

Environmental Guidelines for the Presbytery of Carlisle Presbytery and Its Churches

"We need ethical guidelines appropriate to this particular time of creation's decay and restoration to health...Theology is about God's action; ethics are about the faithfulness of our human involvement with God. Ethics seek to move toward greater specificity and practicality with respect to our household and work habits and our public activity of ecology and justice." (From *Keeping and Healing Creation*, a resource paper prepared by the Presbyterian Eco-justice Task Force)

God made the world good, but we are destroying its goodness. Pollution is everywhere, and *we* are doing little to clean it up or prevent it. Genesis 2 says that God put humans in the garden to till and to keep it. We have this world as a gift, and we continue to have the responsibility to develop it wisely and take good care of it. Saving the environment is not easy, but it is urgent that we work hard to preserve the earth before it is too late to save it. The mission of the church brings Christians into engagement with God in keeping and healing creation.

The abuse of nature and injustice to human beings place the future in grave jeopardy, both for natural systems and for human society. This is evident in problems that are both worldwide and local:

- **Growing world population:** Our communities can no longer expand because water, landfills and sewage systems cannot handle the strain of increased population.
- **Water and air pollution:** Streams and water supplies are threatened, our forests are affected by acid rain, monuments and buildings are being eroded, lack of adequate public transportation adds to the destruction of both air and water.
- **Global warming:** The increase of concrete and shopping malls decrease the vegetation needed to counteract damaging chemicals we place in the environment through aerosol cans, refrigeration used for air conditioning, automobiles and the making of styrofoam.
- **Destruction of rain forest and wetlands:** Our climate, our wildlife and our vegetation are directly affected by this continual destruction.

Effective response to these problems involves our own. household and work habits, and awareness of and involvement in public policy.

Is saving our environment simply a fad? On the contrary, we believe it must become a way of life, and we believe that it must be inclusive. Therefore, we recommend that Presbytery begin by acting on environmentally sound principles. If Presbytery hopes to encourage individual congregations to be accountable for their actions, then it must teach by example. What follows is a list of recommendations for Presbytery adoption in an effort to confirm its commitment to creation.

At the Presbytery level we recommend:

- that the Presbytery office and all churches hosting Presbytery meetings be asked not to use styrofoam products of any kind;

- that the Presbytery office recycle all office paper; -that Presbytery consider ways of reducing the amount of paper that is distributed at Presbytery meetings
(there is a great deal of duplicate paperwork that could be reduced with minimal efforts);
- that Presbytery see environmental education as one of its tasks, and that it find visible ways to educate our individual congregations (e.g. Carlisle Presbytery Newsletter, Presbytery Day).

At the individual church level we recommend:

- that each church examine its own lifestyle and evaluate how it impacts the environment.*
- that this study be done as an inter board, intergenerational study in order to involve the whole church in the educational process.

"We. are free to apply our ability, initiative and ingenuity to the task of keeping and healing creation. New ways to do this will open up for us, even though we know that we live with the dilemma of being stuck in old ways and structures that won't change as quickly as we would like. We are free to rejoice in small steps toward a sustainable future for all, and free to pick up and start over when our steps are blocked or when we stumble." (*Keeping and Healing the Creation*)

To lay down a law and tell each church what they can and cannot do with regard to our environment is neither possible nor desirable. Instead, we would ask that each church comply with the spirit of our request.

*Suggested Resources include:

50 Simple Things You Can Do To Save The Earth by John Javna and The Earth Works Group (Andrews and McMeel: A Universal Press Syndicate Company, New York, 1990) .

Keeping and Healing Creation, a resource paper Prepared by the Presbyterian Eco-justice Task Force, issued by the Committee on Social Witness Policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). .