the pontiff.

Through Friday night, the Youth Festival features music, performing arts, visual art exhibitions, debate, film, community gatherings, street performers, workshops and a Vocations Expo. All Youth Festival events are free and open to the general public.

<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/jul2008/2008-07-17-01.asp>

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## July 17, 2008

### Green drive by church

THE St Mary's Orthodox Church is to organise an environmental awareness programme on Saturday as part of its year-long golden jubilee celebrations.

It will be held at the church premises in Salmaniya from 7pm to 8.30pm, under the patronage of the Public Commission for Environment, Wildlife and Marine Resources and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

"This is to focus attention on Bahrain and global environment and stimulate attention and action," said church vicar Father Saji Mathew.

"The event seeks to give human face to environmental issues, and empower people to become active agents of substantial and equitable development. The idea is to promote an understanding among communities to change attitudes towards environmental issues and advocate partnership which will ensure that everybody enjoy a safer and prosperous future."

Public Commission senior environmental specialist Suzan Al Ajjawi will make a presentation on environmental issues relevant to Bahrain.

UNEP associate programme officer Etaf Chehade will speak on people's role in protecting the environment. It will be followed by an audio-visual presentation.

The church's golden jubilee celebrations were inaugurated by Deputy Premier Jawad Al Arrayed at the Indian School last month.

"The celebration will include various programmes like charity activities, and social and environmental awareness programmes," said church secretary Abraham Samuel and jubilee publicity convenor Benny Varkey.

An Indo-Bahrain cultural meet will be held in Parumala, Kerala on August 1, which will be attended by Indian ministers, church members and their families, and former Bahrain residents now living in Kerala said jubilee committee secretary Abraham George.

<http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/Story.asp?Article=223322&Sn=BNEW&IssueID=31119>

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## July 17, 2008

International Children's Painting Competition Focuses on Climate Change  
UNEP calls for submissions from around the planet

Nairobi

Climate Change: Our Challenge is the theme of the 18th International Children's Painting Competition, which was launched today by the United Nations Environment Programme(UNEP).

This year, the children's paintings will focus on climate change, from the impact of global warming on our planet to concrete actions everyone can take-such as using renewable energy and



energy saving light bulbs, sharing vehicles and using public transport, planting trees, and many other steps.

Children from around the world aged 5 to 13 are encouraged to take part in this global competition which is gaining momentum every year. An unprecedented 15,550 entries from 90 countries around the world were submitted for last year's award.

The competition is organized every year by UNEP and the Japan-based Foundation for Global Peace and Environment (FGPE), Bayer and Nikon Corporation. Since its creation in 1991, the competition has received more than 190,000 entries from children in over 100 countries.

One global winner and six regional winners will be selected, with a cash prize of US\$ 2,000 for the global winner and US\$1,000 for the others. All the winners will get a fully paid trip with a chaperone to the 2009 Tunza International Children's Conference.

This year's theme was announced as the twenty winners of the 2008 UNEP Chinese Children's Painting Competition visited Nairobi to receive their awards from UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. The twenty children will take part in cultural activities and visit environmental spots in Kenya such as Maasai Mara and Lake Nakuru to learn more about the environment. They will also create a giant canvas painting entitled "Our Environment" which will be presented to the Executive Director as a mark of their commitment to the environment.

Notes to editors:

Participants should submit their paintings by 15 January 2009 to the UNEP office in their regions. Aside from the global winners, there will be regional winners for Africa, Asia and the Pacific, West Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America.

The regional winners will be announced on 22 April 2009 and the global winners will be announced at the venue of the 2009 Tunza International Children's Conference (venue and dates to be confirmed later).

For more information on the competition, including the full entry rules and conditions, please visit:

[http://www.unep.org/tunza/children/inner.asp?ct=competitions&comp=int\\_comp](http://www.unep.org/tunza/children/inner.asp?ct=competitions&comp=int_comp)

For More Information, please Contact: Nick Nuttall, Spokesperson/Head of Media, UNEP on Tel: +254 20 7623084, Mobile: +254 733 632755 or +41 795965737, E-mail: [nick.nuttall@unep.org](mailto:nick.nuttall@unep.org)

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<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=540&ArticleID=5873&l=en>

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**July 18, 2008**

Unnecessary flights killing the poor: Tutu

By Jeremy Lovell

LONDON (Reuters) - Businessmen who take flights rather than use video conferencing are adding to global warming that is condemning millions of the world's poorest people to death, according to Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu.

The former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town said developed countries had caused global warming and must therefore take the lead in slashing emissions of climate changing carbon gases.

"It is the countries which are the least responsible for causing climate change that are paying the heaviest price," he said in a video message to a meeting of the World Development Movement lobby group on Thursday night.

"Do not fly in the face of the poor by allowing the emissions produced by endless and unnecessary business flights to keep growing."

Scientists say average global temperatures will rise by between 1.8 and 4.0 degrees Celsius this century due to burning fossil fuels for power and transport. They note that emissions at altitude are many times worse than at ground level.

These rising temperatures will cause droughts, floods, crop failures and water shortages, putting millions of lives at risk.

Tutu, a Nobel Peace laureate and tireless campaigner for global justice and equality, said scientists predicted that up to 185 million Africans would die this century as a direct result of climate change.

"Climate change is for real. As I speak, famine is increasing, flooding is increasing, as is disease and insecurity globally because of water scarcity," he said.

"As an African I urgently call on ordinary people in rich countries to act as global citizens, not as isolated consumers. We must listen to our consciences, and not to governments who speak only about economic markets.

"These markets will cease to exist if climate change is allowed to develop to climate chaos," he added.

Tutu said the developed nations must pass laws forcing them to cut their carbon emissions by at least 80 percent.

"In South Africa we confirmed that if we act on the side of justice we have the power to turn tides," Tutu said.

"I urge you ... to work together with campaigners in the global South and call for strong climate change laws in your own countries in the North, as well as internationally."

The Group of Eight rich nations agreed last week -- against strong resistance from the United States -- that global emissions should be cut by 50 percent by 2050 but they did little else.

British economist Nicholas Stern, whose seminal report in 2006 spelled out the global costs of climate change and galvanized the international agenda, said recently the developed world had to cut emissions by 80 percent by mid-century.

He said the current world annual average was seven tonnes of carbon per head -- ranging from 20 tonnes in the United States to half that in South Africa and almost zero in Chad -- and that had to be cut to an average of just two tonnes per head.

(Editing by Philippa Fletcher)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/environmentNews/idUSL18380920080718>

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## **July 22, 2008**

Why your happiness matters to the planet

Surveys and research link true happiness to a smaller footprint on the ecology.

By Moises Velasquez-Manoff  
Staff Writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Reporter Moises Velasquez-Manoff discusses the correlations between happiness, material goods, and ecological footprints.

New York

Overall, people around the world have grown happier during the past 25 years, according to the most recent World Values Survey (WVS), a periodic assessment of happiness in 97 nations. On average, people describing themselves as "very happy" have increased by nearly 7 percent.

The findings seem to contradict the view, held by some, that national happiness levels are more or less fixed.

The report's authors attribute rising world happiness to improved economies, greater democratization, and increased social tolerance in many nations. Along with material stability, freedom to live as one pleases is a major factor in subjective well-being, they say.

But the survey, based at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research in Ann Arbor, also underscore that, beyond a certain point, material wealth doesn't boost happiness. The United States, which ranked 16th and has the world's largest economy, has largely stalled in happiness gains – this despite ever more buying power. Americans are now twice as rich as they were in 1950, but no happier, according to the survey.

Other rich countries, the United Kingdom and western Germany among them, show downward happiness trends. For psychologists and environmentalists alike, these observations prompt a profound question. Rich countries consume the lion's share of world resources.

Overconsumption is a major factor in environmental degradation, global warming chief among them. Could a wrong-headed approach to seeking happiness, then, be exacerbating some of the world's most pressing environmental problems? And could learning to be truly content help mitigate them?

In the past decade, a cadre of psychologists has directed its attention away from determining what's wrong with the infirm toward quantifying what's right with the healthy. They've christened this new field "positive psychology," and what they're discovering perhaps shouldn't be all that surprising. At the core, humans are social beings. While food and shelter are absolutely essential to well-being, once these basic needs are fulfilled, engagement with other human beings makes people happiest.

For Martin Seligman, director of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, the problem in the US is not consumption per se, but that as a society we consume in ways that don't make us happy. He divides the pursuit of happiness into three categories: seeking positive emotion, or feeling good; engagement with others; and meaning, or participating in something larger than oneself.

People, he notes, are often happiest when helping other people, when engaged in "self-transcendent" activities. What does this mean? Rather than making a gift of the latest iPhone, buy someone dancing lessons, he says. Instead of taking a resort vacation, build a house with Habitat for Humanity.

"The pursuit of engagement and the pursuit of meaning don't habituate," he says, whereas trying to feel good is like eating French vanilla ice cream: The first bite is fantastic; the tenth tastes like cardboard.

By definition, happiness is subjective. And yet, scientists find measurable differences in people who describe themselves as happy. They're more productive at work. They learn more quickly. Strong social networks – a large predictor of happiness – also have health effects, researchers say.

One study found that belonging to clubs or societies cut in half members' risk of dying during the following year. Another found that, when exposed to a cold virus, children with stronger social networks fell ill only one-quarter as often as those without.

For psychologists, social networks explain one of the seeming paradoxes of WVS findings: While relatively rich Denmark took the top spot, much less wealthy Puerto Rico and Colombia are second and third. In fact, relatively poor Latin American countries often score high on WVS rankings. This may underline the value of community, family, and strong social institutions to well-being.

Scientists say this need for community may be a result of humanity's long evolution in groups. Living together conferred an advantage, they say. In the hunter-gatherer world, relatedness, autonomy, curiosity, and competence – the very things that psychologists find make people happy – “had payoffs that were pretty clear,” says Richard Ryan, a professor of psychology at the University of Rochester in New York. “Aspiring for a lot of material goods is actually unhappiness-producing,” he says. “People who value material good and wealth also are people who are treading more heavily on the earth – and not getting happier.”

High consumption fails to make us happy, and it comes at a cost. According to the World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) 2006 Living Planet Report, humanity's ecological footprint now exceeds earth's capacity to regenerate by about 25 percent.

Furthermore, with only 5 percent of the world's population, North America accounts for 22 percent of this footprint. The US consumes twice what its land, air, and water can sustain. (By contrast, WWF calculates that Africa, with 13 percent of earth's population, accounts for 7 percent of its footprint.) America's outsize footprint results in part from its appetite for stuff – what psychologists now say is the wrong approach to lasting well-being.

“The pursuit of happiness can drive environmental degradation, but only a degraded type of happiness pursuit leads to that outcome,” says Kennon Sheldon, professor of psychological sciences at the University of Missouri, Columbia, in an e-mail. “The standard western focus upon economic utility as the highest good (exemplified by the US) seems to encourage that kind of degraded pursuit.”

Worse, so-called “extrinsic” values (wealth, power, fame), as opposed to “intrinsic” values (adventure, engagement, meaning), seem to go hand-in-hand with more environmentally destructive behavior. Tim Kasser, an associate professor of psychology at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., has found that people who are more extrinsically oriented tend to ride bikes less, buy second-hand less, and recycle less. Nations with more individualistic and materialistic values also tend to be more ecologically destructive.

“The choice of sustainability is very consistent with a happier life,” Professor Kasser says. “Whereas the choice to live with materialistic [values] is a choice to be less happy.”

The idea that what’s good for humanity is also good for the planet is central to environmentalist Bill McKibben’s book “Deep Economy.” His prescriptions for lowering carbon emissions – living closer together, relocalizing food production, consuming less – line up with what psychologists say promotes happiness.

In fact, although painful in the short term, high fuel prices may result in happier Americans in the long run, says Mr. McKibben. This year, Americans drove less than they did the year before – probably for the first time since the car was invented, he says. They also bought double the vegetable seeds this year compared with last. “These are signs of a new world,” he says by e-mail.

For their part, psychologists are advocating that policymakers use indicators other than the Gross National Product (GNP) to make decisions. What’s the purpose of an economy, they ask, if not to enhance the well-being of its citizenry?

“It’s become ‘growth for growth’s sake,’ ” says Nic Marks, founder of the Centre for Well-Being at the New Economics Foundation (NEF) in London. “It’s got its own internal logic, but it’s not serving humanity. So why are we doing it?”

Bhutan uses Gross National Happiness as a measure of its success. Although small and undeveloped, the largely Buddhist nation is the happiest in Asia, according to BusinessWeek.

Psychologists also have specific recommendations to promote national happiness, based on their findings about what makes people happy. Insecurity fosters a materialistic approach to life, they say. Policies that combat insecurity – universal healthcare, say, or good, affordable education – promote happiness. Many link social policies like these to Scandinavian nations’ consistently high happiness rankings.

Kasser has more ideas: Limit – and tax – advertising, he says. To promote consumption, ads foster insecurity, he says. That hinders self-acceptance, which is another predictor of lasting well-being.

NEF’s Happy Planet Index (HPI), meanwhile, has developed a new measure of a nation’s success. How efficiently does it generate happiness? HPI takes a country’s happiness and average life span and divides it by its ecological impact to measure how much it spent in achieving its well-being. On this scale, the Pacific archipelago nation of Vanatu comes in first place, Colombia second. Germany is twice as efficient at producing happiness as the US, which ranks 150th by that measure. Russia, with its low happiness scores and relatively low life expectancy, is 178th. And Zimbabwe, plagued by poverty and political turmoil, is the least efficient at producing happiness on Earth.

The World Values Survey is available at: [www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org). Happy Planet Index: [www.happyplanetindex.org](http://www.happyplanetindex.org)

<http://features.csmonitor.com/environment/2008/07/22/why-your-happiness-matters-to-the-planet/>

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**July 23, 2008**

Christians taking on role as environmentalists

Many believe humans must be Earth's stewards

By John Iwasaki  
P-I REPORTER

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Like shrinking ice caps, resistance among American Christians to address the effects of global warming is diminishing, creating a once-unlikely connection between the scientific and the spiritual, representatives of national and local religious organizations said Wednesday.

Even opposition from evangelicals, the Christian group considered least likely to embrace warnings of climate change, might be lessening.

"Science asks what, religion answers why," said Richard Cizik, vice president of governmental affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, during a visit to Seattle. "People need reasons, not directives, to change their behavior when a profound change is required."

Those reasons are evident in scientific research on global warming, he said, and correspond with biblical mandates to care for and protect the Earth.

Although in agreement that Christians are to be good stewards of what God created, evangelicals generally don't view global warming as a threat partly because of opposition to other theories that challenge their faith, Cizik said in an interview before his appearance on a panel at the Burke Museum at the University of Washington.

"Evangelicals have not trusted mainstream science because of Darwin and evolution," he said. "So there's a deep repository of suspicion."

Time magazine named Cizik, a native of Quincy in Eastern Washington's Grant County, as one of the 100 most influential people in the world for 2008 for his activism, though noting his detractors "say there are more important issues for evangelicals to tackle, and there is no consensus within the community about global warming anyway."

Cizik's work made him a lightning rod among national evangelical leaders.

"The religious right asked for my head on a platter," he said.

Christian concern for the environment has been more typical among mainline denominations, whose top values include Earth stewardship and social justice, said LeeAnne Beres, executive director of Earth Ministry in Seattle.

"There is no inherent conflict between science and religion," said Beres, a former fisheries biologist. "We have an obligation to care for creation, whether we believe life evolved or is from God."

Peter Illyn, founder of Restoring Eden in Vancouver, Wash., sees a growing interest in environmental issues among college-aged Christians and others "tired of debating the origins of life while forgetting the degradation" of God's creation.

In her years of teaching about environmental issues at Seattle Pacific University, geography professor Kathleen Braden said, "I have seen a huge turnaround in attitude -- from skepticism to true concern -- and I would say the concern is often motivated by faith and their belief that God has entrusted the world to our care."

A study released early this year by The Barna Group, which specializes in religious surveys, found that only 33 percent of American evangelicals considered global warming to be a major problem facing the country. (Barna regards evangelicals as a socially conservative subset of born-again Christians.)

Two years ago, 86 prominent evangelical leaders signed a major statement to combat global warming, saying it was imperative of Christians to protect the earth and those affected worldwide. Among the signers were Richard Stearns, president of World Vision, the Federal Way-based Christian charity, and Philip Eaton, president of Seattle Pacific University.

The Rev. Joe Fuiten, pastor of Cedar Park Assembly in Bothell and known for his conservative positions on social issues, takes a dim view of global warming.

"Who is causing the warming on other planets in our solar system, and how can we really know how much of the current temperature rise is human caused rather than just the normal cycle of nature?" Fuiten asked. "I also wonder why previous rises in temperature were a good thing for the Earth, but the current one is bad."

Cizik said that 90 percent of global warming was attributed to humans by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a United Nations network of 2,000 scientists.

"It comes down to trust," he said. "Whom do you trust?"

But Cizik said underlying troubles remain that science can't solve.



"Loss of biodiversity, pollution and climate change are reflections of man's greatest problem: pride, apathy and greed," with society turning resources into commodities without replenishing the Earth, he said.

Solving global warming, he said, will "necessitate a cultural and spiritual transformation."

[http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/371963\\_greenfaith24.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/371963_greenfaith24.html)

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## **June 31, 2008**

Creation itself under threat from environment damage, church leaders say

By Martin Beckford, Religious Affairs Correspondent

The Telegraph

Bishops gathered in Canterbury for their once-a-decade meeting, the Lambeth Conference, say their discussions have proved that the changing climate is already a pressing concern in many countries, where crops are failing and deserts growing.

They say the church must provide moral leadership in warning of the dangers of increasing pollution and in telling worshippers to repent of their ecological sins.

Safeguarding "God's creation" should also be a prominent part of a set of rules being devised for the 80 million-strong worldwide Anglican Communion, they say.

The Rt Rev George Browning, Bishop of Canberra, said: "The church has only itself to blame for giving the impression that it is in the business of saving souls only. The environment is what we are about."

He insisted going green is not a "new religion" but a Biblical imperative drawn from the description of creation in the book of Genesis.

The Anglican church has been driven to the brink of schism over sexuality, with hundreds of bishops boycotting Lambeth in protest at the presence of liberal Americans and Canadians who have elected an openly gay bishop and blessed same-sex unions in defiance of tradition.

But the head of the Episcopal Church of the USA, the Most Rev Katharine Jefferts Schori, warned that internal divisions will be irrelevant if the church does not work to preserve the environment.

She said: "If we do not pay attention to the health of all creation, the other issues will not be important."

The Rt Rev Denis Sengulane, Bishop of Lebombo in Mozambique, told how his country's critical production of cashew nuts was under threat from climate change.

"Today, cashew nuts have gone mad with trees dropping their nuts out of season. We have messed up the environment in such a way that even the production of cashew nuts is unpredictable."

In an early draft of a set of "reflections" of the three-week conference, bishops say: "Stories shared from bishops around the Communion give a picture of a global crisis.

"There are many examples including water pollution, dumping of toxic waste, air pollution, deforestation, irresponsible dumping of garbage.

"Environment is the top priority for some provinces and must be a high priority for all of us. In the Global South, safeguarding creation is a day-to-day activity, not an intellectual exercise."

They claim the church should portray the destruction of the environment as a "spiritual issue" and should urge "repentance of ingrained habits that are ecologically irresponsible".

The prelates also say they should set an example by offsetting carbon emissions from travel, not using plastic in churches and by improving recycling facilities at future meetings.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/main.jhtml?xml=/earth/2008/07/31/eachurch131.xml>

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## **August 6, 2008**

Polluted Ganges must be cleaned, gurus demand

Rhys Blakely  
Bombay  
The Times Online

A coalition of gurus has issued an ultimatum to India's fragile Government: purify the chronically polluted Ganges, the river revered by Hindus, or face protests and political ruin.

Ganga Raksha Manch, a newly formed alliance of celebrity holy men, is demanding urgent action to cleanse the holy waterway, which has become a noxious cocktail of human and industrial waste, before a general election that must be held before May.

The movement, which holds sway over countless devotees' votes, is being led by Baba Ramdev, a yoga teacher and spiritual leader who has won tens of millions of followers through his combination of anti-Western diatribe and a cable television show.

If the Government did not pay heed to the call for saving the Ganges, the agitation would take “a fierce turn”, he said.

He has been joined by Ravi Shankar, the 52-year-old leader of the Art of Living Foundation, who is a right-wing disciple of the late Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

The pair, who are both courted assiduously by Indian politicians and count prominent industrialists among their followers, are championing an issue that touches religious nerves. Hindu teachings may emphasise that Man should not alter his environment but at points the polluted Ganges appears to ooze, rather than flow.

More than 400 million people live along the banks of the river and most do not have proper lavatories. Some stretches have a faecal bacterial count nearly 4,000 times the World Health Organisation’s bathing standard limit.

This is a particular hazard for Hindu priests, who carry out a daily ritual in which they touch the sacred water, immerse themselves in it and drink what amounts to a cocktail of human and industrial effluent. Cases of water-borne disease such as typhoid, polio, jaundice and dysentery are common.

Nearby cremation grounds add to the problems. Thousands of corpses were reported in the waters last year.

The two gurus are demanding that treatment plants be built to end the dumping of untreated sewage in the Ganges. They also want the authorities to scrap plans to divert the river through underground tunnels to turbines, claiming that the process will lower oxygen levels. One protester linked to their movement has begun a “fast unto death” until the hydroelectric scheme is ditched.

Public impatience is growing over the corruption and political infighting that has beset a government “emergency plan” — begun 23 years ago — to save the river. The scheme has been allotted £300 million to no apparent end.

Baba Ramdev, a controversial figure who has claimed that yoga can cure HIV/Aids, said that the Congress-led Government has allowed the Ganges to fester. He is calling on it to give the waterway heritage status and to fine polluters, and is threatening to mobilise huge protests if his demands are not met. “The river is choking in filth,” he said. “Heritage status would ensure adequate protection.”

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article4466950.ece>

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**August 7, 2008**

Pope says Catholic Church has undervalued environment

ROME: Pope Benedict XVI has told a meeting of priests that protection of the environment had been undervalued by the Catholic Church in the past, but said materialism was the biggest threat to the planet.

There have been times when man has ignored "God's teaching on creation," Pope Benedict said in response to a question on the environment yesterday.

But he rejected criticism that Christianity had encouraged the squandering of resources under the pretext of following the commandment to rule over the Earth.

The wastefulness was due to a "materialistic world" where "God is denied," Pope Benedict said.

"God entrusted man with the responsibility of creation" and "creation and redemption are closely bound together," he said.

Pope Benedict's comments came at a closed meeting of 400 priests from the north of Italy where he is spending his holiday. Reporters were briefed by the Vatican spokesman, Federico Lombardi.

Lombardi said Pope Benedict cited St Francis of Assisi as an example in urging Catholics to adopt "a way of life that is respectful of the environment."

<http://www.terraily.com/2007/080806185013.7e8d2445.html>

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## **August 8, 2008**

Jewish groups add voices to green concerns

Ed Stoddard  
Reuters

DALLAS - Following a path blazed by other U.S. religious groups, a diverse coalition of Jewish organizations has outlined its concerns regarding the environment and called for action from Congress and the Administration.

Spearheaded by the [Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life](#), it calls among other things for an aggressive 80 percent cut in carbon reductions by 2050.

It also calls for a cap on emissions, tax credits to encourage the purchase of new technologies and provisions for public transit.

The statement, called “*Jewish Community Priorities for Climate and Energy Policy*,” is rooted in Jewish teachings about obligations to the poor and creation care — an echo of calls for action on the environment by other faith traditions including the U.S. evangelical movement.

“*Our tradition teaches that Adam and Eve were asked ‘to till and to tend’ the Garden of Eden. We believe humans remain a partner in Creation,*” the statement says.

It also notes that “*Jewish tradition is founded on the principles of justice ... (and) Both climate change itself and policies taken to address it present a disproportionate burden on the poor.*”

The coalition of Jewish groups which have signed up to the document is diverse and include [B’nai B’rith International](#), the [Central Conference of American Rabbis](#), and the [Women’s League for Conservative Judaism](#) among others.

It is all part of and parcel of the widening social agenda among faith-based groups in the United States and points to the broadening of the broad “green coalition.”

<http://blogs.reuters.com/environment/2008/08/08/jewish-groups-add-voices-to-green-concerns/>

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## **August 13, 2008**

### *Biofuels soon to be measured by international standards*

300 experts and representatives of the public and private sector have come together in the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels, housed at the EPFL Energy Center, to develop global norms for the economic, social, and environmental impacts of biofuels.

By Jerome Grosse

LAUSANNE

Are biofuels a panacea or a threat to climate, food and energy security? While the answer is indeed "it depends", pundits so far have not agreed on global criteria to evaluate the positive or negative impacts of a certain crop, produced in a certain area, processed in a certain way into a biofuel to be used in a certain place.

However, such diverse constituencies as businesses, academics and environmentalists seem closer to a previously unlikely agreement about the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of biofuels. A critical step was announced today, when the Steering Board of the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB), an international initiative hosted by the Energy Center at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL), endorsed the first draft of a global sustainability standard for biofuels.

The standard is intended to be used by investors, governments, corporations, and civil society groups to assess the sustainability of different biofuels. “With all of the mixed messages we hear about biofuels, there is a clear need for a standard that can differentiate the good from the bad,” said Claude Martin, chair of the Roundtable and former Director-General of WWF International. “For an issue of such seminal importance, it was necessary to bring many different stakeholder groups together to agree on how to define and measure sustainable biofuels. The publication of the first draft standard today represents an important consensus for how we can judge the development of this industry”.

The draft criteria of the Roundtable for Sustainable Biofuels, developed through a multi-stakeholder process, are based on a comprehensive "land to tank" analysis, covering the whole chain of biofuels' production. ‘Version Zero’ of the standard will now undergo six months of global stakeholder consultation for incorporation into what will become Version One to be released in April, 2009. In-person feedback sessions on Version Zero are being planned in East Asia, Europe, Mozambique, Mali, and throughout the Americas. “Any interested stakeholder is welcome to attend these meetings or give feedback online,” explained Charlotte Opal, Head of the RSB Secretariat. “Our hope is that by February, 2009, all interested stakeholders will have had their chance to influence the criteria”.

Over three hundred experts from corporations, civil society groups, academic institutions, and government agencies from nearly forty countries helped draft Version Zero of the standard, through teleconferences, an innovative Wiki format ([www.bioenergywiki.net](http://www.bioenergywiki.net)), and in-person meetings in Switzerland, Brazil, China, India, and South Africa. The standard addresses the major issues of concern regarding biofuels' production, including their potential contribution to climate change mitigation and rural development; the protection of land and labor rights; and their impacts on biodiversity, soil pollution, water availability and food security. Version Zero can be accessed here: <http://cgse.epfl.ch/page70341.html> .

The Energy Center at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, EPFL (one of the two federal institutes of technology in Switzerland) houses the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels. Steering Board members include, among others, individuals from BP, Bunge, EPFL, the National Wildlife Federation, the United Nations Environment Programme, Petrobras, Shell, Swiss and Dutch federal agencies, TERI - India, Toyota, UNICA (the Brazilian sugar producers' union), the World Economic Forum (WEF), and the World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF).

The following members of the Roundtable's Steering Board can be contacted for interviews:

Barbara Bramble, National Wildlife Federation, USA +1 202 797 6601

Jean-Philippe Denruyter, WWF International, +1 202 822 3459

Lukas Gutzwiller, Swiss Federal Office of Energy, +41 31 322 56 79

Stephan Herbst, Toyota Motor Europe, +32 2 745 2720 (August 13th and 14th only)

Marcos Jank or Geraldine Kutas, UNICA – Brazilian Sugar Producers' Union, care of Rose Racorti, +55 11 3093-4949

Jürgen Maier, German NGO Forum, +49 (30) 6781 775 88 or +49 171 383 6135

Martina Otto, United Nations Environment Programme, +33 (1) 44 37 46 91  
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Roberto Smeraldi, Amigos da Terra – Amazônia Brasileira, +55 (11) 3887-9369 (August 13th and 14th only)

For more information, please call Charlotte Opal, +41 21 693 5351, or e-mail her at [charlotte.opal@epfl.ch](mailto:charlotte.opal@epfl.ch). The Roundtable's website is <http://EnergyCenter.epfl.ch/Biofuels>.

<http://actualites.epfl.ch/presseinfo-com?id=612&newlang=eng>

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### **August 18, 2008**

"Toxic" Indian festivals poison waterways

By Nishika Patel

MUMBAI (Reuters) - Toxic chemicals from thousands of idols of Hindu gods immersed in rivers and lakes across India are causing pollution which is killing fish and contaminating food crops, experts and environmentalists said on Monday.

Hindus across India celebrate various religious festivals in September and October, paying homage to deities like Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles, and Goddess Durga, the destroyer of evil.

Elaborately painted and decorated idols are worshipped before they are taken during mass processions to rivers, lakes and the sea, where they are immersed in accordance with Hindu faith.

Environmentalists say the idols are often made from non-biodegradable materials such as plastic, cement and plaster of Paris and painted with toxic dyes.

After the statues are immersed, the toxins then contaminate food crops when villagers use the polluted water for irrigation, said Shyam Asolekar, science and engineering head at the Indian Institute of Technology in Mumbai.

"Even small traces are extremely toxic as they persist in the body for a long time and accumulate in the human tissues," said Asolekar, who has closely studied the effects of Hindu customs.

Paints contain metals like mercury, cadmium and lead, which can pass up the food chain from fish to human beings, he said.

Environmentalists said materials like plaster of Paris do not dissolve easily and reduce the oxygen level in the water, resulting in the deaths of fish and other aquatic organisms.

Statue remains from festivities last year still float in rivers and water tanks in Mumbai, where the annual "Ganesh Chaturthi" festival culminate in the immersion of some 160,000 statues -- some up to 25 feet high -- by millions of devotees.

Traditionally, idols were made from mud and clay and vegetable-based dyes were used to paint them.

But commercialization of festivals such as Ganesh Chaturthi and Durga Puja has meant people want bigger and brighter idols and are no longer happy with the eco-friendly statues.

Authorities say they are taking steps to check pollution. Mumbai has dug 48 ponds this year for the immersion of idols, but environmental groups say not enough is being done.

"If we do not respect nature then we are not respecting god," said Manisha Gutman of environmental group Eco Exist.

About 80 percent of India's 1.1 billion population are Hindus. In recent years, their religious festivals and customs have come under increasing scrutiny as public awareness of environmental issues grows.

The spring festival of Holi involves the throwing of coloured powder but studies have found that the industrial powders used are often toxic and can cause asthma, temporary blindness and even skin cancer.

(Writing by Bappa Majumdar; Editing by Krittivas Mukherjee and

Paul Tait)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/environmentNews/idUKDEL3263220080818>

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## **August 25, 2008**

Christians see climate change as moral issue

By Alister Doyle, Environment Correspondent

ACCRA (Reuters) - Morality should be a spur for stronger action to fight climate change, which threatens food and water supplies for the poorest in Africa, a group of Christian activists said on Saturday during U.N. climate talks.



"We hear about climate change as a political issue, an environmental issue and an economic issue. We want to press the point that this is a moral issue," said Marcia Owens, a minister in the Florida branch of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

She and a group of Christian activists told Reuters they were lobbying delegates at the August 21-27 U.N. talks in Ghana to work out a strong new treaty, due for completion by the end of 2009, to slow global warming.

In Uganda, once predictable rains in mid-August are now often arriving late, killing off seedlings of crops such as beans, groundnuts or maize in what many local people believe is a sign of global warming.

"The crops die. Farmers then have to plough and plant again," said Rosemary Mayiga, a Ugandan Catholic and rural economist. "It is not moral for some people to go to bed with a full stomach when others go to bed with their stomach empty."

"Rivers are drying out where we get water and fish," Daniel Nzengya, a Kenyan Christian who is also a lecturer at Africa University in Zimbabwe. "The walk to collect water is increasing as wells dry up."

The Accra talks are the third this year in a series partly spurred by findings by the U.N. Climate Panel last year that it is at least 90 percent likely that human activities, led by burning fossil fuels, are the main cause of a recent warming.

The panel projects that between 75 million and 250 million people in Africa could suffer stress on water supplies by 2020. And in some African countries, yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50 percent by 2020.

"It is very easy to forget the human dimension. There are people today whose lives are being disrupted by climate change," said John Hill, a Methodist who works for a group on economic and environmental justice with the U.S. National Council of Churches.

Many of the world's religions argue that God has given humans a role as stewards of the Earth.

Yvo de Boer, head of the U.N. Climate Change Secretariat, agreed that there was a moral dimension. "This is a moral issue in the sense that rising emissions in rich countries should not lead to rising poverty in others," he told Reuters.

(Editing by Mary Gabriel)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/environmentNews/idUSLN30619820080825>

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**August 26, 2008**

Church's light relief to save the world

Martin Wainwright  
The Guardian (UK)

The Church of England has gently modified God's first injunction in a new green guide for members, which suggests: let there be a little less light.

Clergy and congregations are being encouraged to cut the increasingly popular floodlighting of ancient churches to reduce parish carbon emissions.

The manual, *Don't Stop at the Lights*, suggests occasional community or sponsored evenings to make floodlighting more of a special occasion.

The guide also calls for a revival of the God's Acre tradition of churchyard management, using more of the land to provide havens for wildlife and plants. Vicars and churchwardens are asked to draw up modern versions of the medieval use of churchyards to grow yew - essential for longbows but banned from open pasture because its berries poisoned livestock.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, said: "All Christians have an important role to play in developing their own environmental awareness and encouraging it in others. This will prove invaluable for those looking to find a deeper theological understanding of our Christian concern for creation."

The guide revives another medieval practice, still carried out in many parishes - the beating of the bounds. The origins of the annual procession round parish boundaries are obscure, but the new book suggests that the ritual has the potential to highlight green issues.

A spokesman for the church said that regular floodlighting would be acceptable if security was involved. The Bishop of London, the Right Reverend Dr Richard Chartres said: "This book offers us not just tips on energy saving but a reorientation.

"The intention is not to urge Christians to get measured for a hair shirt but to rediscover how good and joyful a thing it is to dwell together in unity with everything else that lives."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/aug/26/ethicalliving.anglicanism?gusrc=rss&feed=networkfront>

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**August 28, 2008**

## CATHOLIC ONLINE

### Dominican's Siena Center Presents Year-long Series on Sustainability

River Forest, IL -- Dominican University's Siena Center will explore the topics of sustainability and stewardship of the earth from a number of perspectives during a series of lectures throughout the fall. The series, titled "Sustainability and the Christian Tradition," will consider what our stewardship of the earth and care of creation demands of thoughtful Christians, and how this relates to the larger struggle for social justice in the world. Lectures will be held in the auditorium of the Priory Campus, 7200 Division Street, River Forest.

Opening the series will be a lecture on "Caring for Creation: Human Dignity and the Common Good" by Alexia Kelley on Tuesday, September 16 at 7:30 p.m. Kelley is co-founder and executive director of Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good and worked for a decade at the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the Catholic Church's national anti-poverty program, and served in diverse capacities with nongovernmental organizations committed to poverty reduction, social justice and the environment. The co-author of *A Nation for All: How the Catholic Vision of the Common Good Can Save American from the Politics of Division* (2008), she will connect care for creation to the struggle to promote and protect human dignity and justice, considering how Catholic social traditions speak to ecological issues today.

On Thursday, October 2, Villanova University professor Eugene McCarragher will deliver a lecture titled "Small is Not Enough: A Cultural and Political Critique of Sustainability." The author of *Christian Critics: Religion and the Impasse in Modern American Social Thought* (2000), McCarragher contends that sustainability as it is often understood can divert our attention from the important issues of democracy in the workplace, redistribution of wealth, and the assumption of "scarcity" that underlies capitalist economics. He suggests the Christian socialist tradition offers a way of expanding discussion of sustainable economic and ecological practices.

The third lecture in the series, "Listen to the Universe," will be held on Tuesday, October 14 and will feature poet Elizabeth Michael Boyle, OP who will explore the spiritual link between faith, theology and science. Boyle, who teaches at Caldwell College, is the author of *Science as Sacred Metaphor: An Evolving Revelation* (2006) and *Preaching the Poetry of the Gospels: A Lyric Companion to the Lectionary* (2003).

For the final lecture in the fall series, Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim will consider how sustainability relates to contemporary creation spiritualities, ancient native traditions and major world religions in "The Field and the Force: Religion and Ecology Meet" on Thursday, October

30. Tucker and Grim founded and direct the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, where they also teach. They organized a series of ten conferences on world religions and ecology at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School. Tucker is a member of the Interfaith Partnership for the Environment at the United Nations Environment Programme, and the newly-appointed Earth Charter International Council. Grim is the president of the American Teilhard Association.

Admission for each lecture is \$10. For more information on Dominican University's Siena Center, please call (708) 714-9105 or visit [www.dom.edu](http://www.dom.edu).

The sustainability series will continue in the spring with lectures on the theme of "Globalization, Sustainability and Us."

Dominican University established the Siena Center to engage the critical issues of church and society in the light of faith and scholarship. The center was named for St. Catherine of Siena, a 14th century laywoman who worked for the reform of the church and justice in the world. Her passionate devotion to the central issues of church and society inspires the work of the center in its schedule of lectures, symposia, workshops, retreats, research and seminars.

Contact:

Dominican University  
<http://www.dom.edu> IL, US  
Kristin Peterson - Public Relations Coordinator, 708-524-6452

<http://www.catholic.org/prwire/headline.php?ID=5023>

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## **September 4, 2008**

UNEP uses Google Earth to Put You in the Cockpit of New Eco-Monitoring Service

Take a Five Second Flight to Top Environmental Hot Spots

Nairobi/Washington DC

People can 'fly' to some of the world's most dramatic environmental hotspots courtesy of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)'s innovative use of the popular mapping tool Google Earth.

The new computer service allows armchair environmentalists as well as politicians, researchers and business executives to zoom in, whizz past and monitor close to 200 sites.

Here they can witness at first hand in 3D the impacts of climate change and other destructive human activities on the earth's environment and natural resources.

Highlights include the appearance of road networks in the remote rainforests of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the dramatic expansion of many West African cities.

Other highlights, presented as a series of 'before and after' images include the surprising changes in the glaciers of Greenland and Alaska and the loss of biodiversity-rich spiny forests to farms in Madagascar.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "If we are to change the hearts and minds of the global public we need to surprise, to excite and occasionally perhaps to shock. These images, allied to modern computer technology, do all three".

"But these 'fly-by' satellite sets do more. They also show humanity is equally capable of positive, intelligent and empowering change—from the re-forestation of parts of Niger to a new management plan for the Itezhi-tezhi Dam in Zambia which is helping to restore natural and seasonal flooding," he said.

These virtual 'trips' are featured in UNEP's popular series of changing environment atlases including "*One Planet many people: Atlas of our Changing Environment*" from 2005 and the recently released "*Africa, Atlas of Our Changing Environment*."

#### Notes to Editors

On September 13, 2006, the Google Earth team released "UNEP Atlas of our Changing Environment" as a part of the Featured Content layer including these environmental hotspots through their worldwide distributed data servers.

On April 10, 2007, Google Earth released the new UNEP materials for 120 environmental hotspots (the original Atlas has information on 79 environmental hotspots).

Google Earth created a new folder, called "Global Awareness" to showcase featured layers that are non-profit, public-benefit - where they want to help draw the world's attention to an issue. Google Earth has over 300 million users worldwide. This release incorporates the latest technological tools developed by Google Earth.

Project coordinator, Ashbindu Singh, of UNEP's Division of Early Warning and Assessment said: "Google Earth technology already allows a more informative and accessible means of delivering information about our changing environment. By keeping pace with the changing world of technology and media, UNEP helps the environmental community keep pace with the real changes in our real world."

The new service contributes to The International Year of Planet Earth which aims to capture people's imagination with the exciting knowledge we possess about our planet, and to see that

knowledge used to make the Earth a safer, healthier and wealthier place for our children and grandchildren.

The International Year runs from January 2007 to December 2009, the central year of the triennium (2008) having been proclaimed by the UN General Assembly as the UN Year. The UN sees the Year as a contribution to sustainable development targets as it promotes wise (sustainable) use of Earth materials and encourages better planning and management to reduce risks for the world's inhabitants.

*One Planet Many People: Atlas of Our Changing Environment* and *Africa: Atlas of Our Changing Environment* are available to view at <http://na.unep.net> and at <http://earth.google.com/>

Both are available to purchase from UNEP's online bookstore <http://www.earthprint.com>

More Information Please Contact Nick Nuttall, UNEP Spokesperson, on Tel: +254 20 7623084 or E-mail: [nick.nuttall@unep.org](mailto:nick.nuttall@unep.org)

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UNEP News Release 2008/30

<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=545&ArticleID=5909&l=en>

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## September 5, 2008

Freak hailstorm in tropical Kenya 'a foretaste' of climate change, says ecologist and theologian

FREDRICK NZWILI  
ECUMENICAL NEWS INTERNATIONAL  
Nairobi

Unusual weather conditions that led to a blanket of hail resembling snow falling on the Nyahururu area in central Kenya are the result of the plunder and pollution of the planet, says a Kenyan theologian and ecologist.

“As a consequence of human-induced rapid climate change there will be extreme weather and ecological conditions,” Professor Jesse Mugambi told Ecumenical News International on Sept.4.

“This happened in Nyahururu, and it has also happened elsewhere, in southern Africa, some parts of Asia and also in some parts of the Americas.”

The hailstorm on Sept. 2 covered 40 hectares of land and was at least 10 centimetres (4 inches) deep, media reported. In three villages in Nyahururu, people are continuing to marvel at the snow-like substance on their land, with schools suspending classes to visit the areas.

Still, the hail fell at the end of a long cold season, and resulted in the destruction of maize, beans, pea and vegetable crops.

As the ice pellets fell, African leaders and those concerned about climate change were meeting in Dakar, Senegal to discuss how the continent can benefit from carbon trading, a policy that seeks to stabilize and gradually reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Mugambi, who is a professor of philosophy and religious studies at the University of Nairobi, said some people had chosen to “work against nature” when they should be working with nature. “The more we plunder and pollute, the more ‘developed’ we consider ourselves to be,” said Mr. Mugambi, who is also a member of World Council of Churches’ working group on climate change. “We are challenged by the Gospel to make it possible for the natural processes to replenish and renew our ecological home,” he added.

Churches leaders and theologians have been calling for reduction of greenhouse gases, which are said to accelerate global warming. They also want to see adaptation measures, especially for the poor in Africa, where the consequences of climate change are expected to be more severe.

“It is very late to begin, but it is not too late,” said Mr. Mugambi. “We must take responsibility for the damage we have cost to the ecology of this planet.”

<http://www.anglicanjournal.com/nc/100/article/freak-hailstorm-in-tropical-kenya-a-foretaste-of-climate-change-says-ecologist-and-theologian/>

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## September 9, 2008

Tiny Pacific nation seeks global climate change help

Ecumenical News International

One of the world's smallest nations, Tuvalu, has a big problem. Slowly, but surely, it is "going under" the relentless waves of the Pacific. Tuvaluans know it, but they don't accept that sinking is their ultimate fate - *writes Kim Cain from Funafuti, Tuvalu.*

Leaders of government, opposition, Church and town council all want the world to join them in saving their nation of 12,000 people, and in doing so, save the world itself from the worst effects of climate change.

"Don't give up on us," is the plea to the world by the head of the largest non-governmental organisation in the country, the Christian Church of Tuvalu (Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu or the EKT).

The Rev Tofina Falani, the church's president, says his country is "on the frontline of climate change, and the evidence is before our eyes. We may be small - a peanut to a rich nation - but I am so thankful for God who gave us these small islands to call our home."

He adds, "Words can't explain it, but I am so thankful to God for this 26 square kilometres [10 square miles] and I don't want to be forced by another power to leave this place."

Tuvalu is the world's fourth smallest country, bigger only than the Vatican City (0.44 square kilometres); Monaco (1.95 square kilometres) and Nauru (21 square kilometres).

Falani says people see the evidence of climate change before their eyes: big tides, coastal erosion, salty pools and ponds, and "swimming holes that were once clear waters where you could see the bottom but are now made up of low, dark water, and salty". He says this personal evidence humanises what is being demonstrated by scientific data: rising tides triggered by the accumulation of greenhouse gases due to human activity.

Tuvalu's environment minister, Tavau Teii, says his nation and the world thought they had 50 years to save Tuvalu, but, "recent research from the University of the South Pacific now informs us that we now only have 30." The situation is dire, he says.

Walk along the northern reaches of Funafuti Island, the main atoll in the Tuvalu group, and examine the evidence: once-large coconut trees have been washed into the lagoon, not by waves but by tides. A strand of a dozen more trees await their fate.

People say the problems are like a very sick patient; one health problem causing distress on other parts of the body. Tuvalu has a rising salty water table due to rising tides. This causes sanitation problems, which in turn affects sewage, and has led to spoliation on the reef around which the whole lagoon exists.

The Rev Kitonia Tausi, general secretary of EKT says, "Enough talking. We all know the sea is rising. It is time to reclaim Tuvalu. What's the use of more talking ... If we don't do anything we may as well leave now."

But Tausi is far from convinced that leaving is necessary.

"Why can't we raise Tuvalu?" he asks. "It is only 26 square kilometres in size. And that is counting all the islands." He notes, "With international help, we could raise Tuvalu, build sea



walls to protect us from the tidal surges and embark on increasing the prosperity of our people." He cites the example of Japan building a whole airport on an artificial island.

Kelesoma Saloa, the prime minister's secretary, says, "We are putting before the world the question: 'Is it still possible for Tuvalu to exist on the face of the earth?' We are asking the global community to give us that chance." Saloa outlines how his government is pursuing its goals to save the nation through international forums, especially at the United Nations, and working in regional councils with countries such as Australia.

However, his nation can only leverage its smallness against the global powers to save itself. But, with the bigger picture in sight, Saloa says: "We still feel as though we have a chance to save the world by saving Tuvalu."

Or in the words of Falani: "This is our land, we call it 'fanua'- our home ... We love Tuvalu. While I can eat Tuvaluan food in another country, speak the Tuvaluan language somewhere else, see my Tuvaluan friends and family elsewhere, I want to be in Tuvalu. Not someone else's land, but in these little atolls - the land God gave us."

[With acknowledgements to ENI. [Ecumenical News International](http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/7670) is jointly sponsored by the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the Conference of European Churches.]

<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/7670>

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## **September 11, 2008**

Thou shalt go green

*Rev. Richard Cizik brings his bold 'creation care' message to Colorado Springs*

By John Weiss

Colorado Springs Independent

When the Rev. Richard Cizik talks, his message isn't what one might expect from the most prominent public voice representing the national organization of America's evangelical movement.

Religion and social issues aside, Cizik, 57, has become well-known the past few years for pushing a theme not usually associated with the evangelical movement: taking care of the Earth.

Last June, speaking at the Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey, Cizik outlined the foundation of his evolving philosophy.

"Right now, we are in a defining moment in human history, when not only is our politics itself changing, and not only is our church really changing radically — for the good — but the very nature of power itself is changing," said Cizik, whose official title is vice president for governmental affairs of the Washington, D.C.-based National Association of Evangelicals.

"About 230,000 years ago, man controlled fire. Now he could warm his food and his shelter. Just several centuries ago, after man learned how to harness fossil fuels, steam energy transformed our world by powering our industrial revolution. Today, faced with 'peak oil' and rising worldwide demand for limited resources, our challenge now is to move away from fossil fuels and turn towards various forms of solar energy.

"Those nations and organizations — including our church — that change their thinking and their behavior will thrive. Those that cannot, or won't, will not survive in the ways they should."

"Read the Bible'

Those are strong words, coming from a self-described "Reagan-movement conservative" whose political ties and convictions put him clearly into the religious right.

Cizik vigorously opposes gay marriage and abortion and has prayer-breakfasted with President George W. Bush. But today he also is known worldwide for spreading the doctrine of conservation and "creation care" to evangelical Christians and lay audiences alike, pushing many of the same themes that have come with the battle against global warming: conserving fuel, reducing pollution, promoting sustainability and so on.

That puts the hybrid-driving Cizik at odds with some evangelicals who feel the Bible gives people "dominion" over the Earth and all its other creatures. In a 2005 interview with the environmentally conscious *Grist* online magazine, Cizik called that view "deeply flawed," adding that, "Dominion does not mean domination. It implies responsibility — to cultivate and care for the Earth, not to sully it with bad environmental practices. ...

"There are still plenty who wonder: Does advocating this agenda mean we have to become liberal weirdos? And I say to them, certainly not. It's in the scripture. Read the Bible."

Cizik defines creation care as a direct articulation of a biblical doctrine, which is that we are commissioned by God to be stewards of the Earth. In Genesis 2:15, Cizik notes, God shows Adam to the Garden of Eden and instructs him to "to watch over and care for" the bounty of the Earth and its creatures. Scripture not only affirms this role, but warns that the Earth is not ours to abuse, own or dominate.

To drive his point home, Cizik cites Revelation 11:18, which warns that God will "destroy those who destroy the earth."

"When asked about hell, Jesus used the word "Gehenna," says Cizik, in a summer interview with the *Independent*. "He referred to a place outside of Jerusalem that was a garbage heap. This is Jesus' description of hell — a garbage heap. And one of the reasons I'm an advocate of creation care is that if you besmirch that creation, if you destroy it, despoil it, turn it into a garbage heap, then how can it reveal the glory of God?"

### Friends in high places

So far, more than 140 evangelical Christian leaders have joined with Cizik to back a major initiative to fight global warming. Among signers of the Evangelical Climate Initiative statement are the presidents of more than 50 evangelical colleges, the Salvation Army's leadership and mega-church pastors including Rick Warren, author of the bestselling *The Purpose Driven Life*.

The Rev. Joel Hunter, pastor of a mega-church in Longwood, Fla., is featured in an ad saying: "As Christians, our faith in Jesus Christ compels us to love our neighbors and to be stewards of God's creation. The good news is that with God's help, we can stop global warming, for our kids, our world and for the Lord."

For Cizik and the growing number of his allies in the movement, stepping forward on creation care is not at all a departure from either principle or history.

"We are simply reclaiming our evangelical heritage," Cizik says. "Climate change is an overarching issue of justice — the biggest of the 21st century."

As author-lecturer Jim Hightower reports in his 2008 book, *Swim Against the Current: Even a Dead Fish Can Go With the Flow*, Cizik says, "Unlike our evangelical fathers who sat on their hands and tolerated racism, we will not sit on our hands today, and we will not either, in the end, have to apologize to our children for doing nothing about what is a threat to the entire biosphere."

Hightower will join Cizik next week in visiting Colorado Springs. Cizik's two appearances are sponsored by an eclectic coalition of 30-plus organizations including the *Independent*, Vanguard Church, New Life Church, Colorado College, the Pikes Peak Group of the Sierra Club and Ranch Foods Direct.

### Evangelical division

Of course, not everyone supports Cizik when, as in the 2005 *Grist* interview, he urges the National Association of Evangelicals' 30 million members "to live their lives in conformity with sustainable principles," and the government "to reduce pollution and resource consumption."

In March 2007, Focus on the Family founder James Dobson of Colorado Springs and several other traditional right-wing Christian leaders publicly demanded that the NAE fire Cizik over what they termed a "preoccupation" with global warming. They wanted the NAE to stay focused on what they described as just "the great moral issues of our time": opposing abortion, gay rights

and sex outside of marriage. Dobson and his allies added that global warming is an unproven theory.

NAE board members did no such thing. In fact, they gave Cizik the biggest show of support possible by simply making no response at all to the resignation demand, as though it had never existed. Instead, the board simply unanimously reaffirmed its 2004 vote of the "For the Health of the Nation" declaration. (See "All these issues matter," above.)

Not giving up, the 72-year-old Dobson, along with supporters ranging from Christian singer Pat Boone to U.S. Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla, in May unveiled a second campaign to combat Cizik, called "We Get It!" Their message: Christians should support "biblical" solutions to global warming. They warn against a prevailing culture of "knee-jerk" reactions to our changing climate.

We Get It! spokesman Dr. Calvin Beisner does "not deny that the earth has indeed warmed in the past 30 years. We just do not believe that manmade activities have been the cause of much of this warming. And therefore man's efforts to reduce climate change will be too costly for any benefit derived. The solutions climate-change advocates propose will be too costly, especially for the poorest people of the world. We think Rev. Cizik is well-meaning, but misguided."

The We Get It! campaign's stated goal is to collect a million signatures. So far, however, the effort has rounded up "only about 10,000 signatures," says spokeswoman Melinda Ronn. She adds that, this month, the nonprofit will launch radio blitzes in political battleground states, including Colorado, to garner signatures and to urge Christians not to get overheated about the supposed climate-change controversy.

#### Path to prominence

Cizik was raised on a farm in eastern Washington state. He says his mother, a schoolteacher, voted Democratic while his farmer father voted Republican.

"We always had battles at home," he recalls.

After attending Whitworth College in Spokane, Wash., he earned a master's degree in international affairs at George Washington University, and then won a Rotary fellowship to study Mandarin in Taiwan.

In the early 1970s, while at a Rotary luncheon in Taipei, he met motivational author Norman Vincent Peale, who asked what he was going to do with his life. Cizik responded that he was torn between joining the diplomatic corps and going to seminary.

"Well," Peale told him, "God could use a few good diplomats."

So Cizik decided to be a diplomat for God. His first step was to enroll at Denver Seminary in Littleton.

Upon graduation, he made his way in 1980 to NAE's Washington, D.C., office.

In the nearly three decades since, he's grown into one of "the 100 most influential people in the world," according to *Time* magazine, for his work helping faith-based organizations promote environmental sustainability.

*Editor's note: Indy publisher John Weiss helped organize Cizik's upcoming appearances in Colorado Springs.*

<http://www.csindy.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A29875>

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## September 15, 2008

### PRESS RELEASE: MUSLIM REDUCE THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINTS - GREEN GUIDE FOR MUSLIMS

A green guide to help Muslim households reduce climate change has been published jointly by Lifemakers UK and the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES), with Muslim Hands, the Nottingham based charity meeting production costs. The booklet explains the impact of climate change using Islamic references and also explains why Muslims must do their bit for the environment.

The Green Guide is unique in that it is a simple, practical handbook that looks at different aspects of the Muslim household and suggests changes that can have a big impact on climate change. These include decisions about domestic food, water, laundry, heating, electricity, transport and recycling. At the end of the 20 page booklet is also a 'How green is my family' checklist that gives households something positive to aim towards.

The booklet has been printed in time for Ramadan, the month in which Muslims are most reflective of their actions.

For more information about the Green Guide please contact Raja on 07956 983 609 or Shaid on 0787 969 4540 or e-mail IFEES at [info@ifees.org.uk](mailto:info@ifees.org.uk) or visit the website at [www.ifees.org.uk](http://www.ifees.org.uk).

[End]

Notes to editors:

- Ramadan, Muslim holy month where fasting between dawn and sunset is observed.
- Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) is an Islamic Environmental NGO, based in Birmingham with projects all over world, working for betterment of all, in our only home, planet Earth.

[http://ifees.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=82&Itemid=27](http://ifees.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=82&Itemid=27)

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## September 16, 2008

Learning by Playing - Innovative Education Tool for Secondary Schools Launched During Global Montreal Protocol Celebrations

"Montreal Protocol - Global Partnership for Global Benefits"

New York/Nairobi

Under the theme "Montreal Protocol - Global Partnership for Global Benefits - UNEP, UNESCO, UNICEF and WHO announce the launch of the new OzonAction Education Pack for Secondary Schools entitled "High Sky", during the celebration of the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer.

This guide, targeted of secondary school students (13-16 years old) includes a teacher's book, a student's book and a collection of Ozzy and Zoe Ozone multimedia materials.

This package contains an entire teaching and learning programme based on key knowledge, practical skills, and participation that enables teachers and students to learn about simple solutions to protect the ozone layer and safely enjoy the sun.

The Education Pack uses an innovative and interactive approach - "role playing" - to engage the students in the subject matter.

The reader assumes the role of a journalism student about to get a job in an important news agency and he/she is challenged to write an article to tell the world the current situation of the ozone layer and the linkage with climate change, including practical tips for children to help protect our planet.

The Montreal Protocol deadline for developing countries to complete the phase - out of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), carbon tetrachloride (CTC) and halons is by 1 January 2010.

However, there is still remaining work to be done with other chemicals such as hydrofluorocarbons (HCFCs) and methyl bromide. Scientists now expect the ozone layer to recover only by 2050 if all of the necessary measures under the Protocol are implemented as planned.

This Education Pack mobilizes children and teachers to do their part to help achieve these compliance targets, and informs them how to use safe sun practices.

The Pack was jointly produced by the DTIE OzonAction Branch of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) and was supported by the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol.

"Children are the most valuable resource of our planet. Kids and their parents are protected by the ozone layer, our Earth's protective shield, which is under continued threat" says Mr. Achim Steiner, UNEP's Executive Director.

"The complex problems of global environment cannot be solved only by developing technologies but by deploying them through a learning process. The Education Pack not only explains the problem, but encourages children to find practical solutions. Through this new initiative, UNEP is giving a very strong message to save the planet".

The OzonAction Education Pack is also linked to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which is led by UNESCO.

UNEP, UNESCO, UNICEF and WHO are jointly promoting the OzonAction Education Pack to countries around the world and encouraging Environment, Education and Health Ministries, schools and teachers to adopt it as part of the secondary school curriculum.

Notes to editors:

The signing of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer on 16 September 1987 is now celebrated every year as the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer.

UNEP as an Implementing Agency of the Multilateral Fund of the Montreal Protocol through the OzonAction Branch of the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, has a unique regionalized programme that delivers compliance assistance services to countries to assist them meet the international commitments under the Protocol. The compliance regime requires countries to: achieve and sustain compliance, promote a greater sense of country ownership and implement the agreed Executive Committee framework for strategic planning.

Ozzy Ozone is the UNEP's flagship campaign for children regarding stratosphere ozone protection initiated as part of our organization's mandate as an Implementing Agency of the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

The Ozzy Ozone character is a registered trademark of the Government of Barbados. UNEP would like to thank the Government of Barbados for its permission to use this character.

For more information, including resources and ideas for celebrating International Ozone Day, see : <http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/events/ozoneday/2008.htm>

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<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=545&ArticleID=5921&l=en>

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## September 19, 2008

### UNEP NEWS RELEASE

#### Clean Up the World Maps Communities Tackling Climate Change

For the first time ever, communities worldwide taking action to protect the environment as part of the Clean Up the World Weekend, 19-21 September, will have the opportunity to plot their activities using a new online mapping function.

Developed with the support of Google, Clean Up the World's technology partner, the new website <http://activities.cleanuptheworld.org> will give participating groups the chance to profile and share their environmental activities as part of the Weekend and the year-round campaign.

The Australian founder and chairman of the campaign, Ian Kiernan AO\* said many of this year's Clean Up the World Weekend activities will be focused on limiting the impacts of climate changes under the campaign's theme '*Start today-.Save tomorrow-Clean Up Our Climate*'.

"Tens of millions of people around the world taking simple actions is the perfect first step towards protecting the Earth for our future generations," Mr Kiernan said.

"All over the world people are seeing the devastating effects of climate change. Clean Up the World provides every person and every community with the opportunity to do something about it."



"Now, thanks to Clean Up the World's use of Google Maps, we have the tool to visually show the extent of environmental action being undertaken around the world and motivate new communities to get involved in the campaign."

Participating organisations and their volunteers will take part in a range of activities designed to improve the environment such as waste reduction and recycling, water and energy conservation, and revegetation.

The Clean Up the World campaign is in its 16th year and has the support of the United Nation's Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)).

Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, praised the efforts of organisations across the world involved in the Clean Up the World campaign.

"Climate change is the number one issue facing humanity at the turn of the 21st century -lives are threatened as is the very fabric of all countries and communities. So let's all start today to save tomorrow." he said.

\* AO Order of Australia awarded for distinguished service of a high degree to Australia or to humanity at large.

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Clean Up the World is a campaign held in conjunction with our Primary Partner UNEP. Sponsors-Brambles and Qantas. Technology Partner - Google Inc. Global Media Partner - National Geographic Channels International. Supporters - The Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Armor and Marriott International Inc.

<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=545&ArticleID=5924&l=en>

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## September 22, 2008

Mexico to Host World Environment Day Under the Theme 'Your Planet Needs You'

Mexico City/Nairobi

Mexico, a country at the crossroads of the Green Economy and one increasingly in the centre of regional and global affairs will host the international 2009 World Environment Day celebrations.

The theme chosen by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which coordinates the day on 5 June on behalf of the UN system and the peoples of the world, will be 'Your Planet Needs You-UNite to Combat Climate Change'.

It reflects the urgency for nations to agree on a new agreement at the crucial climate convention meeting in Copenhagen some 180 days later in the year, and the links with overcoming poverty and improved management of forests.

The news that Mexico has been chosen to host World Environment Day (WED) 2009 was announced jointly by President Felipe Calderón and Achim Steiner, UNEP's Executive Director at a press conference in Mexico City.

The decision in part reflects the growing practical and political role of the Latin American country in the fight against climate change, including its growing participation in the carbon markets.

Mexico is also a leading partner in UNEP's Billion Tree Campaign. The country, with the support of its President and people, has spearheaded the pledging and planting of some 25 per cent of the trees under the campaign.

UNEP has now launched a new and more ambitious phase-the Seven Billion Tree Campaign.

This aims to see more than one new tree planted for every person alive by the Copenhagen meeting as one empowering symbol of the global publics' desire for action by their political leaders on the greatest challenge for this generation.

President Calderón said: "It is great news that today the UN, through Achim Steiner, has announced that Mexico will be the international seat for World Environment Day next 5 June here in our beloved country".

He said he hoped WED would not only be a time of reflection on the great challenges facing humanity including climate change, but an event linked with "a lot of action and commitment".

"Undoubtedly this decision further underlines Mexico's determination to manage natural resources and deal with the most demanding challenge of the 21st century-climate change," said President Calderón.

Mr Steiner, who is also a UN Under-Secretary General, said: "I am delighted that the President and the people of Mexico will be the hosts of WED only some 180 days before governments meet in Copenhagen before the crucial UN climate convention meeting".

"Mexico is at the cross-roads of the Green Economy politically, physically and practically. Firstly it still has many challenges, from high air pollution in cities and dependence on fossil fuels to land degradation and the need to fight poverty. But Mexico is also emerging as one among a group of developing economies who are bringing much needed leadership to the need for a new, comprehensive and decisive climate treaty," he said.

Mr Steiner(see notes to editors on new data) said that in addition Mexico was seizing the opportunities of the carbon markets and had, in just four short years, become second only to

Brazil in terms of wind, solar, biogas and other Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects in the region.

"Thirdly Mexico's ambitions in terms of combating climate change under its new Special programme-ambitions that include renewable energy to using forests and other nature-based assets as carbon sinks-will send a clear message to countries in the region and the world that Mexico means to be part of the solution," he noted.

"Finally, Mexico is set to be one of the big economies of the 21st century along with nations like China and India. Thus its ability to encourage the greening of the economy of neighboring nations-both North and South of its borders-will be significant," he noted.

Notes to Editors

Climate Change

Mexico, which accounts for around 1.5 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, is demonstrating its commitment to climate change on several fronts.

Mexico was praised by Non Governmental Organizations at the recent climate convention talks in Accra, Ghana for being among a group of countries willing to build bridges between the North and the South.

UNEP is looking forward to the shortly-to-be published Special Programme on Climate Change covering 2008-2012.

It is likely to set ambitious goals for the Mexican economy from boosting the climate-friendliness of 'hard' infrastructure via energy efficiency and an increase in renewables to boosting the carbon management of Mexico's 'soft' infrastructure including its forests and soils.

New Findings on Mexico and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)

Today UNEP also launched new data underlining how Mexico is seizing the opportunities presented by the UN-brokered carbon markets.

The Centre's researchers estimate that Mexico's CDM projects in the validation; requesting registration or registered phases have accumulated to 187 projects by September 2008.

This is up from 4 in 2004 and in terms of Latin America Mexico is now second after Brazil with 303 projects.

This is followed by Chile, 56; Colombia, 32 and Argentina, 30. The country in the region with the least projects registered or in the pipe line is Guyana with one.

The lion's share of Mexico's CDM projects are currently agricultural and involve the flaring of methane produced by animal wastes. 55 per cent of CDM projects are in this category.

Close to 30 per cent of the projects are renewables which includes wind, solar, biogas and biomass. Biogas represents 70 per cent of Mexico's CDM renewables-here the methane from wastes is harvested to generate electricity rather than flared.

The Risoe Centre stresses that, given Mexico's relatively high level of industrialization, it has huge opportunities in terms of energy efficiency which remain to be exploited.

If all its CDM projects to date are registered, then Mexico could generate over 14 million Certified Emission Reduction (CERS) annually versus a world total of 529 million.

Risoe estimates that, by 2012 there could be a total of 1,600 Latin American and Caribbean CDM projects in the pipeline or registered-a more than doubling.

It is estimated that 260 million CERs could be generated equaling \$3.9 billion with a value per CER of \$15 a tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>.

#### Solar Water Heaters

UNEP announced today that it is also assisting the UN Development Programme and Mexico-with funding from the Global Environment Facility-on a project to boost Mexico's solar water heater sector.

The programme will cooperate with Mexico's National Solar Water Heater Program (known as PROCALSOL) to develop a supportive regulatory environment and to assist in building the market demand and the supply chain for solar water heaters (SWHs).

The aim is to reach the total capacity of 2,500,000 cubic metres of installed SWH systems in Mexico by the end of 2011.

It also aims to support continuing sustainable growth of the market beyond the project's life in order to reach the target to 23.5 million cubic metres of installed capacity by 2020.

This has been estimated to correspond to an estimated cumulative greenhouse gas reduction potential of over 27 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2020.

China, the world leader in solar water heaters, has an installed solar water heater capacity of around 100 million cubic metres million and has created 600,000 green jobs.

Thus, by 2020, Mexico might have the potential to generate jobs for some 150,000 people in this sector as a result of the new project.

#### About World Environment Day

World Environment Day was established by the UN General Assembly in 1972 to mark the opening of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. Another resolution, adopted by the General Assembly the same day, led to the creation of UNEP.

WED is commemorated each year on 5 June in a different city. It is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action.

The day's agenda is to give a human face to environmental issues; empower people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development; promote an understanding that communities are pivotal to changing attitudes towards environmental issues; and advocate partnership which will ensure all nations and peoples enjoy a safer and more prosperous future. World Environment Day is also a popular event with colourful activities such as street rallies, bicycle parades, green concerts, essay and poster competitions in schools, tree planting, as well as recycling and cleaning-up campaigns.

On that particular day, heads of State, Prime Ministers and Ministers of Environment deliver statements and commit themselves to care for the Earth. Pledges are made which lead to the establishment of permanent governmental structures dealing with environmental management. It also provides an opportunity to sign or ratify international environmental conventions.

Last year the main global host was New Zealand and the theme was 'Kick the CO<sub>2</sub> Habit- Towards a Low Carbon Economy'.

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<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=545&ArticleID=5928&l=en>

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## September 24, 2008

Landmark New Report Says Emerging Green Economy Could Create Tens of Millions of New "Green Jobs"

New York (ILO/UNEP)

A new, landmark study on the impact of an emerging global "green economy" on the world of work says efforts to tackle climate change could result in the creation of millions of new "green jobs" in the coming decades.

The new report entitled *Green Jobs: Towards Decent work in a Sustainable, Low-Carbon World*, says changing patterns of employment and investment resulting from efforts to reduce climate change and its effects are already generating new jobs in many sectors and economies, and could create millions more in both developed and developing countries.

However, the report also finds that the process of climate change, already underway, will continue to have negative effects on workers and their families, especially those whose livelihoods depend on agriculture and tourism. Action to tackle climate change as well as to cope with its effects is therefore urgent and should be designed to generate decent jobs.

Though the report is generally optimistic about the creation of new jobs to address climate change, it also warns that many of these new jobs can be "dirty, dangerous and difficult". Sectors of concern, especially but not exclusively in developing economies, include agriculture and recycling where all too often low pay, insecure employment contracts and exposure to health hazardous materials needs to change fast.

What's more, it says too few green jobs are being created for the most vulnerable: the 1.3 billion working poor (43 per cent of the global workforce) in the world with earnings too low to lift them and their dependants above the poverty threshold of US\$2 per person, per day, or for the estimated 500 million youth who will be seeking work over the next 10 years.

Green jobs reduce the environmental impact of enterprises and economic sectors, ultimately to levels that are sustainable. The report focuses on "green jobs" in agriculture, industry, services and administration that contribute to preserving or restoring the quality of the environment. It also calls for measures to ensure that they constitute "decent work" that helps reduce poverty while protecting the environment.

The report says that climate change itself, adaptation to it and efforts to arrest it by reducing emissions have far-reaching implications for economic and social development, for production and consumption patterns and thus for employment, incomes and poverty reduction. These implications harbour both major risks and opportunities for working people in all countries, but particularly for the most vulnerable in the least developed countries and in small island States.

The report calls for "just transitions" for those affected by transformation to a green economy and for those who must also adapt to climate change with access to alternative economic and employment opportunities for enterprises and workers. According to the report, meaningful social dialogue between government, workers and employers will be essential not only to ease tensions and support better informed and more coherent environmental, economic and social policies, but for all social partners to be involved in the development of such policies.

Among other key findings in the report:

- The global market for environmental products and services is projected to double from US\$1,370 billion (1.37 trillion) per year at present to US\$2,740 billion (2.74 trillion) by 2020, according to a study cited in the report.
- Half of this market is in energy efficiency and the balance in sustainable transport, water supply, sanitation and waste management. In Germany for example, environmental technology is to grow fourfold to 16 per cent of industrial output by 2030, with employment in this sector surpassing that in the country's big machine tool and automotive industries.
- Sectors that will be particularly important in terms of their environmental, economic and employment impact are energy supply, in particular renewable energy, buildings and construction, transportation, basic industries, agriculture and forestry.
- Clean technologies are already the third largest sector for venture capital after information and biotechnology in the United States, while green venture capital in China more than doubled to 19 per cent of total investment in recent years.
- 2.3 million people have in recent years found new jobs in the renewable energy sector alone, and the potential for job growth in the sector is huge. Employment in alternative energies may rise to 2.1 million in wind and 6.3 million in solar power by 2030.
- Renewable energy generates more jobs than employment in fossil fuels. Projected investments of US\$630 billion by 2030 would translate into at least 20 million additional jobs in the renewable energy sector.
- In agriculture, 12 million could be employed in biomass for energy and related industries. In a country like Venezuela, an ethanol blend of 10 per cent in fuels might provide one million jobs in the sugar cane sector by 2012.
- A worldwide transition to energy-efficient buildings would create millions of jobs, as well as "greening" existing employment for many of the estimated 111 million people already working in the construction sector.
- Investments in improved energy efficiency in buildings could generate an additional 2-3.5 million green jobs in Europe and the United States alone, with the potential much higher in developing countries.
- Recycling and waste management employs an estimated 10 million in China and 500,000 in Brazil today. This sector is expected to grow rapidly in many countries in the face of escalating commodity prices.

The report provides examples of massive green jobs creation, throughout the world, such as: 600,000 people in China who are already employed in solar thermal making and installing products such as solar water heaters; in Nigeria, a bio fuels industry based on cassava and sugar cane crops might sustain an industry employing 200,000 people; India could generate 900,000 jobs by 2025 in biomass gasification of which 300,000 would be in the manufacturing of stoves

and 600,000 in areas such as processing into briquettes and pellets and the fuel supply chain; and in South Africa, 25,000 previously unemployed people are now employed in conservation as part of the 'Working for Water' initiative.

*Pathways to green jobs and decent work*

"A sustainable economy can no longer externalize environmental and social costs. The price society pays for the consequences of pollution or ill health for example, must be reflected in the prices paid in the marketplace. Green jobs therefore need to be decent work", the report says.

The report recommends a number of pathways to a more sustainable future directing investment to low-cost measures that should be taken immediately including: assessing the potential for green jobs and monitoring progress to provide a framework for policy and investment; addressing the current skills bottleneck by meeting skill requirements because available technology and resources for investments can only be deployed effectively with qualified entrepreneurs and skilled workers; and ensuring individual enterprises' and economic sectors' contribution to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases with labour-management initiatives to green workplaces.

The report finds that green markets have thrived and transformation has advanced most where there has been strong and consistent political support at the highest level, including targets, penalties and incentives such as feed-in laws and efficiency standards for buildings and appliances as well as proactive research and development.

The report says that delivery of a deep and decisive new climate agreement when countries meet for the crucial UN climate convention meeting in Copenhagen in late 2009 will be vital for accelerating green job growth.

The report was funded and commissioned by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) under a joint Green Jobs Initiative with the International Labour Office (ILO), and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Organization of Employers (IOE), which together represent millions of workers and employers worldwide <sup>2</sup>. It was produced by the Worldwatch Institute, with technical assistance from the Cornell University Global Labour Institute.

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*The Green Jobs Initiative is a partnership established in 2007 between UNEP, the ILO and the ITUC, joined by the IOE in 2008. The Initiative was launched in order to promote opportunity, equity and just transitions, to mobilize governments, employers and workers to engage in dialogue on coherent policies and effective programs leading to a green economy with green jobs and decent work for all. The ILO is a tripartite UN agency that brings together governments, employers and workers of its member states in common action to promote decent work throughout the world. IOE is recognized as the only organization at the international level that represents the interests of business in the labor and social policy fields. Today, it consists of 146 national employer organizations from 138 countries from all over the world. ITUC is the International Trade Union Confederation. Its primary mission is the promotion and defense of workers' rights and interests, through international cooperation between trade unions, global campaigning and advocacy within the major global institutions. The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates. UNEP is the voice for the environment in the United Nations system. It is an advocate, educator, catalyst and facilitator, promoting the wise use of the planet's natural assets for sustainable development.*

*For more information on the green job initiative:*

[www.ilo.org/integration/greenjobs/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/integration/greenjobs/index.htm) -  
[www.unep.org/labour\\_environment/features/greenjobs.asp](http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/features/greenjobs.asp)

<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=545&ArticleID=5929&l=en>

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## September 24, 2008

African Faith Leaders, U.S. Christians Seek Climate Justice

Ethan Cole  
Christian Post Reporter

A delegation of African Christian leaders joined their American counterparts this week on Capitol Hill to give voice to climate change concerns and its impact on the lives of poor Africans.

Crops are failing and storms are increasing across Africa, says the group of Christians from Uganda and Zimbabwe to U.S. congressmen, according to the National Council of Churches USA.

Delegate member Rosemary Mayiga, a Ugandan Catholic and rural economist, says crops die and African farmers have to plough and plant again because of climate change.

“It is not moral for some people to go to bed with a full stomach when others go to bed with their stomach empty,” she said.

Mayiga and other African leaders will brief members of Congress and senior religious leaders on the devastating impact of climate change on countries in Africa from Sept. 22 to 27. They will also call on both U.S. lawmakers and the United Nations to address the disproportionate impacts.

"The delegation aims to raise awareness about how global climate change impacts those living in poverty and to help people understand that climate change is a moral issue that demands timely action," said Tyler Edgar, delegation representative from NCC.

The African leaders' visit this week is the result of a partnership formed between African Christian activists and representatives from the NCC who attended the recent U.N. Climate Negotiations in Accra, Ghana.

During the Accra meeting, religious delegates urged U.N. delegates to develop a new treaty that would slow global warming and provide strong adaptation measures for communities such as farmers in Uganda.

"We hear about climate change as a political issue, an environmental issue and an economic issue," said Marcia Owens, a minister in the Florida branch of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, who attended the Accra negotiations. "We want to press the point that this is a moral issue."

Other religious delegates include Evelyn Nassuna of Lutheran World Relief in Uganda; Daniel Nzengya, a professor at Africa University in Zimbabwe; Marcia Owens of African Methodist Episcopal Church; and John Hill, who is part of the General Board of Church in Society at the United Methodist Church.

<http://christianpost.com/article/20080924/african-faith-leaders-u-s-christians-seek-climate-justice.htm>

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## September 25, 2008

Respect for different cultural and religious values vital, countries say at UN  
UN News Center

Encouraging dialogue and mutual respect between peoples of different faiths, beliefs and values is essential in modern societies where citizens come from diverse backgrounds, the representatives of three countries told the General Assembly's high-level debate today.

Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, said every government faced a challenge in balancing the need to affirm the cultural and religious values and customs of citizens with building bridges with the rest of the world.

“Governments are there for everyone,” he said. “For men and women. For people of all backgrounds and all religious convictions. For monks, priests, rabbis and imams. And equally for those who do not believe in a supreme being.”

Mr. Balkenende called on everyone to “cherish and defend” both the freedom of religion or belief and the freedom to express one’s views, saying they went hand in hand and should be viewed as universal rights.

“At the same time, we must remind everyone who enjoys these freedoms of their responsibility – the responsibility to show the same respect to others that we claim for ourselves.”

San Marino’s head of Government and Foreign Minister Fiorenzo Stolfi stressed the importance of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, saying they affirmed the guiding principles of the UN.

Mutual respect between individuals and peoples are prerequisites to peace and justice, Mr. Stolfi told the Assembly debate, adding that they help to reduce tensions or prevent them from emerging.

For his part, Brunei’s Crown Prince Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu’izzadin Waddaulah said his country has long supported the need for worldwide dialogue between faiths to promote tolerance and understanding.

“We affirm the right of all small nations and the fragile societies and values they uphold to continue their way of life with security today and hope for the future,” he said.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28282&Cr=general+assembly&Cr1=debate>

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**September 25, 2008**

Caritas Leader Urges UN to Use Imagination  
Asks Them to Conceive a World Not Divided Into 1st, 3rd

NEW YORK

[Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)

The cardinal-president of Caritas Internationalis says a lack of political leadership is keeping the millennium development goals delayed, and he urged the United Nations to imagine a planet without divisions into First and Third World.

Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga addressed the United Nations today, having been invited along with five others by U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to a summit on development and climate change.

The cardinal urged the world leaders to make "courageous decisions and fulfill past promises," so as to achieve the development goals by the original deadline of 2015.

He blamed the delay in progress on "a lack of political leadership."

But the cardinal said the reasons for this failure are not due only to questions of money, effective aid, or commerce, but rather of confidence, given the need to "imagine a world that is no longer divided into First and Third."

"We need to imagine a world in which the needless deaths of nearly 10 million children a year are an abomination that cannot be tolerated," he affirmed. "We need to be able to imagine ourselves not in the 'Third World' and a 'First World' but in one world in which our duties to the poor are shared."

#### Greenhouse

The cardinal also made an urgent appeal to industrialized nations to lower toxic emissions. Climate change is negatively affecting the progress of developing countries, the Honduran prelate lamented.

"We are witnessing the creation of a world in which the greed of a few is leaving the majority on the margins of history," he said.

He offered the example of his own country, where mining companies have exploited the earth and contaminated it.

In statements on Vatican Radio, Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga said he hoped that concrete steps would be taken to reduce poverty by 2015, adding, however, that what is most necessary "is that the United Nations consider that without development, the millennium's goals will not be achieved."

"It is necessary to allocate greater resources to development and, at the same time, developing countries must be strongly committed to the fight against corruption," he contended.

In this connection, the cardinal added that the Church's mission "is to continue to sensitize peoples through social doctrine, as Paul VI said in 'Populorum Progressio,' that development is the new name of peace; without development, peace will not be achieved in the world."

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<http://www.zenit.org/rssenglish-23715>

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## September 26, 2008

### *Religious and political leaders hold peacemaking dialogue*

Mennonite Central Committee

NEW YORK — About 300 international religious and political figures, including Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, attended a dialogue at a Manhattan hotel on the evening of Sept. 25 to discuss the role of religion in responding to global challenges and building peace and understanding between societies.

Speakers included President Ahmadinejad, the Rev. Kjell Bondevik, former prime minister of Norway, and the Rev. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, president of the United Nations General Assembly.

The dialogue, which followed a meal, was sponsored by American Friends Service Committee, Mennonite Central Committee, Quaker United Nations Office, Religions for Peace and World Council of Churches in consultation with the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations.

Arli Klassen, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee, gave welcoming remarks on behalf of the sponsoring organizations. She lit an oil lamp as a symbol of faith and invited participants to reflect on peacemaking from their own faith perspectives.

"As a Christian, I believe that we are following Jesus Christ's example and his teaching as we eat together and hold this dialogue despite our many differences," Klassen said.

Klassen noted several areas of high tension in relations between Iran, the United States and other nations. Addressing President Ahmadinejad, Klassen raised concerns about his statements on the Holocaust and Israel, Iran's nuclear program and religious freedom in Iran.

"We ask you to find a way within your own country to allow for religious diversity, and to allow people to make their own choices as to which religion they will follow," Klassen said.

The theme of the dialogue was "Has not one God created us? The significance of religious contributions to peace." A series of panelists shared Jewish, Muslim and Christian perspectives on addressing poverty, injustice, environmental degradation and war.

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb, a leader in the Jewish Renewal movement, spoke about Jewish traditions of peacemaking and nonviolence and drew upon her work for reconciliation between Muslims and Jews and Palestinians and Israelis. She also spoke about the significance of mourning the deaths of all victims of war, including the millions of people killed in the Holocaust, World War II and wars in Iran and Iraq.

"Because of the Holocaust, I learned from the rabbis who ordained and guide me, to be active in preventing further suffering of all human beings as a primary religious call to action," Gottlieb said.

Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, spoke about Islamic principles for alleviating poverty, caring for the environment and working for peace and justice. He encouraged his interreligious audience to cooperate more closely toward these goals.

"Has not God created us?" Awad said. "Yes — and he wants us to work together."

Dr. John Brademas, a former U.S. congressman and president emeritus of New York University, served as the event moderator. Along with several of the evening's speakers, Brademas called for direct negotiations between Iran and the United States.

"We believe that war is not the solution to the differences that divide peoples," Brademas said. "Dialogue can make a real difference."

Although Klassen, the Rev. Bondevik and others raised concerns about religious freedoms and human rights in Iran, President Ahmadinejad did not address these issues directly.

President Ahmadinejad spoke at length about theological issues, such as monotheism, justice and commonalities among religions.

"All divine prophets have spoken of one truth," the president said. "The religion of Islam is the same as that offered by Moses."

President Ahmadinejad spoke in broad terms about "challenges facing the human community," including poverty, declining morality and a lack of religion in public life. He decried the humanitarian costs of wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon and spoke extensively about the hardships suffered by Palestinians. He criticized nations such as the United States for maintaining nuclear weapons and did not deviate from his previous statements that Iran's nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

The evening's program ran later than scheduled, and President Ahmadinejad departed shortly after concluding his remarks without taking questions from the audience as had been planned.

Robert J. Suderman, general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, was among several Canadians who attended the dialogue.

"I think it was a valuable thing in terms of the objectives, which was to nurture peace by fostering understanding and human relationships," he said.

Suderman added that the event's participants should also reach out to people who objected to the dialogue with President Ahmadinejad, such as protesters outside the hotel who represented various Jewish and Evangelical Christian groups, among others.

"What's left is to build relationships with people on the other side of the street," Suderman said.

<http://www.mcc.org/news/news/article.html?id=395>

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### **September 27, 2008**

Pope Benedict XVI says tourism must respect environment, local cultures

By Associated Press

ROME (AP) \_ Pope Benedict XVI has urged tourists to respect the environment and local cultures, touching again on a theme that has earned him a reputation as the "green pope."

Benedict says tourism depends greatly on pristine environments and the industry is among the first to suffer from the "improper use" of natural resources and the "abuse of the culture" of local populations.

The pope made the comments Saturday at his summer residence of Castel Gandolfo near Rome as he received two groups that promote sustainable tourism. The meeting marked World Tourism Day, which this year focuses on how the industry can respond to climate changes.

Benedict has made frequent calls to save the planet, and the Vatican is adding solar power to some buildings.

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<http://www.newsday.com/news/nationworld/wire/sns-ap-eu-pope-tourism,0,446591.story>

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### **September 29, 2008**

Europe's churches asked to tackle climate change

by Jennifer Gold

Christian Today

The 7th Assembly of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) ended on Sunday

with a call to Europe's churches to make climate change a top priority.

The ECEN assembly brought together 100 delegates from 27 countries and all European traditions under the common theme, "The true challenge of climate change".

The assembly coincided with the 10th anniversary of the ECEN's founding this year and took its inspiration from last year's third European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA3), which recommended that churches celebrate a "Time of Creation" between 1 September and 4 October and step up their level of engagement with environmental challenges.

The ECEN's Secretary, the Rev Dr Peter Pavlovic, said in his concluding remarks that many European churches had taken up the cause of climate change.

"In a number of churches in Europe, care for creation has received rising attention. Therefore it is increasingly important to provide a space for exchange of experiences and deliberation in view of common action," he said.

In a final statement issued at the Assembly's end on Saturday, delegates urged people to go beyond a consumption-based view of creation.

"The roots of human destruction of the environment are to be sought not just in actions, but in our most deep-seated attitudes. It is not enough for humans to keep alive by consuming the world around them; they need a relationship with the world that is not purely utilitarian and market-based," the statement said.

"Churches need to accept the challenge to come together to overcome the threat of water shortages, decreased harvests, natural disasters, diseases, migration and many other projected effects of climate change."

The delegates called on European churches to develop a "road-map" with timelines and goals towards the amelioration of global warming.

They also ask individual Christians to lobby their governments and politicians in the European Parliament on the issue of climate change.

"The EU commitments for green house gasses emission must not be achieved through offsetting emissions: significant cuts of greenhouse gas emissions have to be achieved through efforts here and now," says the document.

Last week, the vice-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Nobel Prize winner, Professor Jean-Pascal van Ypersele told the assembly that there was no need for a "fatalistic view of the future".

"There are ways to reduce emissions, and churches can contribute to solutions by proposing changes in lifestyle and behaviour patterns," he said.



<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/europes.churches.asks.to.tackle.climate.change/21539.htm>

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## September 29, 2008

Vatican sees the light of solar power  
Audience hall provides location, and gets the benefits

The Associated Press

ROME - The first of a planned 2,400 solar panels have been installed on top of the papal audience hall at Vatican City.

Workers on Monday began putting photovoltaic cells on the roof of Paul VI Hall to convert sunlight into electricity.

Pope Benedict XVI has made conserving the Earth's resources an important concern of his papacy.

Rome gets lots of sunshine, and engineers say the cells will produce enough electricity to illuminate, heat or cool the hall.

"With this plant, if it is working in about two weeks we avoid 210 tons of carbon dioxide and this is the equivalent to 70 tons of oil," said Andre Koekenhoff, from Thermovolt, the company installing the panels.

The solar panels were donated by SolarWorld, based in Bonn, Germany. The company's CEO gave the panels a Bonn-based company called SolarWorld. The company's CEO decided to give the solar project as a gift to the German-born pope.

According to Catholic New Service, the solar panels and inverters are worth nearly \$1.5 million and should work without much maintenance for 25 years.

The 6,300-seat audience hall is used for the pontiff's general audiences on Wednesdays in winter and in bad weather during the rest of the year.

The auditorium had cement panels on its vast, flattened roof that needed replacement. The frames for the solar panels are the same shape and almost the same color as the cement panels they are replacing, reducing the aesthetic impact.

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<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26946700/>

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**October 7, 2008**

IUCN and UNESCO publish guidelines on sacred natural sites in protected areas

Thousands of sacred natural sites are in jeopardy around the world despite the fact that many lie within formal Protected Areas.

At the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, Spain, IUCN and UNESCO launch the latest in the Best Practice Guidelines Series on Protected Area management. The new guidelines are called Sacred Natural Sites – Guidelines for Protected Area Managers. The 100-page volume focuses on improving protection of sacred natural sites within and near Protected Areas.

“IUCN has become a key player in the effort to protect sacred sites and holy lands of the planet,” says Gonzalo Oviedo, IUCN Senior Adviser on Social Policy. “We run projects in the field with custodians of sacred places, we support them at the policy level, we advocate for their recognition and support and we promote better understanding of their values.

Around the world there is growing interest in, and recognition of the importance of, sacred natural sites as critical elements to both biological and cultural preservation, especially in light of the accelerating loss of biocultural diversity as an unintended by-product of globalization. These new Guidelines summarize experience to date in recognizing, planning and managing sacred natural sites in a variety of Protected Areas. The Guidelines will be used to share experience with protected area managers and their colleagues around the world who are concerned about and interested in protecting sacred natural sites.

The new publication includes 44 guidelines and 16 case studies from around the world. While focusing primarily on the sacred places of indigenous communities, the guidelines are also relevant for the sacred sites of mainstream faiths.

“From the ground up, working from place to place, we are building bridges with custodians of sacred lands of indigenous and traditional peoples as well as of religious and monastic communities,” says Gonzalo Oviedo, IUCN Senior Adviser on Social Policy. “Alliances between many such groups and conservation are based on strong common values and a shared commitment for the planet.”

There are now 108,000 protected areas worldwide encompassing 11.75 million square miles, an area greater than the African continent, but the definition and practice of protection is not uniform. Indigenous peoples are sometimes excluded or forcibly removed from their traditional territories and separated from sacred natural sites they have cared for over many generations.

<http://cms.iucn.org/what/issues/index.cfm?uNewsID=1745>

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**October 8, 2008**

## Nature-Based Enterprises Can Help Rural Poor Adapt to Environmental Threats

BARCELONA, SPAIN - Expanding nature-based enterprises can increase income for the world's rural poor. This approach, as outlined in the latest *World Resources Report 2008*, can also develop the rural poor's resilience to social and environmental threats such as climate change.

Three-quarters of the 2.6 billion people who live on less than \$2 a day are dependent upon local natural resources for their livelihoods. Threats such as climate change and ecosystem degradation are beginning to strain those livelihoods, and it will be necessary to shape development strategies that build resilience against such threats and ensure stable and prosperous communities.

[\*World Resources 2008: Roots of Resilience\*](#) - released here today as part of the IUCN World Conservation Congress - closely examines existing community-based efforts. The report argues that properly fostered nature-based enterprises can improve rural livelihoods and, in the process, create resilience to economic, social, and environmental threats.

Achim Steiner, under-secretary general and executive director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), said, "Poverty will never be made history unless we invest in more intelligent management of the world's nature-based assets. There are now countless models and case studies of how ecosystems can be managed to boost rural livelihoods and incomes while meeting the goal of environmental sustainability.

"Mainstreaming and making these models and blueprints more commonplace and widespread is now a matter of great urgency in a world challenged by climate change, in a world where we are pushing, if not pushing past the regenerative limits of the planet's life support systems," Steiner added.

*Roots of Resilience* concludes that expanding the scale of already successful models requires an emphasis on three critical elements:

- **Ownership:** A groundwork of good governance must both transfer to the poor legal authority over local resources and elicit local demand for better management of resources.
- **Capacity:** Local communities must have the ability to manage ecosystems competently, carry out ecosystem-based enterprises, and distribute the income from these enterprises fairly.
- **Connection:** Establishing adaptive networks that connect and strengthen nature-based enterprises will give them the ability to adapt, learn, link to markets, and mature into businesses that can sustain themselves and enter the economic mainstream.

"Local communities clearly have an interest to sustain the ecosystems on which they depend," added Manish Bapna, executive vice president, World Resources Institute (WRI). "But all too often, they face a disabling, not an enabling environment. Governments and donors have a

crucial role to play in constructing the right policies and institutions necessary to protect ecosystems and grow the wealth and resilience of the poor.”

One of dozens of examples from the report is an effort in Bangladesh to help villagers sustainably manage fisheries and wetlands. Before the program was implemented fishing was difficult, waterfowl had been eliminated and fierce competition for fishing rights had disrupted the lives of villagers that depended on the ecosystem for their income. Once the pilot program was implemented, however, villagers were granted new fishing rights that included responsibility for managing the fisheries. They were also trained to manage fisheries and supported with micro-loans to start new businesses. The results, over the past eight years, included a reversal of the degraded bird and fish habitat, a 140 percent increase in fish catches, and a 33 percent rise in local income.

The report includes recommendations for national governments, donors, and the private sector to help create enabling environments that nurture rural enterprises and the resilience that can come with their growth.

“The international community must fast-track this model to the center stage of development policy. By doing so, countries can bring a new level of commitment and creativity to the poverty- and environment-related Millennium Development Goals,” said Veerle Vandeweerd, director of the Environment and Energy Group at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

World Bank President Robert Zoellick writes in the foreword to the report, “Increased resilience must be part of the response to the risks of climate change. The efforts that foster resilience chart the first steps on the path out of poverty.”

*World Resources 2008* is a joint effort produced by WRI, UNEP, UNDP and the World Bank. It is free to download at [WRI Website](http://www.wri.org)

<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=548&ArticleID=5941&l=en>

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**October 12, 2008**

THE FOOD ISSUE

Kosher Wars

By SAMANTHA M. SHAPIRO

NY TIMES MAGAZINE

ONE SUNNY DAY in late August, Andy Kastner made the short drive from his apartment in Riverdale, in the Bronx, to Yonkers First Live Poultry Market, a narrow cinder-block shop that sells live chickens, pigeons, quail and rabbits stacked in ancient-looking metal cages. At Yonkers

First, workers usually slaughter and butcher the animals for customers, but Kastner was there because he wanted to kill his own chickens.

Kastner, who is 28 and has curly hair, big brown eyes, stick-straight posture and a calm, thoughtful demeanor, had recently returned from his summer job leading a community-service trip for Jewish teenagers to a Navajo reservation, and he was about to begin his third year at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, a small, Orthodox rabbinical school. He parked his green Subaru by an auto-body shop across from the poultry market, and from the backseat he grabbed a tote bag holding his slaughtering knife, his butcher's jacket and a red leather book in Hebrew.

Kastner spent the previous year studying how to slaughter animals according to Jewish law. Kosher dietary laws, which religious Jews observe, prohibit eating certain animals, and the ones that are permitted must be killed and butchered in very specific ways. There was a time when learning the practice of slaughter, or shechita, was part of standard training for rabbis, but in an era when most animals are killed and butchered on assembly lines, it has disappeared from the curriculum of most rabbinical schools.

Kastner's yeshiva didn't teach shechita, so he asked the head of the school for help finding a teacher. Then he cold-called shochtim, or ritual slaughterers, in the New York area looking for information on where to get the special knife required for kosher slaughter. ("It turned out they were made in some guy's basement in Brooklyn," Kastner told me.) Now that Kastner has completed his training, he occasionally comes by Yonkers First to practice. Shechita requires one quick, smooth cut to the throat, which must sever the trachea and esophagus but not hit the spinal cord. The amount of force needed for the cut depends on the breed of animal, and the only way to learn is to practice. Kastner and his wife serve the chickens that he cuts correctly for Shabbat dinner, and he gives the occasional mistake to his doorman.

Ten years ago, learning how to slit animals' throats by hand was simply not a compelling choice for young rabbis of the clean-shaven, earnest sort like Kastner. But the politicization of food issues and the popularization of epicurean and artisanal eating has made learning Jewish food traditions relevant for a new generation. Kastner grew up in the Reform movement, which 120 years ago formally disavowed kashrut, the kosher dietary laws, as an anachronistic impediment to "modern spiritual elevation" — though Reform leaders later softened their position, decreeing that kashrut was a matter of personal choice. But for Kastner, Jewish ritual slaughter actually seems a bit revolutionary. He says he thinks that contemporary disconnection from our food sources is the cause of numerous environmental and social ills, like the national obesity epidemic. He wanted to be a shochet to help people make more healthful food choices and reconnect to the source of their food, and to encourage investment in local agriculture. He says the rules around kosher food — like the requirement that meat be slaughtered by a pious person with a certain intention and the requirement to say a blessing over every food acknowledging its

source (land, tree, grain, other) — encourage mindful eating and discourage overconsumption of resources.

Kastner is part of a nascent Jewish food movement that draws upon the vast body of Jewish traditions related to agriculture and farming; Judaism, for all its scholarly abstraction, is a land-based religion. The movement emphasizes the natural intersections between the sustainable-food movement and kashrut: a shared concern for purity and an awareness of the process food goes through before it reaches the table. “The core of kashrut is the idea of limiting oneself, that not everything that we can consume should be consumed,” Kastner said. “I wouldn’t buy a ham sandwich, and I would also refrain from buying an exotic mangosteen imported from China, which wastes fossil fuels and is grown with pesticides.” He told me he studied shechita because he wants to “create food systems outside the industrial model.” He has been trying to set up a grass-fed-kosher-meat co-op in his neighborhood; he says he hopes to travel to a local farm and shecht the animals himself.

The proprietor of Yonkers First, Vincent Siani, was happy to see Kastner. Siani has a modified pompadour with a white streak and was wearing two gold chains with cross pendants, a pinkie ring and a diamond-stud earring. Siani’s father ran the store before he took it over, and Siani told me he remembered when a rabbi hung out at the shop a few days a week to serve the neighborhood’s Jewish customers. These days, his customers are mostly from the surrounding Hispanic neighborhood, although Muslims sometimes ask to slaughter their own animals for holidays, or they have Siani do it. “They ask me to say, ‘Bismillah,’ and, ‘Allah hu Akbar,’ when I make the cut,” Siani said. He shrugged. “It don’t cost me nothing.”

Kastner went to the back of the store and peered inside a cage full of white chickens. He opened the door a bit, tentatively reached around inside and then closed it. “This is the hard part,” Kastner sighed. “They know what’s up. You can feel their feathers plump when you reach in. They all hide in the corner.” Siani came back to chat about the chickens available that day, which breeds were better for soup, which would be more tender. Siani opened a cage of small birds that he pronounced superior, unceremoniously pulled two out and handed them, squawking, to Kastner.

Kastner took the chickens to the small room for slaughter and placed them in the deep sink. He took a knotted plastic bag filled with dirt out of his pocket and sprinkled the dirt into two plastic cones where the chickens would be placed after they were killed, to drain the blood. The Torah says the blood of an animal contains its “life” and should not be eaten, and when some animals are killed, their blood is supposed to be buried with a blessing. That’s why Kastner lined the cone with dirt. He unsheathed his knife and ran the blade across his fingernail to check for nicks, which would render the animal unkosher. He picked up one bird, held both its wings in one hand,

and tipped it back so its head hung upside down against the back of his arm. Kastner ran a finger across the chicken's neck to elongate it, whispered a blessing and made his cut.

FOR MOST OF Jewish history, kashrut was a home- and community-based ritual. There were no prepared kosher foods and few restaurants. As recently as the 1950s, my father would sometimes travel with his town's rabbi and kosher butcher to a farm, where the rabbi would slaughter and skin an animal. They would bring it to a local kosher butcher, who would remove the veins and tributaries and certain fats; later, the women who bought the meat would ritually soak and salt it on boards in their kitchens to drain the blood.

But in the age of industrial food production, kosher food has become a \$12.5-billion-a-year business, monitored by an elaborate multimillion-dollar kosher-certification system. The Orthodox Union, or O.U., the largest kosher-certification agency in the country, charges companies a fee (which ranges, depending on the size of the company, from \$4,000 to \$10,000) to supervise their ingredients and equipment and place a small symbol on their food packages indicating the food is kosher. Last year, the O.U. certified more than half a million products, mostly the preservatives, colorings and additives found in most processed food, generating millions of dollars in profit.

Perhaps surprisingly, more than 70 percent of kosher-food consumers in the United States are not observant Jews; they choose kosher products because they view them as safer or rely on the strict ingredient labeling for their food allergies or other religious concerns. According to a report released earlier this year by the Mintel International Group, a London-based market-research company, the observant Jewish population alone is not large enough to support the market for food bought specifically because it is kosher. (This finding is borne out by the dozens of candy and cookie companies that request kosher certification each year for special Christmas- and Easter-themed products.)

Kosher meat represents a small part of the overall kosher industry and a tiny fraction of the American meat industry, but it has followed the larger meat-industry trend toward consolidating local slaughterhouses and butcher shops into megaplants, where all the meat is processed on site and shipped out pre-cut. Some kosher meat distributors arrange to bring their own slaughterer and processors to a nonkosher processing plant one day out of the month, and others operate their own facility.

[Agriprocessors](#), the largest independent facility, was started by Aaron Rubashkin, who is part of a prominent family in the Chabad Lubavitch movement. Rubashkin ran a kosher butcher shop in Brooklyn for many years, and in 1987 he decided to buy a defunct meat-processing plant in Postville, Iowa. Agriprocessors hired low-wage, nonunionized workers, often illegal immigrants, and they churned out huge volumes of both regular kosher and glatt-kosher meat (which hews to

a more strict standard than regular kosher) as well as nonkosher meat, which accounts for the majority of their output. Agriprocessors came to dominate the market, providing about 60 percent of the kosher beef and 40 percent of the kosher poultry nationwide. In many parts of the country, Agriprocessors became the only option for glatt-kosher beef. While Agriprocessors grew, the infrastructure of small-scale kosher meat production — local slaughterhouses and butchers, and Jews who knew how to kasher meat in their own sinks — was largely disappearing. Jews no longer know that their meat is kosher because they know the person who killed it but because of the symbol that appears on the shrink-wrap at the grocery store.

In 2004, in response to tips about excessive use of cattle prods at the Postville plant, [PETA](#), the animal rights group, sent undercover operatives into Agriprocessors, and they returned with especially gruesome footage of workers ripping out the tracheae of live cows after their throats had been cut. The PETA video was only the beginning of a long run of bad press for Agriprocessors. In 2006, *The Forward*, a national Jewish newspaper, published a long exposé claiming bad labor practices at the plant as well as health and safety violations. That May, Agriprocessors was the target of what was then the largest single-site [immigration](#) raid in U.S. history; 389 employees were arrested, and Iowa's attorney general filed criminal charges against Agriprocessors and Aaron Rubashkin for more than 9,000 counts of child-labor violations.

The allegations against Agriprocessors galvanized a small but thriving Jewish environmental movement and took its concerns to a much wider audience. In some American Jewish households, the raid on Agriprocessors started a deep conversation about the very meaning of kosher: is it simply about cutting an animal's neck and butchering it in a specific way? Or is the ritual also meant to minimize an animal's pain or to bring sanctity to its death? Does it matter how the animal was treated when it was alive? How about the workers who processed it? Is reverence for life possible in a factory-farming setting?

Jewish religious texts contain many laws about the treatment of workers and animals. For example, the Torah repeats some variation on the injunction "Do not oppress the stranger, for you were strangers in Egypt" seven times. It requires animals to rest on Shabbat and prohibits farmers from making an animal carry too heavy a load. But in the Jewish legal system, rules about the treatment of workers and animals are not directly linked to kashrut. A cow that is mistreated does not become unkosher as it would if it had too many adhesions on its lung.

The idea of linking kosher food with other ethical issues is not new. In the 1970s, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein of New York urged Jews not to eat veal. In the late 1980s, Rabbi Arthur Waskow, a leader of the Jewish Renewal movement, wrote that Jews should examine all the resources they consume, not just food, to determine if they were "kosher" in the broadest sense of the word. (Kosher means "fit" in Hebrew.) In 1990, Waskow convened a conference with rabbis from every denomination to introduce this idea, which he called eco-kashrut. Waskow suggested that



perhaps nuclear power shouldn't be kosher. What about paper that's not made from postconsumer waste?

At the time, Waskow's proposals were considered marginal, and few Jews took steps to implement them. But since then, many of his ideas about food have become more mainstream. Hazon, a Jewish environmental organization, helps support several Jewish farms around the Northeast and convenes an annual food conference with classes on urban worm composting and biblical farming laws and, in one case, a live-animal-slaughter demonstration. And in the wake of the allegations against Agriprocessors, a number of American groups have set about trying to create a certification system for kosher food that would alert consumers to the conditions under which it was produced. In August, Morris Allen, a rabbi in Minnesota, released preliminary guidelines for an additional certification, which he calls Hekhsher Tzedek (literally, "justice certification"), a seal that Allen says he hopes will appear on kosher products that are also created under fair working conditions. In New York, Uri L'Tzedek, an Orthodox social-justice group, announced plans to introduce a certification system for kosher restaurants based on worker treatment this fall. A group of Los Angeles Orthodox rabbis plans a similar effort in a Jewish neighborhood there.

OVER THE LAST YEAR, several unlikely entrepreneurs have attempted to create an alternative kosher food economy based on the local systems of farmers' markets and food cooperatives that have evolved in many parts of the United States over the last decade.

I have a friend named Simon Feil, a 32-year-old actor and sushi instructor, who is completely obsessed with meat; he deep-fries it, bakes it, slow-cooks it in his rotisserie. Vegetables make rare and grudging appearances at his dinner table; I once attended a Shabbat dinner where he served a challah into which he had embedded a footlong kosher hot dog before baking. In 2004, Feil saw the PETA videos from Agriprocessors, and he was shocked. Feil thought he knew a thing or two about kashrut; he grew up attending Orthodox day schools and yeshiva in Israel and later worked as a kosher supervisor for a Chinese restaurant. But until he saw the PETA videos, Feil had always assumed that if an animal was kosher, it wasn't mistreated at any stage of its life. "We always learned that kosher slaughter is more humane," Feil told me recently. "And we learned all these rules about not inflicting pain on animals. It sounds silly now, but it never occurred to me that you could violate those laws in a kosher establishment in any way." Feil no longer felt comfortable eating meat, and becoming a [vegetarian](#) was clearly not an option for him. So he set about creating an alternative that met his ideal of kosher, a process more arduous than he bargained for. His co-op, Kosher Conscience, distributed one round of Royal Palm heritage turkeys last Thanksgiving and has a second round of Broad-Breasted Whites, plus a flock of free-range chickens, in the works. A benefactor who learned of Feil's efforts just bought him a \$3,500 chicken-plucking machine.

Last year, Maya Shetreat-Klein, a 34-year-old pediatric neurologist who lives in Riverdale, decided she wanted to feed her family of five grass-fed meat, for health reasons and because, she said, kashrut should be about “elevating ordinary experiences.” When she was still trying to find all the people and equipment she would need — a farmer, a certifying rabbi and humane restraints for kosher slaughter that she could use at the local nonkosher slaughterhouse — her efforts were mentioned in an opinion piece in *The Jewish Week*. It was just one sentence, but it struck a nerve. People started contacting her, offering assistance, financial and otherwise. “I felt a responsibility to provide the meat to a wider group, since there was so much interest,” Shetreat-Klein told me. In August, her new co-op, Mitzvah Meat, slaughtered and processed 31 lambs and two grass-fed cows, all raised on farms in the Hudson Valley. Shetreat-Klein says she now hopes to make monthly deliveries of kosher meat.

The most fully developed of these grass-roots kosher-meat distributors is KOL Foods (for Kosher Organic-Raised Local), based in Silver Spring, Md., which sells grass-fed lamb and beef through synagogues in Maryland, New Jersey, Philadelphia, California and Washington. Devora Kimelman-Block, the founder of KOL Foods, had been running a community-supported agricultural co-op out of her synagogue for two years when, in the fall of 2006, she decided to try to start distributing meat. She had kept a vegetarian kosher kitchen for 16 years because she didn’t want to support the factory-farming system and there were no local, pasture-raised kosher options. But she loved meat. (“It’s just damn good,” she told me, shaking her head.) It took her almost a year to coordinate the project, but finally, in July of last year, KOL Foods slaughtered three cows raised on a farm in Rocky Ridge, Md., at one of the nation’s few remaining independent kosher slaughterhouses, in Baltimore. The cows were then butchered at a small shop in Silver Spring, yielding 400 pounds of kosher meat that Kimelman-Block sold in 50-pound boxes.

Kimelman-Block’s marketing effort was pretty low-key: she sent e-mail messages to organic-food groups and to the listserv for her children’s day school and her synagogue. But the response was huge: she sold \$11,000 worth of meat in less than a week. She soon had waiting lists in four Northeastern cities, as well as about 100 unsolicited e-mail messages from eager customers scattered around the country. A man from Cleveland drove to Maryland and bought more than 100 pounds of Kimelman-Block’s meat. These days, she says, she sells as much as \$20,000 a month in kosher beef and lamb.

Some in the ethical-kashrut movement describe it as a return to the traditional values of kashrut: community-based supervision of the food supply, reverence for agriculture and animal husbandry and attention to detail. They see new small-scale meat companies like Kimelman-Block’s as a welcome throwback to the food networks of the shtetl. Rabbi Allen’s proposal for a new “justice certification,” which has been embraced by the Conservative and Reform movements and by social-justice groups like Hazon, is laced with quotations from the Talmud

and the Jewish legal codes about the treatment of workers. But some Orthodox rabbis say that labeling kosher foods or restaurants according to an additional set of standards would inappropriately redefine kashrut and that it grafts trendy values and ideas onto a practice whose real purpose is mysterious and unknowable.

Part of this debate has to do with denominational infighting. Some Orthodox Jews don't like the idea of Conservative Jews or even liberal Modern Orthodox Jews horning in on an area of Jewish life that has traditionally been the domain of the Orthodox alone. But some of the debate harks back to longstanding Jewish questions about the purpose of religious observance: Does God require adherence to his laws because they are just, or is following God's laws a good unto itself whether or not the laws serve a moral purpose? Should Jews keep kosher because it is an ethical practice, or should they keep kosher because it is what God wants? Last month, Agudath Israel, a lobbying organization that represents haredi, or ultra-Orthodox Jews, released a statement opposing Allen's proposals for a "justice certification." [Avi Shafran](#), a spokesman for Agudath Israel, told me that if kashrut is framed as simply an ethical practice, or as a practice with any specific function other than obeying God's law, it could set the stage for the practice to ultimately be discarded.

Over the years, Jewish scholars have suggested a variety of explanations for the kosher laws. The medieval commentator Maimonides said kashrut was a means of acquiring discipline. In the early 1900s, the first chief rabbi of [Palestine](#) under the British mandate, Avraham Yitzhak Kook, taught that the restrictions were a part of the Torah's effort to limit meat consumption in general. But even the most radical champions of ethical kashrut acknowledge that there is an aspect of the practice that is simply unknowable. "In some profound way, kashrut is not rational," Waskow told me. "That may even be part of it. The idea may be just to cause you to pause before you put food in your mouth. To stop and ask a question."

*Samantha M. Shapiro is a contributing writer for The New York Times Magazine.*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/magazine/12kosher-t.html?ref=magazine>

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**October 19, 2008**

New tool for 'green' Christians: ecofriendly Bible

Printed on recycled paper with soy ink, the new edition highlights more than 1,000 passages in green.

By [Jane Lampman](#)

Christian Science Monitor

Reporter Jane Lampman talks about a new, ecofriendly Bible.

Can a “green” Bible bring more of the Christian community into the growing “creation care” movement? Many people of faith, including young Evangelicals, hope so.

This past weekend, Christian college students from across the US kicked off an effort to become catalysts for environmental action on campuses and in churches. The student-initiated Renewal network, which gathered at Eastern University in Pennsylvania, has a new resource to help them: an ecofriendly version of the Good Book published this month by HarperOne.

Produced with soy-based inks, recycled paper, and a cotton/linen cover, “The Green Bible” highlights in green more than a thousand passages relating to God’s love for creation and the role of humans in caring for the earth.

“It’s beautifully put together. I appreciate that they used sustainable materials,” says Anna Jane Joyner, Renewal’s coordinator. “It’s a great compilation of different resources.”

Along with the biblical text, the book includes a set of essays by theologians and conservationists (including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Brian McLaren, and Pope John Paul II). There’s a concordance on environmental subjects and a study guide on “green” biblical themes for use by individuals and church or campus groups.

“Many younger people very much feel it is part of the Christian message to take care of the world,” says Michael Maudlin, coproject editor for HarperOne. “So we wanted to give them a primer to help people understand that Earth care is part of the mandate God gives us.”

For others working to spur a church awakening on environmental issues, the new Bible is a welcome development.

“It helps rectify a misperception that this is not a biblical issue,” says Peter Illyn, an evangelical pastor who founded an environmental stewardship group called Restoring Eden to foster awareness across the denominational spectrum. (The Green Bible comes in the New Revised Standard Version, which is accepted by Protestants, Roman Catholics, and the Orthodox.)

While some Christians have been active on these issues for decades, others – particularly Evangelicals – have long questioned the justification and aims of environmentalism. Many conservative Christians have viewed it as a “leftist” issue, sometimes bordering on pantheism. In recent years, however, some prominent evangelical leaders have been converted by the evidence of climate change, and in 2006, they signed the Evangelical Climate Initiative. Others continue to dispute the evidence.

Churches have lagged in recognizing the problem, Mr. Illyn suggests, partly because of a misperception of what it means that man has dominion over the earth and partly because of the fundamentalist theology of dispensationalism, which teaches that “the earth is going to burn up” during the end times – which some believe could come at any moment.

But signs of a shift in attitudes are multiplying, say those on the front lines.

Matthew Sleeth – a former medical doctor concerned about environmental degradation who came into Christianity through reading the Bible – is the author of “Serve God, Save the Planet.” He’s become a sought-after speaker on campuses and in churches and wrote the lead essay in the Green Bible.

“When I started doing this, my own church wouldn’t let me speak from the pulpit – the only people who would were the Unitarians,” he says. “Now many churches who call themselves quite conservative are taking it up.”

This month he’ll spend a weekend with 350 Southern Baptist ministers in Tennessee talking about creation care. (Evangelicals prefer that term to emphasize that environmental action is about a relationship to the Creator.)

Dr. Sleeth has also seen Christian colleges that had no interest in the subject begin to change their behavior, modifying curriculum and finding ways to reduce their carbon footprint.

“When I speak to an audience, I start with the tree of life in the first part of the Bible and trace trees right through to Revelation 22, which has the beautiful description of the river of waters and the tree of life that is for the healing of the nations,” Sleeth says. “It seems there’s a tree there whenever anything of significance is happening, from Abraham to Zacchaeus.”

The Rev. Joel Hunter – senior pastor at Northland, a megachurch in Longwood, Fla. – led his own congregation and then other pastors into the movement. Northland formed a creation-care task force that conducted a comprehensive environmental audit and saved money by switching to more sustainable practices. This year, it hosted a Green Expo for its community and a national Creation Care Conference for pastors.

The Sierra Club also issued this year its first national report on the environmental engagement of communities of faith, which highlighted an example in each of the 50 states.

<http://features.csmonitor.com/environment/2008/10/19/ascripture/>

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**October 22, 2008**

The 'green' commandment

Kentucky doctor says caring for Earth is not an option for Christians, it's a responsibility

By Peter Smith  
[psmith@courier-journal.com](mailto:psmith@courier-journal.com)

WILMORE, Ky.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

And the verse was printed in green. And so were more than 1,000 other Bible verses that deal with Earth and all things that live upon it (much like some other Bibles put the words of Jesus in red).

And the Bible was printed on recycled paper, with environmentally friendly soy-based ink.

"The Green Bible," published by the mass-market religious publisher HarperOne, is interspersed with writings on the environment by such figures as Pope John Paul II, Nobel laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Kentucky author and environmentalist Wendell Berry.

Chosen to write the main introduction to this Bible is a Kentucky doctor who gave up his medical practice to travel and write full-time on the subject.

Dr. J. Matthew Sleeth, who lives in Wilmore, a small college town south of Lexington, is helping spread a message slowly taking root among fellow evangelical Christians, who traditionally have been skeptical of environmental causes -- that caring for the Earth is "not an option, it's a commandment."

The soft-spoken but earnest Sleeth calls himself an unabashed "evangelical tree hugger" and says he's in good company.

"In the Bible, the first page has a tree -- the tree of life," he said. "The last page has a tree on it -- the tree of life. ... The Earth is the Lord's. That's what the 24th Psalm says. And we've treated it like it's ours."

A moral crisis

"The Green Bible" -- complete with a commentary, "green subject index" and list of Web sites on environmentalism -- has sold 1,000 copies a week since its release earlier this month. HarperOne is confident enough of selling its original run of 25,000 to print an additional 3,000, publisher Mark Tauber said.

The Bible is designed to reach a "wide audience" of both religious and nonreligious people who may not realize its theme of "creation care," Tauber said.

Leading environmentalist Bill McKibben endorsed it as "the book we've been waiting for."

But not everyone has been waiting for it.

A 2007 survey by the Barna Group, an evangelical research service, found evangelicals recycle less than other Americans and are less likely than people in other religious categories to consider global warming a serious challenge.

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, said recently in his daily radio program that the use of such things as soy-based ink "just looks like feel-good-ism" and that many verses highlighted in green in the book actually have nothing to do with caring for nature.

Sleeth noted that when he speaks at churches, some ask, "Won't people start worshipping trees?"

He said he finds it ironic that the question is asked "by someone who belongs to the only religion on the planet that brings a tree into their house once a year, sings songs to it, decorates it, and puts little statues of their God underneath it."

Richard Cizik, vice president of the National Association of Evangelicals and a leader of efforts to galvanize evangelicals on the environment, calls Sleeth a "prophet."

"Sleeth rightly frames this crisis as a moral one in which there is a clear right and a clear wrong," Cizik said.

'The world is dying'

A decade ago, Sleeth would have been an unlikely candidate to have such a role.

He was a prosperous doctor living on the Vermont-New Hampshire border, with a large house and a fast car with a teak dashboard.

But he was also haunted.

Haunted by the lifeless 8-year-old girl in a green bathing suit who had been playing in the water on a hot, hazy day before succumbing to an asthma attack in an emergency room where Sleeth was working.

And haunted by the preschool girl innocently coloring a get-well card for her mother, who had just died of breast cancer -- a disease that has grown so rapidly during the past quarter century that he is convinced by studies suggesting a connection with environmental pollution.

Sleeth said he and his family were vacationing about eight years ago on a remote Florida island when he told his wife what troubled him: "The world is dying."

That crystallized a long pilgrimage that sent Sleeth, who had rarely attended church, searching various religious texts.

He became a Christian after reading the Gospel of St. Matthew, which he said taught him "not to judge others" -- or feel superior to the neighbor who drove a bigger gas guzzler than he did -- and to "clean up our own act."

His family traded in the big house for a smaller one, the fast car for a hybrid Prius. He quit his medical job, telling a baffled hospital board member he planned to do what became the title of his first book: "Serve God, Save the Planet."

A family vocation

He and his wife, Nancy, moved to Kentucky in 2006 when their son, Clark, and daughter, Emma, began attending Asbury College, a Christian school in Wilmore.

Now, he makes a living as a writer and speaker, spreading a message that has become a family vocation.

Emma Sleeth, 18, published her own book of environmental tips for teenagers earlier this year, "It's Easy Being Green: One Student's Guide to Serving God and Saving the Planet."

Emma said she had found plenty of books about the environment for teens in general and for Christian adults, "but there wasn't anything out there for Christian kids.

"I wrote the book I wanted to read (but) couldn't find," she said.

And Nancy Sleeth has a forthcoming book called, "Go Green, Save Green," in which she suggests ways families can cut electric usage in each room of their houses.

"It's a family ministry from the start," she said. "You don't make changes like that without involving everybody."

Their ranch-style house looks surprisingly ordinary -- no solar panels but rather subtle things such as clotheslines, insulated windows, compact fluorescent bulbs and an organic garden.

The Sleeths say the savings from their lifestyle changes has resulted in electric bills as low as \$15 a month.

They said they don't always do the greenest thing. They use air conditioning, partly because of Matthew's asthma, which they acknowledged increases the power-plant emissions linked to people's breathing problems.

And they agonize over the carbon-emission trail that Matthew Sleeth leaves behind with a speaking schedule that takes him on the road as many as 250 days a year.

Sleeth said the family is still "on a journey" in its efforts. He hopes enough evangelicals take up the cause that he can "work myself out of a job."



Reporter Peter Smith can be reached at (502) 582-4469.

<http://www.courier-journal.com/article/20081022/NEWS01/810220728/1008>

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**October 26, 2008**

## MATTERS OF FAITH

Believing in green

*Houses of worship are going eco-friendly to save money*

By Erica Noonan and Brian Benson, Globe Correspondent

NEEDHAM - Souls are saved in the sanctuary, but money is saved in the boiler room.

These days, local churches and temples are taking a greenness-is-next-to-godliness approach to their sanctuaries, emphasizing environmentally friendly construction that ranges from low-flush toilets to solar power for religious lighting. It's a change in outlook for many religious leaders, who traditionally have been less than comfortable with the technical and financial nitty-gritty of making buildings more efficient.

"If you aren't paying attention to your heating and cooling you are wasting money hand over fist," said Thomas Nutt-Powell, president of Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light, which has consulted on dozens of regional church renovations.

"That's money you can't use for another program, which is the reason the church, synagogue, or mosque exists - to serve the Kingdom of God, not the kingdom of Wall Street or Mobil or Exxon."

Wellesley's Temple Beth Elohim hopes to power its Eternal Light, a religious symbol that must remain constantly lit, through solar power. First Parish, a Unitarian Universalist church in Needham, hopes to save thousands of dollars a year in heating costs by installing double-pane windows.

At First Congregational Church in Holliston, officials are preparing to insulate the 100-year-old church sanctuary to keep heat within its soaring ceilings.

Nutt-Powell said Interfaith Power & Light was formed after his home parish, All Saints Episcopal in Brookline, did a six-year-long, \$180,000 renovation and reduced its utility consumption by 40 percent.

Now he consults with churches around the state looking to renovate and become more environmentally aware. Much of his job is to help people overcome their fear of change. His consultations are "20 percent about the boiler systems, 80 percent about how they are going to transform their congregations," said Nutt-Powell, who has advised hundreds of churches since co-founding the nonprofit a decade ago.

If church leaders balk at investing \$15,000 for a new furnace or energy management system, he'll walk them into the church parking lot to survey the collection of Escalades, Lexuses, and minivans, and do a little on-the-spot reality check. "I ask them, 'Did any of these cars cost you less than \$15,000? Will they not only pay for themselves, but last you for the next 20 years?' "

Dozens of houses of worship in eastern Massachusetts - including churches and synagogues in Upton, Holliston, Waltham, Wellesley, Wayland, Needham, Lincoln, Newton, and Concord - are in the midst of "green" renovations or planning to embark on one soon.

It's a movement that has been a long time coming, but is now being embraced by a wide variety of religious groups, said John Buehrens, minister of First Parish in Needham. "For too long America had relatively bad environmental theology, with the idea 'Jesus is coming and we don't really need to care of the environment.' We see this going back to the Puritans, that God has specially blessed their errands into the wilderness and they could treat the native population however they wanted," he said.

For decades, talk of green churches, in-house recycling programs, and special worship services for Earth Day were seen as something just for the most liberal of congregations, he said.

But now even the nation's conservative evangelical Christian leaders are promoting "a sea change of consciousness recognizing that the Creation we have been given is one we have to treat very carefully," said Buehrens, a former president of the national Unitarian Universalist Association.

Bud Cederholm, bishop suffragan of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, said congregants have "come to a deeper understanding of the effects of global warming on the whole planet."

"There is a realization that church buildings are a prime place where energy is wasted - they're old, inefficient, and small meetings are held in large heated rooms," said Cederholm, whose group oversees 193 congregations ministering to 77,000 Massachusetts Episcopalians. "I think people understand that it's within our abilities to do something, and interest is growing exponentially."

Green elements will also figure heavily into plans for St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish's planned new Catholic church in Upton, which has the considerable job of merging two parishes, Holy Angels in Upton and St. Michael's in Mendon, into one new building in 2009. The plans are still in the earliest design stage, but "it's essentially going to be, 'how green can you go and still be cost effective?'" said member Art Bartlett. "We don't know what those figures are yet."

Selling church building committees on energy-efficient heating systems is usually not difficult because of the payback in energy savings over time and the fact that state building codes require efficient systems, said Daniel Barton, an architect based in Harvard who is working on the St. Gabriel building.

As a frequent adviser to church renovations, Barton said he has recently noticed an increase in the number of church committees considering sustainable elements for their projects, such as

dual flush toilets, metered faucets, and cisterns that capture rain runoff from the roof and store it for landscaping irrigation. "Many of the churches really feel a sense of responsibility that, as churches, they need to set an example and be leaders in their community," said Barton.

For a community of faith, money is always an issue, but should become more manageable as the technology gets less expensive, he said. "Hopefully so much of it just becomes standard practice," he said. "I'm looking forward to the day where it's not newsworthy to see things done in a sustainable way."

Environmentalism and sustainability were guiding values for First Parish in Needham, which is nearing the end of a 14-month-long, \$2.2 million renovation, said member Ed Quinlan. First Parish expects to reduce its annual heating costs from close to \$12,000 to less than \$6,000, thanks to energy efficient windows and insulation, and see its annual electric bill plummet from more than \$4,000 to just under \$2,500 when its rooftop solar panels are installed.

The church's carbon footprint will also shrink by more than half, from an estimated 160,000 pounds of carbon dioxide warming the globe to just 70,000 pounds when all the efficiencies are in place, Quinlan said.

In Wellesley, Temple Beth Elohim is set to start a \$30 million green construction project, said Harriet Warshaw, president of the synagogue.

"We're commanded to take care of the earth," said Warshaw. "Being sustainable is a core value within Judaism so we really wanted to have the building reflect that value. Every major decision was always looked at through the lens of sustainability."

Plans include a garden irrigated by rain run-off, as well as a protection plan for nearby wetlands and sustainable carpeting and finishes. Temple leaders explored heating hot water through solar electricity but determined it would not be cost effective, given how little hot water the temple consumes, Warshaw said. But they hope their Eternal Light will be lit through solar power.

Temple Beth Elohim officials also reached an agreement with Wellesley schools in which the temple and Schofield Elementary School will share their parking lots, preventing the need for the church to take away green space for parking, she said.

A few miles away, at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, workers are putting the finishing touches on a \$150,000 project that replaced 51 single-pane windows original to the church's 1948 addition with double-pane windows, said church sexton Steve Killeen.

"The difference is amazing as far as draftiness," Killeen said. Before, "you'd get a cold breeze running through the windows and then have to turn the heat up just to compensate for that." Killeen said the church undertook the project hoping to lower its heating bill, which was approximately \$30,000 last winter. Next year, officials plan to change from steam heat to forced hot air, and install central air conditioning in some parts of the building, Killeen said.

At First Congregational Church in Holliston, officials are preparing to insulate the 100-year-old church sanctuary. With a soaring ceiling and tall columns, the room can grow frigid in winter. This year - with fuel costs a major part of every church budget - the faithful can no longer afford to ignore the pocketbook

"The first priority for the church is "not only greening the church, but trying to control and reduce the energy usage," said Greg Schumacher, a member of the congregation. "Energy costs are increasing dramatically, and it's probably one of the most difficult things for a church to handle."

*Matters of Faith is series of occasional articles examining religious life in area communities.*

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[http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/10/26/believing\\_in\\_green/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/10/26/believing_in_green/)

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## October 30, 2008

Climate Change Is Changing Theology  
Theologians Consider the Shifts Needed in Thinking and Action

*GENEVA (LWI)* –“Climate change is opening up horizons that are deeply spiritual, theological and cosmic in scope. [It] may literally be melting icebergs but it also exposes metaphorical icebergs of how God, human beings and the rest of creation have been conceptualized in ways that contribute to the injustices that have only increased under climate change.” This observation from a background paper prepared by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) set the stage for a consultation of biblical scholars, theologians and ethicists working in this area, 2-4 October, in Geneva.

Background information for the consultation included the grassroots survey initiated by DTS to get response to ordinary people’s theological questions about climate change, and the related extensive adaptation and mitigation work that the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) field programs have long been pursuing with local communities. (*The LWF survey is presented in the LWI special edition titled, Climate Change - Facing Our Vulnerability, available online at, [www.lutheranworld.org/What\\_We\\_Do/OCS/LWI-2008-PDF/LWI-200805-EN-low.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/OCS/LWI-2008-PDF/LWI-200805-EN-low.pdf)*)

Dr Sigurd Bergmann who teaches at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway, emphasized the need for a “spatial turn” in theology, taking Earth seriously as “our home where the Holy Spirit takes place.”

Such a spatial turn resonates with how indigenous people view the sacred manifesting itself in space, added Rev. Tore Johnsen from his own Sami perspective as a pastor in the Church of Norway. He noted that indigenous people worldwide were the most vulnerable to climate changes, and they do not separate nature and human beings as in much of Western theology. Johnsen advocated pursuing theology within a “circle of life” that includes God, human beings

and the rest of creation, proposing how this both relates to and revises traditional Christian understandings.

### *Spiritual Resources*

Giving an account of what his students heard when they went out to local communities using the LWF survey, Dr George Zachariah, who teaches at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute in Chennai, India, focused on the spirituality of those displaced from their land and livelihood because of climate change. He argued that many prevailing climate change discourses were an attempt to “absolve the sins of neo-liberal capitalist plunder,” and called for attention to the spiritual resources of subaltern communities that can “decolonize our minds, our faiths, our communities, and our planet.”

Awareness raising and advocacy are crucial at grassroots level as pointed out in two presentations. Dr Colette Bouka Coula, DWS program officer for Central and Francophone Africa, spoke of how logging companies in her home village in Cameroon, select and cut down trees without consulting with the local people who have managed the forests for centuries. Deserts result from such corporate greed, she argued. Dr Chiropafadzo Moyo from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe said the desperation resulting from the bleak economic and political situation in her country was driving people to cut down trees, thus destroying nature.

Re-reading the Bible is essential in times of climate change, as a source for wisdom and survival rather than for Christian doctrine, insisted Dr Christof Hardmeier, a retired professor of Old Testament who has worked on the upcoming climate change declaration of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). He noted similarities between indigenous views today and the early chapters of Genesis.

LWF Executive Committee member Rev. Dr Barbara Rossing, who teaches New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, USA, spoke of the need to re-interpret apocalyptic passages in Revelation and II Peter 3, to counter scriptural interpretation of climate changes as God’s punishment. What needs emphasizing instead is healing a world that is ill due to climate change, she said.

Ethical criteria and guidelines for policy advocacy related to climate change were set forth by Dr Christoph Stückelberger of the Geneva-based global network on applied ethics, Globethics, and by Dr James Martin-Schramm of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, USA, who emphasized the importance of moving beyond cynicism and despair to effective action, especially with regard to energy policies.

Papers presented at the consultation and other related resources are being developed for a book to be published in the Theology in the Life of the Church series in early 2009, as well as a discussion resource for use in local communities. (724 words)

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**October 31, 2008**

Protecting the earth a Christian duty, archbishop tells audience

By Carmen M. Hubbard

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES DEANERY — The need to protect and nurture the earth is not only the responsibility of everyone but our Christian duty under God's law: That's the message Archbishop Celestino Migliore conveyed Oct. 26 at Xavier University in Cincinnati as part of the Ethics/Religion and Society lecture series.

Archbishop Migliore is the Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and was the guest speaker, along with Jame Schafer, associate professor of theology at Marquette University, for the event, "The Lord God Took the Man and Put Him in the Garden of Eden to Till It and Keep It (Genesis 2:15)." The discussion was co-sponsored by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and Xavier's theology department at the Schiff Family Conference Center of Xavier's Cintas Center.

"The issue of climate change is one we must take very seriously," the archbishop said, citing Adam and Eve being set in the Garden of Eden to oversee God's creatures and nurture them and take care of the land. He noted that orders of monks were experts at tilling the land centuries before global warming and greenhouse gases developed.

"We humans must be part of the solution and keep humans beings at the center of the solution," he said.

As part of his duties with the United Nations, Archbishop Migliore has traveled the world spreading the message of conservation and sharing stories of prevention to stop further damage to the global climate change. He addressed the U.N. General Assembly regarding global climate change last year.

The archbishop said efforts to mitigate effects, such as adjusting energy production, pollutant consumption and suffering as a way of sacrifice, are needed to reduce greenhouse gases.

"This is difficult to sell, because we have to learn how to cope," Archbishop Migliore said. "We hear about and watch devastation, but hear little about prevention. "Fear and anxiety do not help solve the problem."

Ultimately, the archbishop says everyone must be responsible to the inter-laws of creation and obey them to maintain a healthy global environment.

Dr. Schafer noted that moral action "is part of the Catholic social teaching. It's needed at all levels and adapt to changes we cannot not avoid. Acting (based on Catholic social teaching) must be concurrent on all levels to adverse the effects (of global climate change)."

Schafer's theological work focuses on the constructive relationship between theology and the natural sciences with special attention to religious foundations for ecological ethics.

Linda Finkey of Mt. Lookout asked the speakers if they thought American Catholic parishioners have been asked to live modestly and sacrifice wants for the greater good of the planet.

"I think that's an awful oversight of responsibility. I don't think I've ever seen a challenge at the expense of our planet," she said.

Archbishop Migliore said his visit to Cincinnati was his third trip to Ohio, where discussions about global climate change and the church's role proved that people are concerned about it.

"The difference is there should be appeals to decrease what we are consuming," Schafer said. "Everyone of us has to look and be careful. The theologians called for us (not to overuse) sustainability."

Xavier's Ethics/Religion and Society lecture series is devoting its 2008-2009 season to the theme of global climate change.

<http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/tct/oct3108/103108protecting.html>

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## November 2, 2008

Spiritual environmentalism

Steven G. Vegh  
The Virginian-Pilot  
McClatchy-Tribune Regional News delivered by Newstex

THERE'S NO LACK of parish get-togethers at Williamsburg United Methodist Church this fall. There's a lunch for the "50-plus" crowd and a state-fair youth jaunt, a church barbecue and a middle school retreat.

And who'd want to miss this month's excursion to the Tidewater Fib re Corp. recycling plant in Chesapeake?

The green movement is percolating into Hampton Roads' faith community, where advocates say environmentalism is a newfound but natural fit with spirituality.

At Williamsburg United Methodist, the recycling field trip is hosted by the church's year-old Green Initiative Committee, which promotes conservation by Christians.

"Part of it is having an awareness of God's creation, awareness of how we, as Christians or people of faith, have to take care of the world," said Carolyn Spencer, a committee member.

Organized environmentalism is still more the exception than the rule in area congregations.

But creation care, Earth stewardship and eco-spirituality are becoming buzzwords, particularly in some Catholic, mainline Protestant and Jewish communities.

"This creation spirituality has been around for a while, but climate change has brought it to the forefront," said Susan Hedge of the Ecological Working Group of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. The group encourages parish environmentalism.

"There's so many Scriptures that talk about the Earth, the Creation of God, and we kind of skipped over that somewhere."

Perhaps no one knows more about Virginia's faith-based green movement than the Rev. Pat Watkins. He directs Virginia Interfaith Power and Light, part of an environmental advocacy group active in about half the states.

Watkins performs energy assessments for churches, suggesting ways they can reduce energy use. He also talks to congregations about how they can "go green" and how environmentalism fits Christian theology.

The latter is sometimes an unfamiliar notion for folk raised to believe that God, in Genesis 1:28, told humanity to "fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion (NYSE:D PRA) (NYSE:D) " over all creatures.

Watkins said the passage has been read wrongly as justifying unrestrained exploitation of natural resources. He tells churches that a better interpretation of "dominion" is to care for living things.

"It is not a hard sell, and I'm a little surprised, to be honest with you," he said of his audiences' reaction. "People do say, 'That's not what I heard in Sunday school growing up,' but it makes sense for them."

It also is making sense among some national religious groups, such as the National Association of Evangelicals, which includes dozens of denominations.

"We want our churches to likewise in their community to be faithful witnesses on matters concerning stewardship of the Earth," Richard Cizik, the NAE's vice president said last fall.

Pope Benedict XVI has been dubbed the "green pope" for his repeated public warnings about global warming and exploiting natural resources.



"We cannot simply do what we want with this Earth of ours, with what has been entrusted to us," the pope said last year. "Our Earth is talking to us, and we must listen to it."

Secular environmentalists are eager to have people of faith as allies, said Glen Besa, who directs the Sierra Club's Virginia chapter. Religious leaders are part of a coalition in southwest Virginia fighting a proposed coal-fired power plant, he said.

To stop global warming, he said, "it's going to require a broad coalition of interest groups, and the faith community is certainly an important partner."

But there are plenty of congregations that don't see climate change or eco-stewardship as high priorities.

Among local Southern Baptist churches, "I think most of them feel that it's not something that we need to expend our time and energy -- it's not part of our mission," said the Rev. Lynn Hardaway, who called climate change a fad topic in religious circles.

Hardaway, a Newport News pastor who led Central Baptist Church in Norfolk until this summer, said Scripture does call caring for the Earth a responsibility -- but a secondary one.

"The mission God calls us to do is reaching people with the gospel," he said.

At the other end of the spectrum is Warwick Memorial United Methodist Church in Newport News. Three years ago it decided that in its new building addition, "we'd be as green as we can," said ministry coordinator Dave Munro.

The church installed regular and compact fluorescent lights and a high-efficiency air conditioner and stocked the kitchen with plates and silverware, eradicating disposable plates and utensils.

"That cuts down the carbon footprint because we're not using paper -- we cut our garbage load in half," Munro said.

The church also uses a low-phosphate dish detergent and collects recyclable trash, including the paper, bottles and cans from members' households.

"There's always some folks that say that's not part of church," he said of eco-spirituality. "A preponderance of folks in this church believe part of our stewardship responsibility is helping care for God's creation, regardless of where you sit on global warming."

Other churches that are eco-active have taken similar steps.

At Christ and St. Luke's Episcopal in Norfolk, the year-old Environmental Team has inspired the planting of a butterfly garden, a Lenten talk series on environmental theology and deployed recycling bins. The church also switched its newsletter to e-mail, seeded oysters in a riverbed and is compiling a book of environmental prayers.

At Temple Israel in Norfolk, the synagogue is swapping incandescent bulbs for energy-efficient CFL bulbs and urged its 450 households to do likewise.

Rabbi Michael Panitz said the eco-action harkens to Genesis 2:15, where God creates the Garden of Eden and puts man in the garden "to till it and tend it."

"People are supposed to be God's stewards of the environment," Panitz said.

The Tidewater Sowers of Justice, a Catholic social justice group, has an ecological working group that educates parishes on environmentalism.

Ed Marroni, the group's chairman, said he personally composts kitchen waste, limits water use, recycles and drives a fuel-efficient Saturn.

"I don't use a power mower anymore," he said. "I use a reel push mower."

Other churches with green committees include Church of the Holy Family, St. Nicholas Catholic Church and Emmanuel Episcopal Church, all in Virginia Beach.

In Williamsburg, Spencer's group posted recycling bins in the church and swapped Styrofoam disposable cups for reusable mugs for Sunday coffee hour. It showed the energy conservation film "Kilowatt Ours" and hosted a program on making rainwater barrels to conserve water.

"If we believe God created the world -- and that doesn't preclude believing in Darwin or evolution -- I think he then created us to use, not abuse," Spencer said. "If we want to live for a while, we better do something."

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<http://www.voteforbusiness.net/newsArticle.jsf?documentId=2c9e4f691d5c0146011d5cb8919600ca>

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## November 3, 2008

Taoism -- "The Way" for Climate Action in China?

*By Olav Kjørven, Assistant Secretary General and Director of Development Policy  
at the UN Development Program*

Something unprecedented happened in China in late October. It may not have been as glitzy spectacular as the Olympics in Beijing over the summer. It did not attract heads of state or world celebrities. But it possibly leave a more lasting imprint on the future of China and indeed the world.

Taoist masters from all over China gathered near the ancient capital of Nanjing to agree on a seven-year plan for climate change action. Anybody with minimal knowledge of China will immediately understand that this is more than a curiosity.

But the fact that it was the ancient, homegrown Taoist tradition that gathered their most revered teachers to discuss what climate change means for them and their country is more than exotic, whether one looks at it from a religious, an environmental or a political perspective.

But how can a gathering of Taoists be potentially transformative in a country like China? This is, after all, a country where relentless, carbon-fueled economic expansion and consumerism seem akin to doctrine and are deeply embedded into the very fabric of society. (In this respect Western societies are not that different, just a bit further along the same path). Wouldn't you have to be something of a devout Taoist yourself, or a wildly optimistic and credulous climate warrior in order to believe that such a meeting could amount to much?

Possibly, but I am willing to accept the risk. Let me try to explain: First, the Chinese Taoists have been around for thousands of years. They have seen countless dynasties come, and go. But the Tao (which translates as "the Way") has outlasted them all, proving its resilience and strength. Taoist values and beliefs continue to hold enormous sway in Chinese society.

Secondly, these values and beliefs are now welcomed back into the broader discourse of society, on matters such as economic, social and environmental policy. Taoism is no longer confined to the personal and family levels, and to festivals and rituals. Taoist temples and their masters are increasingly addressing politicians and business leaders at all levels about environmental and other challenges. This week's gathering was actively attended by government officials. In their statements, they asked the Taoists for help in building a more environmentally harmonious and sustainable China. They had come to realize that in order to solve current challenges and secure a sustainable future, they indeed needed to mobilize all of society. Today, this includes religion, and not just the Taoists.

Third, and what makes this doubly interesting, Taoism probably has more on offer to the environmental cause in today's China than any other major, organized religion. This is a strong statement, but anyone who has read key Taoist masters such as Lao Tzu knows to what extent this faith tradition emphasizes environmental stewardship as a sacred duty, something we simply must do in order to preserve our future and the balance of the entire world. Take climate change. The whole problem and challenge can be beautifully captured and explained through the concepts of Yin and Yang: The carbon balance between earth and sky is off kilter. This causes instability and disasters. It is truly significant that the current masters of Taoism in China have started to communicate precisely through this ancient yet new vocabulary.

Fourth, the Taoists are walking the walk. Over the last year or so they have installed solar panels on half of their thousands of temples around China and the job will be completed soon for all their sacred places. They are providing comprehensive guidance on all aspects of environmental and climate stewardship: water and land management, protection of biological diversity, energy efficiency of buildings, educational curricula, moral teachings, outreach through media and

advocacy to business, etc. They will use their Seven-Year Plan to make a holistic and systematic contribution to climate responsibility and environmental stewardship in China. The perspective goes beyond seven years. The ambition is to change the course for generations to come. Because the Taoists plan to be around for quite a while longer, continuing their sacred cosmic dance that transcend time and space.

Could this be the kind of stuff that in the end will tip the scales in favor of decisive climate action in China and beyond? Well, even if you're half-way convinced by the four points above, you'd probably still think that's a tall order to place on the Taoists--and I would agree. The good news, however, is that similar things are now happening in all the 11 major religions in our world today. They are all coming up with multi-year plans for climate action, spanning all dimensions of who they are and what they do. They are greening their management of land, buildings and financial investments. They are articulating care for creation more strongly and clearly in their teaching and preaching. They are strengthening their climate advocacy towards society at large, but grounded in their own spiritual and moral traditions. By November next year, a few weeks before the crucial Copenhagen climate meeting takes place, these faiths will all present to the world their plans and commitments.

This is no small contribution--these 11 faiths represent in some way or another roughly 80-85 percent of humanity. Perhaps that's enough to bring us to a global, political tipping point. In the end, it may just be what is needed to convince even the most stubborn and reluctant of policy makers that the time to secure humanity's future is now.

*Olav Kjørven is Assistant Secretary General and Director of Development Policy at the UN Development Program*

[http://www.undispatch.com/archives/2008/11/taoism\\_-\\_guidi.php](http://www.undispatch.com/archives/2008/11/taoism_-_guidi.php)

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## **November 7, 2008**

Do You Know a 2009 Champion of the Earth?  
UNEP Evolves its Annual Awards to Spotlight Transformational Leaders in Environmental Policy, Business, Civil Society and Science & Technology

Nairobi/World - Whether it be combating climate change or stemming the accelerating loss of biodiversity or promoting sustainable agriculture and recycling - some people and organizations are making a real and landscape-shifting difference.

They may be Presidents, politicians, economists, scientists or philosophers or perhaps musicians, artists, actors, religious or civic figures operating on the global, national or local stage.

They may be community leaders, business leaders or youth leaders who are triggering a transformation aimed at bringing forward tomorrow's world today by turning their societies into beacons of fundamental and sustainable change.

Whomever and wherever they are UNEP wants to know and looks forward to award the brightest and the best as a 2009 Champion of the Earth.

With the new four categories, UNEP aims to highlight the urgency of cooperation between all players and all sectors of society to achieve a global Green Economy: one that reflects the real needs and aspirations of six billion rising to nine billion people by 2050.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), said: "We are looking for real and inspirational champions - people and organizations who are not fazed by what can sometimes seem to be insuperable challenges. Individuals and organizations who refuse to accept the status quo."

"The world is facing multiple crises but also huge opportunities to move to a more resource-efficient, more intelligently-managed planet. There are those who have been working for decades and others who have are just now stepping up to the bar," he said.

"So we want to learn about these outstanding and catalytic candidates from Asia and the Pacific, West Asia and Europe to Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and North America. Who is your Champion of the Earth 2009?" said Mr Steiner.

The 2009 award ceremony will take place in parallel to the annual Global Business Summit for the Environment (B4E), co-hosted by UNEP and the United Nations Global Compact in Paris, France, next April.

The Summit, attended by international business leaders and policy makers, will highlight the most urgent environmental challenges facing the world and discuss business-driven solutions for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

### **Notes to Editors**

Background on the Champions of the Earth prize and previous laureates, including biographies and photographs, is available from <http://www.unep.org/champions/> or from UNEP DCPI at [championsoftheearth@unep.org](mailto:championsoftheearth@unep.org).

No monetary reward is attached to the prize. Each laureate receives a trophy designed especially for the occasion with environmentally friendly materials.

UNEP invites nominations from individuals who have made a significant contribution globally, regionally and beyond, to the protection and sustainable management of the environment and natural resources. **[Deadline for receipt of nominations is on 1 December 2008](#)**. Candidates are judged by a senior UNEP panel.

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<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=550&ArticleID=5971&l=en>

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## November 7, 2008

Climate tops meeting of religious leaders

By Lennart Simonsson, DPA

Stockholm - Climate issues including how to tackle global warming were to top discussions at a gathering of some 30 religious leaders and policy-makers from various faiths of the world, Swedish Archbishop Anders Wejryd said Friday. The two-day meeting was to adopt a manifesto that contains "demands and commitments," Wejryd said of the envisaged document to be signed November 28 in Uppsala, north of Stockholm.

"We call on international policy- and decision-makers to take certain steps and we also call upon our own faiths to be active," he said of the tract.

"The basic tone of the manifesto is that of wonder and awe of nature and the environment that we live in. To realize what an enormous gift we have been given," Wejryd, head of the Church of Sweden, a Lutheran church, added.

The Interfaith Climate Manifesto was scheduled to be presented to various governments and at international gatherings in the run-up to a United Nations climate conference to be hosted in Denmark in 2009 for a post-Kyoto agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Wejryd said one reason for organizing the gathering was that he was "afraid of fear," adding that when "more and more people" realize how close we live to "the limits of this environment" this might "create a sense of fear that would block us from doing sensible and wise things."

He also expressed "fear" of the overuse of "non-renewable resources" and said there was need to restore the perspective of "stewarding" for future generations.

Another factor was a wish to encourage political decision-makers who had the courage to think in the long-term perspective, both in western-style democracies and other forms of government.

Among religious leaders and thinkers due to attend the parley were: The grand mufti of Syria, Sheikh Ahmad Badr al-Hassoun; the Anglican bishop of London, Richard Chartres; Professor Liu Xiaogan of the Chinese University of Hong Kong who is a Daoist; Metropolitan John of Pergamon of Greece, one of two representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople; Dutch Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, as well as Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist scholars and Native American Indian leaders.

European Union Commissioner Margot Wallstrom was also scheduled to attend the meeting, project leader Ann-Christine Jarl said.

The pope had been contacted and "was very positive," although no formal representative of the Roman Catholic church was to sign the manifesto, Wejryd said.

Wejryd described himself as a "technical optimist" and was confident that "new technical solutions" would be discovered in future, for instance to harness solar energy.

In connection with the meeting, some 50 seminars and lectures were to be held on issues like climate change and conflict, sustainable environment, and how different faith traditions view climate change.

Some 80 per cent of Sweden's 9 million people belong to the Church of Sweden that was separated from the state in January 2000 making it a "faith-community" along with other denominations like the Pentecostals, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Jews and Muslims.

<http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/240552,climate-tops-meeting-of-religious-leaders--feature.html#>

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### **November 8, 2008**

Saving the planet by using the golden rule

By Rich Barlow

The Boston Globe

He was Al Gore before Gore was cool.

Two decades ago, Cambridge filmmaker Marty Ostrow filmed some episodes for the PBS series "Race to Save the Planet," trumpeting the threat of pollution and energy waste. Yet while exposing that inconvenient truth years before Gore won an Oscar for doing so, Ostrow was nagged by a sense that his work was incomplete.

The PBS series focused on science and public policy, but he had wanted to also address values and the spiritual imperative of environmentalism.

This student of religion and ecology has turned in his finished project. His latest film, "Renewal," made with Arlington colleague Terry Kay Rockefeller, is a 90-minute, episodic documentary on faith communities - Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists - tackling environmental problems around the country.

It's been a spiritual journey for the 61-year-old documentarian, an unobservant Jew with a passing resemblance to Woody Allen. He gives Gore full credit for rousing the public from indifference to climate change through his movie. But years of research have convinced him that we can't save the planet without religion and religious believers.

Western culture, Ostrow believes, needs to confront and change its consumer-driven, waste-and-pollute ways, and then change them. "That sort of inward reflection goes to some deep places. Who deals with those deep places in our world?" he says. "Religions! That's what religions are good for. They're good for talking about moral or self-reflection [and] to treat each other [by] the golden rule."

And so "Renewal" shows, for example, Chicago Muslims supporting sustainable food production and humanely raised animals. One activist, a woman in hijab, explains to the camera that the Prophet Mohammed "told us that we should be kind to the animals, treat them with respect, treat them with dignity." Meanwhile, evangelical Christians in Appalachia organize airborne tours of mountaintops scalped by coal mining operations that "rape," as one puts it, the surrounding environment.

In New Jersey, a group called GreenFaith helps churches adopt energy conservation and recycling. A minister with the group says, "God created not just humankind with love, but the entire created order, with love and with a purpose. And we know for sure that that purpose wasn't to end up in a landfill."

Discussing these efforts, Ostrow grows animated, enthusiastic. You'd half think he might have found religion himself, finally. Yet he still doesn't go to temple. Growing up, he says, he didn't feel particularly spiritual, except in the presence of two works of creation. Music was one. The other was nature.

You might expect a kid raised on suburban Long Island to feel awed by nature on summer trips to the ocean or the country, where, he says, the stars at night filled him with "this feeling that, 'Oh, I'm in the presence of something I don't have words to explain,' the mysterious, the divine, the sacred."

As an adult, he was drawn to the writings of Thomas Berry, a Catholic priest and self-described "geologian," who draws on Eastern and Western religions to advocate humanity's awareness of its bond with the environment. After "Race to Save the Planet" he stumbled upon scholarly conferences run by the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale, which archives case studies of environmental activism by religious communities.

He approached Rockefeller, who helped create PBS's "Nova" and produced parts of the network's epic history of the civil rights movement, "Eyes on the Prize." He contemplated a movie mixing interviews of scholars with nature shots. But this Animal Planet-meets-Ken Burns approach would have been "pretty intellectual - not film material," says Rockefeller. Then Ostrow heard about the on-the-ground work by religious communities. "It became a different kind of story to tell on the screen," she says.

The partners identified 30 compelling stories and whittled them down to eight, using a process Rockefeller calls "mix and match. We didn't want three stories on recycling." They also determined to roam across the country, and across religions, in their coverage.



The film has had some theatrical screenings - Boston's Museum of Fine Arts showed "Renewal" earlier this year - but Ostrow has fingers crossed for an airing by public television stations in the spring. Numerous church groups have also shown it, according to Ostrow, nourishing its makers' hope that "Renewal" depicts an important cultural development justifying its \$750,000 production cost.

"One of the things Marty and I kept asking each other was, 'Is this a movement yet?' " says Rockefeller. "I think that this is a movement that is still growing."

*Comments, questions and story ideas may be sent to [spiritual@globe.com](mailto:spiritual@globe.com).*

[http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/11/08/saving\\_the\\_planet\\_by\\_using\\_the\\_golden\\_rule/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/11/08/saving_the_planet_by_using_the_golden_rule/)

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## **November 10, 2008**

Green, meet God

The secular environmental movement sees an opportunity in the world of religion. Is this a marriage made in heaven?

By Henry G. Brinton  
USA TODAY

The greening of religion, although long overdue, is really a quite natural phenomenon. The texts of many faiths, indeed most, at some point reference the stewardship of this earth. More surprising is that today, secular environmental groups are seizing the opportunity to reach out to faith communities.

A Sierra Club report highlights faith-based environmental initiatives in all 50 states — "spiritually motivated grassroots efforts to protect the planet." One line leaps off the page: "Lasting social change rarely takes place without the active engagement of communities of faith." Indeed. Think of the U.S. civil rights movement, Solidarity in Poland and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Social change does not stick without the glue of religion.

But as these two movements — one based on the love of God, the other on the love of the earth — intersect, we should celebrate the initiative while remaining aware of the challenges and inevitable spats that await this quite remarkable marriage.

For centuries, the biblical command to "have dominion" over the earth was seen as a divine endorsement of environmental exploitation. But a radical shift has occurred, and most people of faith now support efforts to be good stewards of natural resources.

The Pew Forum's Religious Landscape Survey, released earlier this year, revealed widespread support for stricter environmental laws and regulations among Jews (77%), Buddhists (75%),

Muslims (69%) and Hindus (67%), as well as members of mainline Protestant churches (64%), Catholic churches (60%) and evangelical ones (54%).

"Creation care" is the growing movement that has become a rallying cry among religious people who are concerned about the earth. In just the past few years, this nation has witnessed an explosion of environmental activity at the grass-roots level.

"We now have 5,000 congregations that are responding to climate change by cutting carbon emissions," says Gretchen Killion of Interfaith Power and Light, a San Francisco-based group active in 28 states. It helps churches and religious organizations lower their energy consumption. "Many of our members have installed solar panels, and three or four even have geothermal," Killion says.

The world needs this broad-based, interfaith movement — one that offers practical environmental benefits and draws together people of diverse theologies. Catholics are working with Native Americans to preserve land and water; Muslims are making links between urban communities and sustainable farms; and Protestant churches are joining interfaith coalitions and "greening" their congregations by modifying buildings, installing compact fluorescent lamps, using conservation landscaping and purchasing organic, fair-trade coffee.

Though religions are sometimes scorned for dividing people and illuminating differences, the unifying goal of preserving the planet could do just the opposite: bring people of faiths together. Creation care can be "a great bridge-builder between evangelicals and mainline Christians," says Richard Cizik of the National Association of Evangelicals. Although evangelicals have traditionally distrusted environmentalists, who tend to be political liberals, stewardship of the earth is not a left-wing concept. After all, observes Cizik, "Aren't conservatives supposed to be conservers?"

But is the marriage of the secular environmental movement and the faith-based one even necessary? Actually, it's essential. The international community has settled on the dangers of global warming and has decided to act to literally change the world. We've reached a critical point at which unity is required if this movement is to succeed. Just as in any successful political campaign, you need a good ground game. There is no better ground game in the USA than the thousands of churches, synagogues and mosques that dot our landscape from coast to coast. But are religious people ready to walk down this aisle?

Lyndsay Moseley of the Sierra Club believes so. She has been working for several years to develop partnerships with people who have faith-based, moral or spiritual reasons for protecting the planet. Raised in a deeply religious and politically conservative home in eastern Tennessee, Moseley encountered a low-income community outside Knoxville where the water supply had been contaminated by the illegal dumping of lead, arsenic, diesel fuel and PCBs. She joined a coalition that demanded clean water for the neighborhood, and in the course of that successful effort, Moseley "began to understand that God's call to care for creation is the same as God's call to love our neighbors."

Trust, intersecting values and a willingness to work together. These are the key ingredients that Moseley believes are necessary to build a meaningful alliance between the Sierra Club and people of faith. But even supporters urge caution.

Cizik tells me that "evangelicals need to find their own voice before partnerships are established," because they don't want to be seen as "an appendage of the environmental movement." Though this suspicion and distrust among evangelicals is clearly a hurdle, it is one that can be cleared, as megachurch pastor and author Rick Warren has plainly illustrated.

One doesn't even have to be a global warming doomsday prophet to see the wisdom of greening the planet. Jack Graham, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, says he is unsure about the main causes of global warming, but he strongly believes that Christians should not abuse the earth. He recently led his 27,000-member Texas church through an energy audit that led to changes in consumption, resulting in savings of \$1.1 million in one year— not to mention the environmental benefits achieved through the members' efforts.

Other faith groups want to make sure that their distinctive mission is not diluted by environmental partnerships. Green mustn't overshadow God.

"We hear regularly from secular groups who want to partner with us," says Killion of Interfaith Power and Light. "These groups have important information to share, and we need it to do our work. However, we strive to be theologically based and not to be an environmental organization." Killion wants the message of her organization to remain faith-based, rooted in the mandate to care for creation that is found in most mainstream religions. "We want to engage communities of faith who traditionally don't like the environmental community," she says.

So the environmentalists of the world want to save the planet, and the various faiths that share this planet want the same thing. Good. Yet in reaching out to those of us rooted in faith, the Sierra Clubs of the world must work within our religious traditions to ensure that these efforts enrich, rather than undermine, religion.

Patience will be the friend of these environmental groups as they court the affections of the large and politically powerful community of believers now committed to caring for God's creation. Our planet wasn't polluted in a day, and it won't be cleaned up that quickly either.

*Henry G. Brinton is pastor of Fairfax Presbyterian Church in Virginia and author of Balancing Acts: Obligation, Liberation, and Contemporary Christian Conflicts.*

<http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20081110/opledereligion150.art.htm>

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**November 11, 2008**

UN to host meeting of world's religions

UNITED NATIONS: World leaders gather at the United Nations on Wednesday and Thursday for a conference on inter-faith relations that was overshadowed by uncertainty even before starting.

Seventeen heads of state are expected to attend, including US President George W. Bush and the leaders of Arab nations and of Israel, countries where religion and politics are especially sensitive.

The conference comes as US president-elect Barack Obama, who has signaled greater flexibility for US foreign policy in mostly Muslim geopolitical hot spots, readies to take power.

Two days of meetings will take the form of a debate in the UN General Assembly under the official theme of "culture of peace".

The conference was organized by the General Assembly president, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, a Nicaraguan Catholic priest who adopted the leftwing liberation theology and served as foreign minister under Sandinista rule.

However, the meeting comes at the call of Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, who is keen for a UN follow-up to efforts at promoting inter-faith dialogue in the "World Conference on Dialogue" held last July in Madrid.

King Abdullah, who rules as the head of an ultra-conservative Wahabite Muslim royal family, went to Madrid seeking "constructive dialogue" aimed at opening what he called "a new page of reconciliation" among major religions.

The Madrid declaration that followed that meeting was noted for its call for an international agreement on fighting the root causes of terrorism.

This time it is not clear whether the session will end with a UN resolution or a lower-grade declaration, said Enrique Yeves, spokesman for d'Escoto. "They are still negotiating among themselves."

Diplomatic sources said there was no chance of a resolution and perhaps not even of a declaration because of splits between countries on the nature of the problem in religion and politics.

One source said that Saudi Arabia had proposed a text unacceptable to European countries because of a reference to the "mocking of religious symbols", an issue deeply offensive to Saudis, but seen as a free speech matter in many Western states.

"It's extremely sensitive. That raises important questions and could create many misunderstandings," the diplomat said.

The representatives of 65 countries are planning to speak, Yeves said, including King Abdullah, Bush, Israel's Shimon Peres, and Britain's Premier Gordon Brown.

France is sending only former Prime Minister Alain Juppe, but "we think it's a good thing that religions talk," said UN Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert.

Ripert said that sending a serving government representative was impossible.

"The idea is that we do not mix religious matters... with public matters," he said.

- Agence France Presse

[http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp\\_world/view/389032/1/.html](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_world/view/389032/1/.html)

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## November 12, 2008

### Saudi Arabia to Lead U.N. Faith Forum

By Colum Lynch  
Washington Post Staff Writer

UNITED NATIONS -- Saudi Arabia, the oil-rich Islamic kingdom that forbids the public practice of other religious faiths, will preside Wednesday over a two-day [U.N.](#) conference on religious tolerance that will draw more than a dozen world leaders, including [President Bush](#), Israeli President [Shimon Peres](#) and British Prime Minister [Gordon Brown](#).

The event is part of a personal initiative by Saudi [King Abdullah](#) to promote an interfaith dialogue among the world's major religions. The Saudi leader agreed for the first time to dine in the same room with the Israeli president at a private, pre-conference banquet Tuesday hosted by U.N. Secretary General [Ban Ki-moon](#). But Ban hinted that the two leaders -- whose governments do not have diplomatic relations -- were not seated at the same table.

"Normally, in the past, they have not been sitting in the same place like this. That is very important and encouraging," Ban said. "I wholeheartedly support the convening of the interfaith meeting that will be held here at headquarters tomorrow. The values it aims to promote are common to all the world's religions and can help us fight extremism, prejudice and hatred."

The Saudi initiative emerged in the summer during a meeting of religious leaders in Mecca. The Saudi leader subsequently drew a range of religious groups -- including Jews, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Taoists and others -- together in Madrid in July, where they signed a declaration calling for greater cooperation among religions.

Secretary of State [Condoleezza Rice](#) planned to attend the conference to hear the Saudi King's opening address. Bush is scheduled to deliver an address Thursday. [The White House](#) said last

month that it welcomed the Saudi initiative and supports "the right to practice one's religion" and other principles of religious freedom enshrined in the U.N. charter.

But Saudi Arabia's sponsorship of the event drew criticism from human rights advocates, who said that a country that oppresses its religious minorities lacks the moral authority to lead such a gathering.

"Saudi Arabia is not qualified to be a leader in this dialogue at the United Nations," said Ali Al-Ahmed, a Saudi national who serves as director of the Washington-based Institute for Gulf Affairs. "It is the world headquarters of religious oppression and xenophobia."

Most leaders from Europe -- with the exception of Britain and Finland -- Latin America, Africa and Asia stayed away, sending lower-ranking representatives. Some U.N. delegates said they were put off by the prospect of holding a religious event in the world's premier diplomatic venue, the [U.N. General Assembly](#) chamber. They also expressed concern about having their top leaders participate in an event on religious tolerance sponsored by a government that has such a poor record on the issue.

"We all know what happens in Saudi Arabia," one U.N. ambassador said.

Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director for [Human Rights Watch](#), said a U.N. discussion on religious discrimination should spotlight places "where religious intolerance runs deepest, and that includes Saudi Arabia."

General Assembly President Miguel d'Escoto, a Roman Catholic priest from Nicaragua who is co-chairman of the conference, sought to play down the event's religious significance. "We're not here to talk about religion. . . . We're here to talk about tapping our innermost values and putting them at the service" of the world's neediest people.

"Humanity is in moral bankruptcy, and we are in need of being bailed out," d'Escoto said. Asked whether Saudi Arabia had the moral standing to preside over the event, d'Escoto said: "I never conceived the United Nations as an organization of saints. We are in the world a community of sinners . . . and we should accept warmly any brother who wants to join forces to resolve" the most pressing problems.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/11/AR2008111103029.html>

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**November 12, 2008**

Group encourages local churches to focus on energy conservation

By [Mary Beth Smetzer](#)

FAIRBANKS NEWS MINER

FAIRBANKS — Living one's faith day-to-day involves more than attending weekly church services or proselytizing.

Mary Walker, project coordinator of Alaska Interfaith Power and Light, said it also entails being a good steward to God's creation.

"Creation care is walking the talk of one's faith as the Earth and all it holds belongs to our creator," said Walker, who is seeking to involve local congregations to focus on how they can reduce their carbon footprints.

AIPL is one of 29 affiliates across the country to join the national Interfaith Power and Light organization, also known as the Regeneration Project.

Twenty-one congregations around the state are members. Locations include Anchorage, Juneau, Wrangell and Arctic Village, with the main chapter in Fairbanks at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church.

According to the organization's main Web site, Interfaith Power and Light is "a religious response to global warming ... devoted to deepening the connection between ecology and faith."

Their goals include helping people to recognize and fulfill their responsibility to be stewards of creation as well as promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation.

The interfaith ministry focuses on helping faith communities fulfill their responsibility to steward creation through six actions.

These include education, energy audits, energy efficiency, energy conservation, renewable energy and supporting public policy.

St. Matthew's parishioners, Oliver and Andrea Backlund have taught a class on energy conservation at their church and elsewhere that involves ways to monitor and change everyday energy usage.

The Backlunds have been interested for a long time in stewarding the earth and learned more at an Episcopal convention before co-teaching a class.

"We're much more energy intentional now," Andrea said.

Those actions may include simple everyday energy conservation measures such as replacing incandescent lightbulbs with energy-efficient bulbs, putting on a sweater before turning up the heat, washing clothes in cold water and installing clotheslines or a drying rack.

Information on energy audits and loan programs promoting energy conservation also are included in the class, and dozens of other ways to improve home energy efficiency and lifestyle changes.

Tools to calculate the carbon footprint of individual congregations are available on the nonprofit organization's main Web site, [theregenerationproject.org](http://theregenerationproject.org).

The Alaska chapter also produces a monthly newsletter, which can be found at [www.akipl.org](http://www.akipl.org).

Walker said the organization puts a large emphasis on climate change issues.

"It is already hitting the world's poor the hardest. Our priority in Alaska is to help people of faith fulfill our responsibility to steward creation."

Scripture is clear that Earth belongs to God, not man, Walker said.

"We were tasked as caretakers, called to not be wasteful and steward these gifts for the next generations."

Walker said the organization also helps to bring a moral compass to legislative environmental decisions to forward the best interests of the common good.

"In America, we comprise 5 percent of the world's population but consume 25 percent of the world's resources. We need to be much more mindful when we use resources to use them wisely and justly," she said.

Walker can be contacted at 978-7766 or [mary@akipl.org](mailto:mary@akipl.org).

<http://www.newsminer.com/news/2008/nov/12/group-encourages-local-churches-focus-energy-conse/>

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## November 18, 2008

Contemplating Heaven, but Drilling Deep Down

By [JIM DWYER](#)

The New York Times

ABOUT NEW YORK

For millions of years, invisible streams of water have run deep in the earth below Manhattan at a constant temperature of 65 degrees, a source of energy that seems beyond exhaustion — and beyond reach. But eight months ago, a seminary in Chelsea began to pump water from those streams to heat its buildings in the winter and cool them in the summer.

"It's forever noiseless, forever pollution-less, forever carbon-free," said Maureen Burnley, the executive vice president of the [General Theological Seminary](#) of the Episcopal Church.

For the seminary, and now about 60 other places in Manhattan, the unseen bounty of the earth is being harvested by [geothermal](#) pumps. Manhattan is geologically suited for these deep wells.



From a depth of 1,500 to 1,800 feet, the pumps deliver the consistently moderate temperatures of underground water to the surface, where it works like a refrigerant. It carries energy.

“In the summer, you take the heat from the buildings and put it in the ground,” Ms. Burnley said. “In the winter, you take the relative warmth of the ground and put it in the buildings.”

By the standards of city life, General Theological is an ancient place, its buildings cast in soaring Victorian architecture, its land donated in the 19th century by Clement Clarke Moore, reputedly (but not certainly) the author of “A Visit From St. Nicholas.” By geological time, the seminary does not have the longevity of the wink of an eye.

As the first raw winds of winter belted along 10th Avenue this week, Ms. Burnley sat in her office on 21st Street and picked a small hunk of rock off a shelf.

“Feel the density of that,” she said.

It was a piece of 500-million-year-old Manhattan schist, cut from the ground below the seminary. The piece fit easily in the palm of her hand, but felt as if it weighed close to a pound.

“Drill through that,” Ms. Burnley said, “and you’ve got a well to the end of time.”

So far, General Theological has drilled seven wells to the end of time — or 150 to 180 stories deep, at least. The seminary has plans for 15 more. When the project is complete, it will be the largest system of geothermal pumps in the Northeast, said Carl Orio, the chairman of [Water Energy Distributors](#), a consultant and contractor that worked on the project.

The seminary has about 200 students, most of whom are studying to become Episcopal priests. About five years ago, it commissioned a study on its physical plant, which was expensive to heat and impossible to cool.

“We wanted to come into the 21st century,” Ms. Burnley said. “We skipped the 20th century altogether. [Thomas Edison](#) himself wired this campus. We’ve got Edison Electric plaques all over the place.”

The initial plans did not call for geothermal pumps, but the seminary’s consultants recommended that they be considered. Conventional heating and cooling systems have a much lower installation cost, but require fuel. A study projected that the pumps would take about 9 years to pay for themselves after the entire system was installed. Now, the [projection](#) is 19 years.

“Because we’ve been here 200 years, this investment makes sense,” Ms. Burnley said. “It won’t be the five-year return on investment that businesses want, but that’s fine. We’re going to be around.”

To reach the 65-degree water, the seminary drilled far below the city’s [Third Water Tunnel](#), which is about 500 feet down, and far below [Cameron’s Line](#), the point where an oceanic plate smashed into the prehistoric North American continent.

The first phase of the project was estimated to cost \$6 million, but ended up costing \$9 million for heating and cooling capacity in 80,000 of the buildings' 260,000 square feet, according to Dennis Frawley, who managed the project for the seminary.

The increase was almost entirely the result of monitoring demanded by various arms of 10 government agencies that were involved in oversight, he said. Some neighbors worried that the drilling would cause earthquakes. The city was particularly concerned about damage to its water tunnel.

“When we were first getting started, we had drilling companies that said, ‘You can start a well on 20th Street and by the time you get down 1,500 feet, you’ve drifted to 21st Street,’ ” Mr. Frawley said. “We were allowed 3 degrees of tolerance — we couldn’t drift more than 75 feet on 1,500. Some of our wells drifted 10 feet, some were 20 feet. The worst was a well that drifted 35 feet.”

Underground water in Manhattan flows generally to the south, said Frederick Stumm, a scientist with the [United States Geological Survey](#) who has done extensive mapping of the island to help the city plan the Third Water Tunnel.

“The rock has been sort of brutalized by continental collisions,” Mr. Stumm said. “The rock has been under stress over the years, and it creates patterns of fractures in the rock.” Ground water finds its way down into these fractures, which form a network.

And it’s not just water down there. “We encountered rubies at about 1,000 feet,” Ms. Burnley said.

The rubies, said Mr. Frawley, were formed into the rock. “Nothing in the way of a large scale,” he said. “We weren’t turning the seminary into the ‘Deadwood’ movie set.”

For precious gems, “it’s easier to go to Macy’s,” Ms. Burnley said.

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[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/nyregion/19about.html?\\_r=1&scp=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/nyregion/19about.html?_r=1&scp=1)

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## **November 22, 2008**

At a New York Seminary, a Green Idea Gets Tangled in Red Tape

By [JIM DWYER](#)

The New York Times

ABOUT NEW YORK

Here was the easy part about an elegant, smart alternative energy project at an Episcopal seminary in Chelsea: drilling 1,500 feet through Manhattan schist to reach the water that runs deep and warm in the earth.

“An 8 3/4-inch carbide button drill bit,” said Dennis Frawley, who managed the project for the [General Theological Seminary](#). “Behind that, there was a fluted percussion hammer. That pounds the rock into particulate.”

Drilling a quarter-mile into solid rock was simple, said Maureen Burnley, the seminary’s executive vice president, compared with persuading government officials and agencies that had the authority to say no — or to simply do nothing and stop all progress.

“We had to answer to 10 agencies,” Ms. Burnley said. “It took three times as long as it should have. The left and the right hand did not know what the other was doing.”

Ms. Burnley and Mr. Frawley were members of a small team that has installed seven [geothermal](#) wells at the seminary, which occupies most of a full city block between Ninth and 10th Avenues and 20th and 21st Streets. They intend to drill 15 more. The wells are a source of energy because the water is 65 degrees year-round, so it is being used to cool seminary buildings in the summer and heat them in the winter. Once all 22 wells are running, the seminary will shut down its boilers. By [replacing fuel oil with geothermal energy](#), the seminary will reduce its annual carbon dioxide emissions by 1,400 tons.

This is the future that virtually everyone in the city wants. But the people at the seminary are, in Ms. Burnley’s phrase, “institutionally exhausted” by the four-year siege of red tape, and after spending 50 percent more money than they had expected.

“At a certain point we became angry, and determined, and wouldn’t give up,” she said. “But you can’t create public policy that depends on having obsessed, hardheaded people to get these projects done.

“People are prepared to deploy these strategies,” she said about the enthusiasm for new green approaches. “Policymakers need to get beyond the grand goals and figure out what the way is to move forward.”

In theory, no city in the country should be quicker to welcome such a project. Buildings are by far New York’s biggest source of carbon emissions. And last year, Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#) laid out [one of the country’s most ambitious plans](#) to reduce the use of carbon-based fuels. With [each presentation](#), the vision and depth became more apparent.

The aspirations of the mayor and his planners on paper, however, cannot come to life without the consent of the city’s bureaucracy. “Those folks in the agencies don’t seem to feel that they answer to the executive branch,” Ms. Burnley said.

At one point, the seminary waited three months for the city Department of Transportation’s permission to drill into the sidewalk, Ms. Burnley said. “The conversation went like this: ‘What is the status?’ ‘It has no status.’ ‘Do you need more information?’ ‘No, we have what we need.’ ‘Then how can we get it moving?’ ‘You can’t get it moving.’”

“We were in absolute purgatory,” she said. “What was going on was an internal debate between the engineers and what are the real world requirements, and the lawyers with the legal requirements.”

If geothermal is to become a practical application, Ms. Burnley added, “someone has to lock all these engineers in one room, lock those lawyers in another room, and try to make this affordable and doable.”

Besides the Department of Transportation, among the agencies that had a say were the city’s Department of Environmental Protection, because a branch of a water tunnel runs beneath part of the seminary, and the state’s Department of Environmental Conservation, because its Division of Mineral Resources issues permits for mining operations.

All of those agencies had legitimate public interests to protect. They just didn’t want to act at the same time, in the same place.

“I sat in a room with D.O.T. trying to get D.E.P. and D.E.C. to sit together,” Mr. Frawley said. “I wasn’t able to make it happen. The mayor can stand up on a podium and talk about New York in 2030, but we’re the application of that — we’re the ones trying to make it happen.”

Whenever the project seemed to have stalled beyond hope, Ms. Burnley said, the geothermal team was able to get it moving again with help from a policy adviser in the Bloomberg administration, Ashwini Chhabra.

Geothermal equipment is expensive to install, but it is well-suited for institutions that have time to recoup the initial costs, Ms. Burnley said.

But are there enough people like Ms. Burnley and Mr. Frawley — human drill bits — to drive through the crust of the status quo? She laughed. Not drill bits, she said, “human battering rams.”

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/22/nyregion/22about.html>

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## **November 24, 2008**

Conferees tackle environment

Sarah Hofius Hall

The Times-Tribune - McClatchy-Tribune Information Services via COMTEX

Marywood University became a mini United Nations on Sunday, as dignitaries from countries around the world came to Scranton in an effort to improve human rights in their own nations.

The annual forum of the Washington, D.C.-based Institute on Religion and Public Policy's Interparliamentary Conference on Human Rights and Religious Freedom started Sunday and runs through Tuesday.

About 35 members of parliaments and other delegates from 15 countries attended Sunday's session, along with a few dozen institute and Marywood officials and members of the public. Dignitaries from several more countries are expected to arrive in Scranton today.

"The organizers have made history by bringing all these people here," said Mahdi Mohammed, Command Office member of Sudan's national Congress.

In the back of the meeting room in the Nazareth Student Center, six people sat in sound-proof booths, translating the discussion into the six U.N. languages -- Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Meeting participants could listen to their language of choice with headphones.

One of the goals of the conference, organized by Joseph K. Grieboski, a Scott Twp. native and president of the institute, is to find common ground on human rights and religious freedom issues, with the ultimate goal that countries will enact parallel legislation worldwide.

Attendees said they hoped they could get ideas about how to deal with issues in their own countries.

Officials from Sudan are excited for the country's major election next year, and want to learn more about how to improve the way of life for all people in their country, including those in Darfur region of western Sudan.

"We come here open-minded," Mr. Mohammed said.

Representatives from Somalia are concerned with piracy. On Sunday, Dahir Mirreh Jibreel, envoy for the president of Somalia, spoke to keynote speaker Michael G. Kozak, senior director for democracy, human rights and international organizations for the National Security Council, about his concerns.

"We are making contact with people who are exceptional resources," Mr. Jibreel said. Representatives from China want to learn more about religious freedom.

"We need more dialogue between countries and different religions," Wang Xiuling, a director in China's religious affairs administration, said.

The environment was the focus of Sunday afternoon's panel session, with participants hearing about issues such as conservation and alternative fuel sources.

The Rev. Monsignor Anthony Frontiero, official of the Roman Curia, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, spoke about the Church's stance on environmental issues.

"Our human drives and desires will need to be re-framed with acknowledgment of the entire human good," he said.

Lawrence Anthony, a conservationist and founder of the Earth Organization, told the story of how he rescued animals at the Baghdad Zoo at the start of the Iraq war and his conservation efforts in Africa.

"Wildlife is in danger everywhere," he said. "The plant and animal kingdoms are facing a crisis."

Rabbi Steve Gutow, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, spoke about the need to decrease the use of carbon-based fuels, and increase the presence of cleaner fuels.

Jean McInnis, environmental protection administrator for the Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut, spoke of ways the tribe has conserved natural resources.

The conference continues at 9 a.m. today at Nazareth Student Center, with panels on terrorism and public health. A trip to the Lackawanna County Coal Mine tour is also planned. Members of the public can attend today's sessions for \$50.

Contact the writer: [shofius@timeshamrock.com](mailto:shofius@timeshamrock.com)

<http://www.individual.com/story.php?story=92419458>

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## **November 25, 2008**

Vatican set to go green with huge solar panel roof

By Philip Pulella

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) - The Vatican was set to go green on Wednesday with the activation of a new solar energy system to power several key buildings and a commitment to use renewable energy for 20 percent of its needs by 2020.

The massive roof of the Vatican's "Nervi Hall," where popes hold general audiences and concerts are performed, has been covered with 2,400 photovoltaic panels -- but they will not be visible from below, leaving the Vatican skyline unchanged.

The new system on the 5,000 square meter roof will provide for all the year-round energy needs of the hall and several surrounding buildings, producing 300 kilowatt hours (MWh) of clean energy a year.

The system, devised by the German company SolarWorld, will allow the 108-acre city-state to cut its carbon dioxide emissions by about 225,000 kilograms (225 tonnes) and save the equivalent of 80 tonnes of oil each year.

The Holy See's newspaper said on Tuesday that the Vatican planned to install enough renewable energy sources to provide 20 percent of its needs by 2020, broadly in line with a proposal by the European Union.

The 1971 Nervi Hall is named after the renowned architect who designed it, Pier Paolo Nervi, and is one of the most modern buildings in the Vatican, where most structures are several centuries old. The hall can hold up to 10,000 people.

It has a sweeping, wavy roof which made the project feasible and the solar panels virtually invisible from the ground. Church officials have said the Vatican's famous skyline, particularly St Peter's Basilica, would remain untouched.

An editorial in Tuesday's newspaper appealed for greater use of renewable energy.

"The gradual exhaustion of the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect have reached critical dimensions," the newspaper said.

By producing its own energy the Vatican will become more autonomous from Italy, from where it currently buys all its energy. The Vatican is surrounded by Rome.

Pope Benedict and his predecessor John Paul put the Vatican firmly on an environmentalist footing.

Benedict has made numerous appeals for the protection of the environment. The Vatican has hosted a scientific conference to discuss the ramifications of global warming and climate change, widely blamed on human use of fossil fuels.

Environmentalists praised the pope last year after he made a speech saying the human race must listen to "the voice of the earth" or risk destroying the planet.

(Editing by Tim Pearce)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/environmentNews/idUSTRE4AO8C820081125>

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**November 26, 2008**

## The Vatican's Crusade on Climate Change

### 2,400 Solar Panels Were Placed on Undulating Roof of the Vatican's Hall

By PHOEBE NATANSON

ABC News

ROME – Pope Benedict XVI today launched a crusade against climate change in his own tiny country by holding his first "ecologically friendly" public gathering at a Vatican audience hall newly powered by solar panels.

The 2,400 solar panels placed on more than an acre of undulating roof of the Vatican's hall were officially activated today, providing the energy required by the hall itself and the adjacent large buildings.

The audience hall is a striking modernist construction amid centuries-old historical buildings. Built in 1969 and designed by the renowned Italian architect Pier Luigi Nervi, it is used for concerts and indoor papal audiences that are held there when the weather is poor.

The solar panels will produce about 300,000 kilowatt hours of clean energy a year, offsetting the Vatican's annual Co2 production estimated at 10,000 tons. The system is part of the Vatican's commitment to using renewable energy for 20 percent of its needs by 2020, a goal most European Union countries are striving toward. In so doing, the Vatican will become more self-sustainable and less dependant on Italy for its energy supply.

Throughout the summer, the solar panels, which were donated to the pope by the German company Solar World, were painstakingly slotted on the roof by the engineers. The complete system, including the solar panels and inverters that feed the electricity directly into the Vatican's grid, is worth nearly \$1.5 million.

In a statement issued in January, the company's director, Frank Asbeck said, "with our gift we are paying tribute to the German pope. We support the commitment of the Catholic Church to a responsible use of the resources of creation."

He added, amusingly, "If the three Wise Men from the East came to Bethlehem today, they would in all probability bring solar cell in addition to gold, frankincense and myrrh. It is the symbol for the creation and the energy supply of the future."

Italian Carlo Rubbia, the Nobel prize-winner physicist, will lecture later today on alternative energy that respects historical and artistic building in the Pontifical Academy of the sciences in front of a distinguished gathering of architects, engineers and energy managers. Great care has been taken by the project designers to ensure that the solar panels are not detectable from St. Peter's Square and will not disrupt the Vatican's skyline.

The pope has shown concern for the issue of climate change linked to global warming for some time. The Vatican hosted a scientific conference last year on climate change and global warming and issued a set of suggestions this summer to travellers and tourist to minimize and offset environmental damage. This included taking less luggage on planes and car journeys, planting trees to offset tourists' carbon footprints and choosing vacation spots in clear harmony with nature.



The Vatican has also been involved this year in a reforestation project in Hungary designed to offset its carbon emissions. The first saplings of oak, white willow, black poplar and wild fruit trees in the Vatican Climate Forest were planted this month in more than 600 acres of forests along the Tisza River.

Pope John Paul II, this pope's predecessor, who was often depicted as a lover of nature and the outdoors, made strong calls to protect the environment during his long papacy.

The present pope, who is 81, has also made a number of appeals to protect the environment. In his speeches on God's creation, Benedict XVI has repeatedly illustrated how the earth was created to sustain human life but neglect, greed and short-sightedness have led to damage.

He has often stressed that caring for the environment is part of believing God created all things and showing respect of God's plan.

Speaking to Catholic youths gathered for World Youth Day in Australia this summer, the pope spoke of the fragile state of the planet. "We have become more and more aware of our need for humility before the delicate complexity of the world," he said.

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<http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/GlobalWarming/Story?id=6338997&page=1>

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## **November 28, 2008**

Faith leaders urge climate curbs

By Christopher Landau

BBC religious affairs correspondent

Leaders from the world's religious traditions have signed a manifesto urging tough action on climate change.

Around 1,000 delegates are meeting at the Interfaith Climate Summit in Uppsala, Sweden, at the invitation of the Swedish church.

The manifesto, signed by 30 religious leaders, calls for "rapid and large emission cuts in the rich world".

It argues in favour of a reduction in carbon emissions of at least 40% by the year 2020.

Leaders are also calling on individual followers of religious traditions to recognise the importance of caring for the environment.

They also place an emphasis on the world's more prosperous nations shouldering the burden of responsibility over the issue.

Rich countries, the manifesto states, "should pay for international cuts in addition to their own domestic initiatives. These payments should be obligatory."

The signatories also urge the sharing of technological expertise to mitigate the effects of climate change.

### **'Human emergency'**

Some have questioned what role religious leaders have in an issue that already preoccupies scientists and politicians.

The Archbishop of Sweden said that the hope offered by religious traditions should be recognised alongside the fear some people justifiably feel about the impact of climate change.

"I am convinced that the issue of climate change is not an issue best left only to politics, natural science or the market," he told delegates.

"Our faith traditions provide a basis for hope and reasons for not giving up... despite our shortcomings."

Delegates have also conceded that some religious traditions have been slow to recognise the importance of climate change.

One prominent participant is the Anglican Bishop of London. He says that religious communities must learn to speak out on the issue.

"Here is a major human emergency," he said. "Have the faiths of humankind got anything to say about this challenge?"

"Many of our constituencies regard this still as a peripheral second-order issue - it's got to be moved up the agenda."

### **'Moral perspective'**

What is undeniably unique about this gathering is the breadth of cultures and backgrounds represented.

Delegates were welcomed by HRH Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden.

During the opening ceremony in Uppsala's cathedral, a packed congregation listened to a performance of "Bridge over troubled water", before singing the Christian hymn, "All things bright and beautiful".

Afterwards, a Taiwanese Buddhist nun rubbed shoulders with an American Indian; a Palestinian Christian chatted with a Muslim from Wales.

Political leaders were also present, including Vice-President of the European Commission Margot Wallstrom.

She said that it made sense to hear the views of religious leaders, given the influence they can have over their communities.

The inter-faith summit would "bring another perspective to the climate change debate, an ethical and moral perspective, and a debate that many politicians might not be willing to engage in", she said.

The religious leaders who have travelled to Sweden believe that their ethical contribution to the climate change debate is vital.

The lasting question is whether their contribution will make a real impact - both on their own religious communities and the wider world.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7753784.stm>

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## **November 30, 2008**

### **Interfaith Leaders Sign Climate Change Manifesto of Hope**

UPPSALA, Sweden (ENS) - Faith leaders concluded their two-day Interfaith Summit on Climate Change in Uppsala on Saturday by signing a manifesto demanding quick and extensive reduction of carbon dioxide emissions in the wealthy parts of the world.

Christian, Buddhist, Daoist, Sikh, Muslim, Jewish and Native American leaders signed the declaration that states, "We all share the responsibility of being conscious caretakers of our home, planet Earth. We have reflected on the concerns of scientists and political leaders regarding the alarming climate crisis. We share their concerns."

"The situation is critical," the manifesto states. "Glaciers and the permafrost are melting. Devastating drought and flooding strike people and ecosystems, especially in the South. Can planet Earth be healed? We are convinced that the answer is yes."

Hosted by the Church of Sweden, the interfaith leaders were welcomed with an opening address by Swedish Archbishop Anders Wejryd, who said, "We are not at this meeting to find special religious answers to the environmental crisis. We have to share the realities of technology, economy and politics with all people."

"We have gathered to deliberate on what we do with these facts as people of different religious traditions," said the archbishop. "As people of faith we are carriers of hope – or at least we should be. It is obvious that the world needs change before it is too late and we have a role to

play in enabling a changed world-view and changed perspectives for people of the world and for ourselves."

The faith leaders held their summit and issued their manifesto on the eve of the United Nations' annual climate conference, held this year in Poznan, Poland from December 1 through 12. The Poznan meeting, which is expected to draw around 8,000 participants, is focused on advancing international cooperation on a future climate change agreement to govern the emission of climate-warming greenhouse gases after the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012.

The future agreement is set to be finalized at the 2009 UN climate conference in Copenhagen, Denmark next December in time for countries to sign and ratify the document before 2012.

"As people from world religions, we urge governments and international organizations to prepare and agree upon a comprehensive climate strategy for the Copenhagen Agreement," the Uppsala Manifesto states. "This strategy must be ambitious enough to keep climate change below 2° Celsius (about 3.5 degrees Fahrenheit), and to distribute the burden in an equitable way in accordance with the principles of common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities."

Limiting warming to 2° Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures is essential to averting the worst effects of climate change, scientists say. Yet many environmentalists believe allowing the temperature to rise even that much would be disastrous. The global conservation organization WWF warns that a 2° Celsius temperature rise would bring droughts that will leave many people without safe, clean water, and destroy crops, causing widespread famine. Melting ice caps and glaciers would raise sea levels, leaving some Pacific island nations uninhabitable.

But the Uppsala Manifesto is entitled "Hope for the Future," and European Vice President Margot Wallstrom also took a hopeful view of the situation in her address to the Interfaith Summit on Friday.

"Combating climate change certainly makes sense. It makes sense because it is not only a challenge, but an opportunity. An opportunity to change the world and steer it towards sustainable development and prosperity for all," said Wallstrom.

By the year 2020, the European Union as a whole should cut its emissions by at least 20 percent compared to 1990 levels - and we will increase that figure to 30 percent if other developed countries make a similar commitment under a new international agreement, Wallstrom reminded the interfaith participants. The EU agreed to these targets in 2007 along with increased renewable energy sources and energy efficiency.

"We are on track to get an agreement on the package in the coming weeks. If we can achieve this, we will be in a much stronger position to press for an ambitious agreement in Copenhagen next year," Wallstrom said.

But back in 2007, "no one foresaw the economic crisis that was about to engulf the world," the vice president said. "Faced with the present financial turmoil and economic recession, some EU

governments - especially in Eastern Europe - have become unwilling to accept targets which they perceive as imposing further economic constraints on their industries. They question whether we can afford to take these drastic steps."

"My answer - to quote Barack Obama - is 'Yes we can!' In fact, we can't afford not to!" Wallstrom said.

She cited the 2006 report by UK economist Sir Nicholas Stern on the economics of climate change, which estimates that allowing climate change to continue unchecked would shrink the world's economic output by at least five percent and possibly as much as 20 percent per year if the most dramatic predictions come to pass.

"This dreadful prospect is exactly what a struggling global economy does NOT need," Wallstrom said. "By contrast, swift action to tackle climate change and to move to a low-carbon economy would cost only one percent of the world's Gross Domestic Product."

Hope for a climate agreement was strengthened when in Bali last December, the United States at last came on board. "This was a major breakthrough after years of resistance from the Bush administration," Wallstrom said, adding that President-elect Barack Obama "clearly has ambitions to combat climate change."

The Uppsala Manifesto calls for political leaders to reach an agreement during the preparations of the new global Climate Protocol 2009 on a strategy that is "sufficiently responsible and ambitious for the Earth to be saved for future generations."

But there are dissenting voices. Rajan Zed, a Hindu chaplain in northwestern Nevada and adjoining California, who delivered the historic first Hindu opening prayer in United States Senate in Washington, said today that the "grandiose" Interfaith Climate Manifesto signed at Uppsala lacks moral strength because of Hindus and other religions were not represented.

Other world religions, like Bahaism, Jainism, Shintoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, and the Greek Orthodox Church also were not represented.

Zed, who is president of Universal Society of Hinduism, said that it was commendable to see diverse religious leaders, religions and denominations coming together to bless environmental causes in Uppsala, but the organizers should have given adequate and fair representation to all major world religions.

Zed said he admires the Church of Sweden and Archbishop Wejryd for taking the leadership role in organizing this "much-needed" summit and thus "making religions climate friendly."

The Uppsala Manifesto will create a new framework for discussion about climate change after the Kyoto agreement expires in 2012 said one of the signers, Professor Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, director of the Jewish Studies program at Arizona State University.

"Today it is widely acknowledged that world religions have an important role to play in revising a sustainable future, because religions are the repositories of values and norms that guide human actions toward the natural world," said Tirosh-Samuels. "Through cosmological narratives, symbols, rituals, ethical directives, and institutional structures, religions shape how we act toward the environment."

"Hence," she said, "all attempts to transform our environmental attitudes so as to generate a sustainable world must include understanding of world religions and cooperation with religious people."

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<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/nov2008/2008-11-30-01.asp>

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## **December 1, 2008**

Why should religions engage on climate? Faith summit discusses

Peter Kenny  
Ecumenical News International

Uppsala (ENI). Why should the environmental movement be involved with religion? That is a question Martin Palmer, secretary general of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, often gets asked, and he sought to answer it in this historic Swedish university city north of Stockholm.

Margot Wallström, first vice-president of the European Commission, also addressed the question at the 28 to 29 November Uppsala Interfaith Climate Summit attended by 1000 people from many religions.

"Faith communities can play an important role on the issue of climate change," Wallström told *Ecumenical News International*. Although religion should be separated from politics, noted Wallström, who is a Swede, she stressed that political and religious institutions must cooperate over climate issues. "Religions influence a lot of perspectives and people," she said.

The gathering, which met at the invitation of (Lutheran) Church of Sweden Archbishop Anders Wejryd, hammered out a manifesto calling for an extensive and speedy reduction of carbon dioxide emission in the wealthy parts of the world.

The manifesto, signed by 30 religious leaders and scholars from different faiths, targets the world's political and religious leaders. Archbishop Wejryd and the World Council of Churches will present the document to a United Nations global meeting on climate change, which began in Poznan, Poland on 1 December.

"We are planning to present the manifesto when the WCC addresses the Poznan conference," said Guillermo Kerber Mas, who heads the WCC's human rights and climate change programme. "We need to bring the ethical and spiritual dimensions to the discussion because they will affect us all in the near future. We need to act fast, and need to act now."

Still, why should the environmental movement and religions be joining hands, and why tie up with international organizations?

The Alliance of Religions and Conservation's Palmer, who addressed the Uppsala summit, noted that his organization, known by its acronym ARC, was a secular foundation and a sister organization of the WWF, the global conservation group.

"When we say we are a secular organization established solely to work with religions," Palmer said, "many in the environmental movement still look at us and reply, 'Why bother with the religions?'" Palmer believes the answer lies in a number of factors.

"First and foremost, we look at the sheer amount of land that is owned by the 11 major religious traditions we work with," said Palmer. "These range from Bahais and Buddhists through to Shinto and Zoroastrianism, and take in every major faith ... Within those we are working with there are 25 or 26 forms of Buddhism, about 30 different forms of Islam and ... more than 50 forms of Christianity."

Palmer explained that the 11 religions with whom ARC works, "own about 8 percent of the habitable surface of the planet, and that figure is growing the whole time". ARC has been helping Cambodian Buddhists in their attempt to recover the 28 percent of Cambodia that they lost under communist rule. "And, of course, as communism has fallen or transmogrified, a great deal of land has been given back to faiths," said Palmer. "So we [religions] own a lot of the land."

Palmer also points out that religions are the third largest investing group in the world. In 2001, ARC began a major process of working with major faiths on social investment and ecological principles. Religions also own 5 percent of the forests of the world, and are heavily involved in education.

"Religions either founded, set up, still contribute to, run or own over 50 percent of all schools worldwide," said Palmer, who also explains that media belonging to religious organizations produce more magazines in the expanded E.U. than any other group.

"So," Palmer says, "the question is, 'Why on earth wouldn't you work with religions?'" He adds, "Most people thought role of religion was to tell you what not to do. Now, they are learning they can be proactive."

- Climate summit link: [www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?di=143415](http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?di=143415)
- ARC Web site: [www.arcworld.org/](http://www.arcworld.org/)

- Link to Wallström speech:

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/wallstrom/pdf/speech\\_20081128\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/wallstrom/pdf/speech_20081128_en.pdf)

- Link to WCC: [www.oikoumene.org/](http://www.oikoumene.org/)

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<http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=2512>

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## **December 7, 2008**

Green mission

Churches under renovation using methods that are environmentally friendly

By Erica Noonan  
Boston Globe

The Unitarian Universalist church in Concord once attended by early environmentalists Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson will soon be reopening its newly "green" doors.

Work is coming to an end of a \$1 million, two-year-long renovation that will make First Parish far more handicapped-accessible and boast a host of environmentally friendly changes that will save the planet's resources, and the congregation's money. The church is hoping to save as much as \$10,000 of its annual \$34,000 energy bill

"People were really eager to do a green project, but from an environmental and a faith-based perspective," said Peter Nobile, cochair of the church's Green Sanctuary Committee.

Churches and temples across the northwestern suburbs of Boston are taking a greenness-is-next-to-godliness approach to their sanctuaries, emphasizing environmentally friendly construction that ranges from low-flush toilets, recycled flooring, native plants, low-emissivity windows, and, at one synagogue, even solar power for religious lighting.

It's a change in outlook for many religious leaders, who traditionally have been less than comfortable with the technical and financial nitty-gritty of making buildings more efficient.

"If you aren't paying attention to your heating and cooling, you are wasting money hand over fist," said Thomas Nutt-Powell, president of Brookline-based Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light, which has consulted on dozens of regional church renovations.



"That's money you can't use for another program, which is the reason the church, synagogue, or mosque exists to serve the Kingdom of God, not the kingdom of Wall Street or Mobil or Exxon."

At South Church in Andover, several green elements were included in an approximately 6,000-square-foot addition the church constructed in 2005 and 2006, said Betsy Davis, chairwoman of the church's board of trustees. The new work includes a heating and cooling system and air and vapor barriers that meet or exceed energy efficiency codes. Most of the new lighting is fluorescent and relies on motion sensors that automatically turn off the lights when no movement is detected, Davis said.

"There's a very fervent belief by much of our membership that we need to be stewards of the environment and lead by example," she said. "Cost savings is a very nice benefit, but it's not the motivating factor."

The church has also made improvements to the original 120-year-old structure and an addition constructed in the 1950s, including changing to fluorescent light bulbs in a few locations and upgrading the building management system that controls the heating and cooling systems and other functions. "It is about as slick as an older system can be, as far as what it does control," Davis said.

Nutt-Powell, who consults with churches around the state looking to renovate and become more environmentally aware, said much of his job is to help people overcome their fear of change.

His consultations are "20 percent about the boiler systems, 80 percent about how they are going to transform their congregations," said Nutt-Powell, who has advised hundreds of churches since cofounding the nonprofit a decade ago.

If church leaders balk at investing \$15,000 for a new furnace or energy management system, he'll walk them into the church parking lot to survey the collection of Escalades, Lexuses, and minivans, and do a little on-the-spot reality check. "I ask them, 'Did any of these cars cost you less than \$15,000? Will they not only pay for themselves, but last you for the next 20 years?'" he said.

The Rev. Larry Peacock, who directs the Rolling Ridge Retreat & Conference Center in North Andover, said staff at the United Methodist Conference of New England's main retreat center had already installed compact fluorescent bulbs and low-flow shower heads and toilets.

The center is now gearing up for major - and costly - modifications to its gorgeous, but energy-inefficient, Georgian-style main house and other buildings.

The biggest item on the list of capital improvements - which could total almost \$2 million - would be a shift in its heating system from oil to gas that could reduce by 50 to 75 percent the center's \$300,000 annual heating bill, Peacock said.

Rolling Ridge is also considering the needs of its entire 38 acres of open space. Peacock said the church's work must include "being a good steward of all of it."

"We're interested in saving money - that's part of it - but we are also looking at things that have no immediate cost savings, but are good for the earth," he said.

The green church movement has been a long time coming, but is now being embraced by a wide variety of religious groups, said John Buehrens, former president of the national Unitarian Universalist Association.

"For too long America had relatively bad environmental theology, with the idea 'Jesus is coming and we don't really need to care of the environment.' We see this going back to the Puritans, that God has specially blessed their errands into the wilderness and they could treat the native population however they wanted," he said.

For decades, talk of green churches, in-house recycling programs, and special worship services for Earth Day were seen as something just for the most liberal of congregations, he said.

But now even the nation's conservative evangelical Christian leaders are promoting "a sea change of consciousness recognizing that the creation we have been given is one we have to treat very carefully," said Buehrens.

Bud Cederholm, bishop suffragan of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts - which is contemplating green church projects in Concord and Andover - said congregants have "come to a deeper understanding of the effects of global warming on the whole planet."

"There is a realization that church buildings are a prime place where energy is wasted," said Cederholm. "They're old, inefficient, and small meetings are held in large heated rooms. I think people understand that it's within our abilities to do something, and interest is growing exponentially."

Harvard-based architect Daniel Barton, a frequent adviser to church renovations, said he and his peers have noticed an increase in church interest in innovative irrigation solutions, such as cisterns that capture rain runoff from the roof and store it for landscaping.

"Many of the churches really feel a sense of responsibility that, as churches, they need to set an example and be leaders in their community," said Barton.

For a community of faith, money is always an issue, but should become more manageable as the technology gets less expensive, he said.

"I'm looking forward to the day where it's not newsworthy to see things done in a sustainable way," he said.

*Globe correspondent Brian P. Benson contributed to this report. Erica Noonan can be reached at [enoonan@globe.com](mailto:enoonan@globe.com).*

[http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/12/07/green\\_mission/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/12/07/green_mission/)

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**December 9, 2008**

Churches urge world leaders to build a greener economy

EpiscopalChurch.org

In advance of the European Union summit this month, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden and the Presiding Bishop of EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland) have written to the president of the Council of the European Union, HE Nicolas Sarkozy, urging him to ensure that "climate considerations are not marginalized in the search to find short- and medium-term solutions to immediate economic pressures."

Archbishop Rowan Williams, Archbishop Anders Wejryd and Bishop Wolfgang Huber express their concern that some governments are looking to increase their allowance of carbon credits that can be bought from developing countries, rather than looking at how to decrease carbon output from within the EU. Instead, the church leaders call for governments in the EU to take a more holistic approach to economic growth

"The challenge of resuscitating economic growth cannot be treated in isolation from the challenges of promoting sustainable development," the church leaders say. "The choice is not between economic growth and environmental protection ... Our economic and environmental fortunes are inextricably linked. Working sustainably for the global common good and respecting the integrity of God's creation are not alternatives -- they are one and the same. To think and act otherwise is neither 'common' nor 'good'."

The church leaders also advocate the EU taking the opportunity of the economic downturn to build up a new, greener, economy.

"The current financial crisis and economic recession represent less a threat and more an historic opportunity to bring about tomorrow's low carbon economy today," they say. "We are encouraged that U.S. President-elect Barack Obama has responded to this challenge by pledging to invest \$75 billion to create 5 million new 'green collar' jobs by 2020 as part of a wider package of measures on climate change. Although this pledge has yet to be realized, Europe's leaders must not retreat from taking similar action."

The full text of the letter follows.

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HE Nicholas Sarkozy  
President of the Council of the European Union  
Council of the European Union  
Rue de la Loi  
175 B-1048 Brussels  
Belgium

8th December 2008

Your Excellency,

Drawing on our trust in God, creator of heaven and earth, and on a living faith in Christ, we call upon our governments to strengthen their commitment to addressing the challenge of climate change, a challenge which threatens the flourishing of the world, which is the theatre of God's redemptive glory. We write to you ahead of the European Summit, 11-12 December 2008, to urge you to ensure that climate considerations are not marginalised in the search to find short and medium term solutions to immediate economic pressures.

When governments announced the EU's climate ambitions in March 2007, we welcomed the international leadership that the EU was providing, even if we felt that the emissions reductions targets were not sufficiently aligned with the prevailing scientific evidence. We also welcomed the European Commission's January 2008 climate change package as a clear signal of the EU's intent to deliver on these promises, even if we have subsequently pressed for certain elements to be strengthened.

The final legislative package to be agreed in December needs to be judged from the perspective of environmental effectiveness and the degree to which it can stimulate the innovation necessary to achieve the transition to a low carbon and sustainable economy. This transition needs to be grounded in a shared understanding of social justice and environmental integrity. This necessitates recognising explicitly the interconnection and interdependence of God's creation, demonstrated by humanity's relationship with the environment.

A successful outcome to these negotiations is a prerequisite to a robust and equitable post-2012 settlement in Copenhagen, December 2009. This is perceptible in the course of the currently ongoing COP-14 negotiations in Poznan. Through conversations with our partner churches from around the world, many of whom are experiencing the pressing realities of climate change on a daily basis, we are conscious that Europe's progress is being closely monitored. The outcome of these negotiations will be crucial if the ambitions of governments and societies such as the US, China and India are to be raised. We are concerned, therefore, that as the global climate negotiations approach a critical moment, Europe appears to be using the current financial and economic crisis to modify key elements in its own climate package.

We are worried that several governments want to increase yet further the quantity of carbon credits that they are allowed to buy from developing countries, as an alternative to making actual cuts in their own greenhouse gas emissions. We believe that these credits would only cancel out increases in EU emissions; they would not result in a net reduction in global emissions. Access to external carbon credits needs to supplement rather than supplant cuts in domestic emissions. Unless the EU can signal its intent to drastically cut its carbon emissions through purposeful domestic action, it is difficult to see how it can persuade developing and emerging economies to stabilise, and in time, reduce their own emissions.

How the European Council resolves this issue, will be seen by many as a tipping point in the EU's understanding of, and commitment to the idea of sustainable development. The challenge of

resuscitating economic growth cannot be treated in isolation from the challenges of promoting sustainable development. The choice is not between economic growth and environmental protection. The work of eco-justice (eco-logical and eco-nomic) is one work. Our economic and environmental fortunes are inextricably linked. Working sustainably for the global common good and respecting the integrity of God's creation are not alternatives -- they are one and the same. To think and act otherwise is neither 'common' nor 'good'.

We now know that global economic growth over the past 50 years has been accompanied by accelerated environmental decline and climate stress. The financial, food and fuel crisis of 2008 strongly suggest that the dominant economic models of the twentieth century have their limitations when viewed in and from a global perspective. Learning to live within our planet's means is the new challenge and we must approach it with a sense of realism, a sense of justice and a sober assessment of the legacy we are creating for our children's children.

We support the analysis underpinning the United Nations Environment Programme's Global Green New Deal initiative launched in October 2008. Re-focusing the global economy towards investments in clean technologies and natural infrastructure such as forests and soils offers the most promising options for real and sustainable growth: combating climate change and triggering an employment boom in the 21st Century. The supposition that environmental protection yields significant economic benefits, as well as ecological gains, is substantiated by Europe's own emerging green economy, which, according to the European Commission (January 2008), currently boasts a 227 billion Euro turnover with 3.4 million jobs.

The current financial crisis and economic recession represent less a threat and more a historic opportunity to bring about tomorrow's low carbon economy today. We are encouraged that US President-elect Barack Obama has responded to this challenge by pledging to invest \$75 billion to create 5 million new 'green collar' jobs by 2020 as part of a wider package of measures on climate change. Although this pledge has yet to be realised, Europe's leaders must not retreat from taking similar action.

We understand that agreement has yet to be reached as to how the substantial revenues to be accrued from the auctioning of emissions permits under a reformed Emissions Trading Scheme should be allocated or managed. The conclusion of that negotiation must enhance the EU's credibility and effectiveness. We suggest that revenues should be used to drive Europe's decarbonisation and to support mitigation and adaption measures internationally, not least in the developing world. In this respect, it is imperative that Europe's own low carbon transition empowers the development of many of the poorest countries rather than contributing to their further marginalisation.

We recognise that the challenges facing the European Summit when it meets in Brussels will be immense. Meeting the imperatives of competitiveness and climate change will require a radical change in economic modelling and in the ways in which we think of economic growth. With European public opinion consistently placing climate change at, or close to the top of its priorities, we believe that this is change that people can believe in and support. Please be assured that you and other Heads of Government will be in our thoughts and prayers at this critical juncture.

[http://www.episcopalchurch.org/81808\\_103539\\_ENG\\_HTM.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/81808_103539_ENG_HTM.htm)

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**December 12, 2008**

WCC Delegation at UN Conference Calls for Faith in the Feasibility of Climate Justice

Christian Newswire

In a statement to the plenary of high-level segment of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznań, Poland on Friday, 12 December, a delegation representing the World Council of Churches (WCC) will tell government representatives that a "much more principle-based approach is crucial for reaching an effective and equitable global climate policy regime built on the ethical imperatives of justice, equity and solidarity."

The statement, which calls for good use of the remaining small "window of opportunity" to limit the extent and prevent the most detrimental impacts of climate change on nature, societies, economies and development opportunities, will be presented by Archbishop Anders Wejryd, primate of the Church of Sweden.

Inspired by a 27-30 November Interfaith Climate Summit in Uppsala, Sweden, it will also underscore the role of faith communities promoting hope and trust in the "feasibility of climate proof, sustainable societies and lifestyles that will enhance life with dignity."

More information on the ecumenical representation in Poznań:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1722/respect-the-human-rights.html>

WCC campaign on climate change:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=3416>

Website of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznań:

[http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop\\_14/items/4481.php](http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_14/items/4481.php)

Full text of the statement:

Faith and Feasability - Responsibly searching for a "new heaven and a new earth"

Mister President,

Distinguished Participants in this United Nations Climate Conference,

Two weeks ago 29 committed leaders from all major faith traditions convened at the Uppsala Interfaith Climate Summit and signed a strong manifesto, which is brought to you as an appendix to this statement. People of different faiths give their support to change governed by justice, equity, solidarity, peace and love.

In December 2007 during our message to the plenary of the high level segment of COP13-CMP3 meeting in Bali, Indonesia, the WCC affirmed that as faith communities we are convinced a change of paradigm is needed, if the world is to adequately respond to the challenge of climate change. In February this year, the WCC Central Committee in its Minute on Global Warming and Climate Change called for "a profound change in the relationship towards nature, economic policies, consumption, production and technological patterns". It was added that societies must shift to a new vision where the operative principles are justice, equity, solidarity, human development and care for the environment. And it claimed to the world: "This far and no further: act fast and act now!"

The process towards Copenhagen, started in Bali, must strengthen the commitment of the international community to go beyond the Kyoto Protocol in order to effectively address the threat of global warming.

The journey from COP1 in Berlin in 1995 has been a long one. The WCC has been present in all the UN climate conferences around the world, expressing solidarity with victims of climate change, a.o. in African countries and Pacific Island States, who already suffer from increasing droughts, floods and the sea-level rise. We have supported them in their demand for climate justice for all.

Meeting this year in Poznań, we feel the urgency as we think we have only a small "window of opportunity" of less than 10 years in which to stabilize atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, limit atmospheric temperature rise to 2°C and at the same time prevent the most detrimental impacts on nature, societies, economies and development opportunities. But as a Christian fellowship of churches we also do this with faith, because we know the needed changes are possible and believe in the promise of "... a new heaven and a new earth..." (Book of Revelation, 21:1), where justice, equity, solidarity, peace and love will prevail. As churches, faith is the reason for us to act. We share this inspiration with other faith traditions. Thus the feasibility of adequately addressing climate change depends very much on the political will and consequent decisions this COP will make.

It is our conviction that what is needed for getting negotiations moving and people changing is a convincing argument on the feasibility of climate proof, sustainable societies and lifestyles that will enhance life with dignity. Faith communities have an important role to play.

First and foremost, ambitious politics are needed. As a fellowship of churches, representing more than 500 million people in the world, we urge State Parties and the international community to renew, strengthen and deepen their commitment regarding climate change and global warming.

Once again, we affirm the basic thrust of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol to provide an instrument for a significant reduction of greenhouse gases in order to mitigate human induced climate change. We renew our call for a prompt implementation of the obligations of the Kyoto Protocol as this will give a convincing signal that climate change and responsibilities are taken seriously.

But emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are still increasing, which continues to be a matter of alarm. We call governments to take much more radical steps in terms to cut emissions. The signatories of the Uppsala manifesto call for cuts in developed countries by at least 40 per cent by 2020 and 90 per cent by 2050 against 1990 levels. At the same time ambitious quantitative and short term goals for the use of renewable energy are needed.

The issue of adaptation still has been given insufficient attention. This may be attributed to the unwillingness of industrialized countries to accept real responsibility for climate change and to the lack of clarity about the concept of adaptation. Adaptation must be firmly based on human rights. It must include efforts to reduce people's vulnerability and strengthen their strategies to cope with a changing climate and manage and strengthen the local ecosystems that people, to greater or lesser degrees, depend on for their livelihoods. Comprehensive policies and adequate funding for adaptation programmes in countries severely affected by climate change have to be implemented.

A much more principle-based approach is crucial for reaching an effective and equitable global climate policy regime built on the ethical imperatives of justice, equity and solidarity. On a more practical level this pleads for responsibility principles like "the polluter pays", the precautionary principle, maximum risk reduction and "the polluter changes". Justice and solidarity are interpreted in terms of priority and support for the poorest and those most affected by climate change and the right to sustainable development for those living in poverty and marginalization.

Mister President, distinguished participants,

Once more, as a fellowship of churches, we appeal to you to continue the process in order to reach the unambiguous solution we are expecting. Despite the threat of climate change with a sense of wonder we look at life on planet Earth. It is a miracle and a gift! We all share the responsibility of being conscious caretakers of this home of ours. We shall be with you and have you in our prayers, as you already are in the prayers of millions of people around the world.

Act here and act now!

Thank you.

Additional information: Juan Michel,+41 22 791 6153 +41 79 507 6363 [media@wcc-coe.org](mailto:media@wcc-coe.org)

*The World Council of Churches promotes Christian unity in faith, witness and service for a just and peaceful world. An ecumenical fellowship of churches founded in 1948, today the WCC brings together 349 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other churches representing more than 560 million Christians in over 110 countries, and works cooperatively with the Roman Catholic Church. The WCC general secretary is Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, from the Methodist Church in Kenya. Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.*

<http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/316008943.html>

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**December 13, 2008**

## Big Vatican Christmas tree to be recycled into toys

Vatican City (Reuters) - The largest Christmas tree ever to be placed in St Peter's Square in Rome was lit on Saturday and Vatican officials said its wood will be recycled to make toys for needy children.

The 33-meter-high tree, which came from the forests of southern Austria, was lit at an afternoon ceremony as rain that has brought the nearby Tiber River to one of its highest levels in decades started again after a one-day break.

The Vatican said all the wood from the 120-year-old tree will be recycled to make toys for needy children and garden furniture such as benches for schools.

The decision to recycle the wood from the tree was the Vatican's latest effort to go green.

Last month it activated a large system of solar panels on the roof of its audience hall and announced an ambitious plan that could one day make it an alternative energy exporter.

(Editing by Angus MacSwan)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/environmentNews/idUSTRE4BC1EI20081213>

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**December 13, 2008**

## Green Report: Trash Talk and Fallen Forests

## Holy green plan! The Vatican gets virtuous about the environment

Zoe Cormier  
Globe and Mail, Toronto

The new array of solar panels lining the Paul VI Audience Hall (a.k.a. Nervi Hall) in the State of the Vatican City have been switched on, two months after construction began on replacing the 40-year-old roof tiles. The 2,400 panels covering 5,000 square metres will provide the hall and surrounding buildings with 300,000 kilowatt-hours a year of electricity - enough to save more than 70 tonnes of oil and 200 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions a year.

Aiming to generate 20 per cent of its energy needs from renewables by 2020 (in line with European Union targets), the Holy See may put solar panels on other buildings (although not on any significant historical sites, such as St. Peter's Basilica). Plans are under way for a solar-power plant on Vatican-owned land north of Rome, which would feed electricity into the Italian grid.

Pope Benedict XVI - dubbed by some "the green pope" - stated on World Youth Day this summer in Australia that humanity needs to stop "squandering the world's mineral and ocean resources to fuel [our]

insatiable consumption." He also has suggested that Catholics cut down on carbon use for Lent and listed "polluting the environment" among a suite of seven new "social sins."

Work has recently begun on the Vatican Climate Forest, with more than 100,000 willow, oak, poplar and fruit trees to be planted on 240 hectares of land in Hungary. The forest is intended to offset the more than 10,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide that the Vatican City emits annually - potentially making it the world's first carbon-neutral sovereign state.

Zoe Cormier is a science writer based in London. Her column on environmental news and trends appears every other week in Focus.

[http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/Page/document/v5/content/subscribe?user\\_URL=http://www.theglobeandmail.com%2Fservlet%2Fstory%2FLAC.20081213.ZOE13%2FTPStory%2F%3Fquery%3Dconstruction&ord=18267858&brand=theglobeandmail&force\\_login=true](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/Page/document/v5/content/subscribe?user_URL=http://www.theglobeandmail.com%2Fservlet%2Fstory%2FLAC.20081213.ZOE13%2FTPStory%2F%3Fquery%3Dconstruction&ord=18267858&brand=theglobeandmail&force_login=true)

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**December 16, 2008**

## India Struggles to Clean Sacred Ganges River

By Ron Corben  
Varanasi, India

India's government's efforts to clean the badly polluted Ganges River have been given a fresh impetus after the river was declared a national heritage. But a visit to the holy Hindu city of Varanasi finds there are challenges to cleaning a river that is sacred to the country's 930 million Hindus.

As the early morning sun graces the ghats, the wide concrete steps to the river's edge at Varanasi, hundreds of Hindus come to bathe. The ancient city, with its narrow cobblestone lanes, has for hundreds of years drawn the faithful to the Ganges.

More than 450 million people in five states live near the river, known as Ganga Mya or "Mother" Ganges. It runs from the Himalayas and passes through about 120 cities. Millions rely on its waters for drinking.

### **Environmental hazards abound**

But population growth and economic development take a toll on the river. Every day, 1.7 billion liters of effluent run into the river - most of it untreated. Day after day, the remains of Hindu followers are also committed to the Ganges. The World Health Organization describes the river as an "environmental hazard".

Environmental experts say each year the pollution contributes to the deaths of up to 1.5 million children under age five from dysentery and diarrhea. It raises the threat of diseases such as cholera, typhoid, guinea worm, and trachoma.

For 25 years, the Sankat Mochan Foundation environmental group has led calls for cleaning the Ganges. Veer Bhadra Mishra is president of the foundation and a Hindu priest.

"The pollution in Ganga is contributed by two sources; the point sources of pollution, that is the sewer outfalls, open drains discharging domestic sewerage and industrial pollution along the whole length of Ganga - the 2,500 kilometer length - and they contribute 95 percent of the pollution," Mishra explained. "So this has to be stopped."

### **New initiative seeks to protect river**

In November, the government declared the Ganges a national river and established the Ganga River Basin Authority to protect the river.

This new initiative comes a quarter of a century after the first "Clean Ganga Campaign" began.

The government says its plan replaces older piecemeal efforts with an integrated approach that looks at both the quantity and the quality of the water flow.

The initiative has been widely welcomed.

Supporters of one group, Palawal Jogpit, of Haridwar, led celebrations to the river at Varanasi. The group spokesman is Jaideep Aeya.

"We are giving thanks to the government of India and the religious bodies and those who work for the freedom of the Ganga," Aeya explained. "Now the government of India has considered Ganga Mya as a national river. We are giving thanks to them after 50 years Ganga is a matter of pride for all the Ganga putras."

Aeya says health concerns are at the core of the latest initiative.

"If Ganga water is free from all pollutions and the sewerage they all will be free from these diseases. And our view, the view of Puja Samiran Jay Jimarad, is, 'clean India and healthy India'," Aeya said.

### **Chronic power shortages hinder clean-up effort**

But Mishra at the Sankat Mochan Foundation has doubts. He says the initial effort to clean the river included construction of water treatment plants, but it was bedeviled by power shortages and other problems.

"Ganga Action Plan phase one has been completed - between 1986 and 1994. So the claim was that Ganga Action Plan in Varanasi was successful - that is, no sewerage flows into the river and the treated effluent is good enough to use in the agricultural fields. But this has not happened," Mishra noted.

He says the latest initiative, while attracting public and media interest, does not provide legal

force to anti-pollution efforts.

"Ganga as a national river and with this there should have been an ordinance with this announcement that the discharge of point sources in Ganga from one end to the other end must be stopped - this should not happen. That would have given us so much power and so much encouragement - that has not happened."

### **Some are unrealistic about current state of river**

Many people are not interested in scientific arguments. For them, the Ganges - the Mother River - can never be spoiled, no matter what mixes in its waters.

Larkhan is a boatman and father of two who plies the Ganges every day. For him the waters are sacred.

"This is the nature of Mother Ganga - God of the Shiva. This is the Shiva City in Varanasi," he explained. "[For] All Indian people, Ganga is very holy. I like Mother - nobody, no Indian people, feel that Ganga is dirty Ganga, really, not dirty. People take the plastic, the paper, everything and take to the Ganga but Ganga really not dirty."

As the sun sets at the end of each day, thousands gather along the Ganges to give thanks to the waters.

The rituals are key to daily life here at Varanasi. For officials the challenge lies in finding ways to cleanse the river, even as communities depend on it for water and economic growth, and as millions of the faithful come to its banks each year in the pursuit of spiritual cleansing.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-12-16-voa8.cfm>

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## **December 21, 2008**

### **Going green for Hanukkah**

Jewish communities in Southern California follow a nationwide trend among religious organizations of environmental awareness.

By Ari B. Bloomekatz  
The Los Angeles Times

Some Jewish communities throughout the Southland celebrated the first night of Hanukkah with a twist Sunday, as one group cooked a giant potato latke in a solar-paneled oven and another lit candles atop a recycled menorah -- all part of an effort to usher in an eco-friendly Festival of Lights.

"With the new president [of the United States] coming in, the whole thing is about the

environment," said Rabbi Marc Rubenstein outside Temple Isaiah of Newport Beach, where parishioners in the frontyard crowded around the solar oven that was harnessing the sun's heat to cook a potato pancake, or latke, that measured about 3 feet across.

Rubenstein said he gave a sermon to the 100-family congregation Friday night focused on the environment, with the central message that "we are our brother's keeper, and we also have to take care of the Earth."

"The whole idea of Judaism is *tikkun olam*," Rubenstein said, referring to the Hebrew phrase meaning to repair or perfect the world.

Synagogue members hoped the latke would break a record as the world's largest cooked by a solar oven.

A celebration in Riverside included a menorah made of recycled wood, succulent plants, roses and other flowers.

"We're living in a time where we recognize how important it is that we care for each other and care for this world," said Rabbi Shmuel Fuss of the city's Chabad Jewish Community Center.

"We recognize that we're in a global world," Fuss added. "This is our way of acting on it."

The events are part of a national trend of synagogues and churches going "green" for the holidays.

But it's not enough, said Rabbi Arthur Waskow of the Shalom Center in Philadelphia. He gave the collective efforts "like a D-minus," saying there is much more work to be done.

"All over the country, there are bits and pieces, here and there," Waskow said. "We find that there's beginning to be serious energy about things like using solar energy in the synagogue. But even now it's mostly symbolic."

However, "that's beginning to grow," he said.

About 2 1/2 years ago, Waskow said, his center started a program called the Green Menorah Covenant, with the ultimate aim of cutting oil consumption by seven-eighths by 2020.

The goal is symbolic of the story of Hanukkah: After the Maccabees revolted more than 2,000 years ago, they found only enough oil to last one night at the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem. But the oil lasted eight days.

"That one day's oil should serve eight days' need," Waskow said of his organization's goal.

Environmental groups have advocated for years that the winter holidays be used as an opportunity to make people mindful of waste and to promote energy conservation.

"Environmental Defense Dreams Of A Green Christmas, Chanukah & Kwanzaa" was the title of one list of tips distributed by the Environmental Defense Fund. Among the suggestions: buying a Christmas tree that can be replanted, sending holiday cards made with recycled paper and using recyclable wrapping paper.

Suzanne Jones of the company emagineGreen set up a booth in front of Temple Isaiah on Sunday and, while the latke cooked, tried to coax parishioners to purchase her eco-friendly goods.

She generally drives across the region, meeting with groups of women and coaching them about how they can conserve. In recent years, she said, she has received a growing number of calls from churches and other religious organizations.

For her own holiday presents this year, Jones said, "I'm giving everyone at least one reusable bag."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-hanukkah22-2008dec22,0,3626288.story>

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