



CONGREGATIONAL  
STEWARDSHIP  
WORKBOOK

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## *Stewardship of Creation*



**Congregational Stewardship  
Workbook 2000**

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# Stewardship of Creation

## Introduction

“The image of Noah brings to mind a big wooden boat with the necks of giraffes sticking out the windows. We see two-by-two zoo animals, but strangely missing are the beetles, toads and land snails. We are captives of a paper ark in a child’s world. God made it clear to Noah that He wanted each creature to be saved from extinction. So He asked Noah, at great cost of time, energy and materials to save not only himself and his family, but also the other creatures (Gen. 9:9-10).

“Questions about the significance or worthiness of each species were not raised by Noah.”

This quote by Dr. Calvin DeWitt, Professor of Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison, represents both the simplistic view of creation care many have been taught and the commitment to creation care God expected of Noah.

The media has created news and confrontation around care of God’s creation by reporting the activities of radical conservationists, often referred to as “tree huggers.” The image of Christians caring for what God has entrusted to us has been tarnished—perhaps intentionally—by such reporting.

It is time for Christian stewards to reclaim the proper relationship to the creation care Scripture teaches.

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

**Job 12:7-10**

## Notes

**Biblical foundations**

From Genesis to Revelation, the doctrine of creation weaves its way through Scripture. It is God, the creator of everything perfect in the beginning, who will recreate everything in perfection at the end.

But when sin entered into God's world, humans became the singular part of God's creation that could choose not to serve God. And in making that choice today, mankind does significant disservice to all of creation. The Bible describes the result as "creation groaning" under what mankind has done (Romans 8).

It was God Himself who entered His creation as creature in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ, the man. The relationship of creation to Creator is completed in Christ and in the covenant of God with humankind to care for creation (Col. 1:15-20).

**Use your Bible concordance to discover how many passages contain the word "creation."**

**Dominion or domination?**

In Gen. 1:28 we read the first command given to mankind: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." This first command does not have to do with mankind's relationship to God or to other humans. Rather, it addresses Adam and Eve's relationship to the earth, fish of the sea, birds of the air and all living creatures.

The Hebrew verb in 1:26 and 1:28 is *rdh*, drawn from the sphere of politics and the rule of kings over their people as kingship ought to be (Psalm 72). In passages where the same verb is used, the emphasis is on gentleness

and on active caring that results in peace, *shalom*. It is the model of God's benevolent rule over His cherished people. The Genesis verses are the only place where the verb is used to indicate rule over objects other than people.

**God helped Israel feel they were connected to the land/earth. See Genesis 23, Leviticus 25, 1 Chronicles 29.**

The creation account in Gen. 2:4b-25 takes the relationship of mankind to creation one step further. "Adam" is made from "*adamah*" (red clay). The earthling is made from the earth. The commonality of creation is further emphasized in the report that the trees and the animals are made from the same raw material as the human (Gen. 2:9, 19).

How should the earthling relate to the earth from which he came? He is put into the garden to work it (Hebrew: *abad*, "serve it") and take care of it (Gen. 2:15). This "taking care" is the same concept as the Lord's caring relationship to a city (Ps. 127:1) or to people and individuals (Ps. 121).

It is important to see the duality of God's command in the fact that it is only in being apart from nature that mankind can serve it, and only in being part of it that he has superiority over it. In dominion is stewardship.

This subduing-as-service takes on more depth in Adam's naming of the animals (Gen. 2:19). When we name something, we tend to compartmentalize it—isolate it. But naming in the Biblical sense is not "labeling," it is a

Our salvation, then, as well as all of creation's, is in Christ. As Athanasius says: "Begin, then, with the creation of the world and with God, its Maker, for the first fact that you must grasp is this: the renewal of creation has been wrought by the self-same Word who made it in the beginning. There is thus no inconsistency between creation and salvation for the One Father has employed the same Agent for both works, effecting the salvation of the world through the same Word who made it at the first. It is only in and through Jesus Christ that we can have true dominion over creation while serving it at the same time" ("On Incarnation," 26).

[illegible]

## Notes

## Where do we go from here?

With a Biblical background in place, we stand at the hub of a circle that radiates out in many directions. In a modern society, there are limits to the things we can do in serving God's creation. We must choose to do or not to do things because we have a finite amount of time and resources. Each of us can choose to go in different directions to accomplish a part of the creation care commanded by God. But in any case, choose to go! As God's stewards, the choice to do nothing is not a choice.

Because of differences in doctrine and practice, members of many Christian denominations choose to be quite intense about their choices of creation care issues. "Eco-justice," or campaigning for the rights of poor citizens in our country or in underdeveloped nations when it comes to equal access to clean water, availability of energy, etc., can become very vocal and militant. We read the accounts of conservationists who protest industrial development along rivers where there are endangered species.

The media focuses on individuals who camp out in trees or chain themselves to machinery to prevent logging. Others are involved in campaigns to remove legislators or judges from office because of their records on ecology issues.

**Scan the print media over the next two weeks and clip or copy all articles that address ecology or environmental issues. How many approach it from a radical activist view?**

These people may get action, but they make it difficult for "ordinary" Christian stewards to resolve to exercise "tender care" (*abad*) for God's creation, lest, even in their tenderness, they are labeled radical environmentalists.

Others tend to confuse respect of creation with New Age philosophy. Accusations of mother earth worship or obeisance to Gaia, the earth goddess, cause Christians to shy away from involvement in creation care. This is nothing new. This same type of idolatry was addressed by Paul in Rom. 1:25.

Yet, never fear! There are dozens of ways you and your congregation can exercise truly Biblical tender care for creation. In fact, many of the things you can do will even save or earn money for you and your congregation!

**"One of the grandest principles about the Christian walk is that our smallest efforts in being God's stewards are given increase by God. It is easy to be somewhat overwhelmed by the massive problems our mismanagement of creation has caused. Yet it does not belong to our Christian identity to become paralyzed by that knowledge. Rather, this knowledge spurs us to little deeds of creation care that add up to millions of small, yet significant, acts that restore the earth."**

**"Target Earth"—Gordon P. Aeschliman,  
President, Christian Environmental  
Association**

## Creation-careful management of church facilities

One way to begin to make a commitment to creation care is to examine how your congregation manages its own facilities. Consumption issues will be addressed in more detail later, but energy use and consumer waste are two significant causes of damage to God's creation. Both can be managed better by congregations.

In the book (now, unfortunately, out of print) *The Lord's House—A Guide to Creation Careful Management of Church Facilities*, author Frederick W. Krueger says: "The pastor may teach principles and lessons of Christian responsibility, but those who care for the buildings and grounds...have an opportunity to care for creation in a manner that allows Christian witness to go beyond words. Good stewardship of energy can serve as an introduction to the implications of Christian care for creation and provide substantial financial savings."

Hand in hand with more efficiency in the use of energy must come a reduction in consumption. Whenever efficiency improves, the human inclination is to begin to consume more at the new efficient level. Example: Since the new air conditioner is rated 15 SEER (Standard Electrical Efficiency Rating) in comparison to the old one at 9 SEER, we can now run it longer or keep the building cooler. Obviously, this type of thinking results in no improvement in energy use.

## Steps for reduction in energy consumption

Use the following lists to evaluate and prescribe changes in the congregation's energy consumption. Under each bulleted suggestion, choose one activity from the italicized list that starts you toward the goal. Then complete the checklist for that activity. Make a separate chart for each of the other activities in the list.

The appendix to this section contains information on how to obtain detailed forms for recording and evaluating data on energy consumption.



### • Appoint an energy steward

Activity \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Have done   ☐ Can do   ☐ Will do

Who will? \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_

Completed date \_\_\_\_\_

*Appoint a single person to oversee of all energy operations.*

*Set up a plan for methodical study of energy use and potential savings.*

### • Be deliberate about reducing energy consumption

Activity \_\_\_\_\_

## Notes

## Notes

☐ Have done   ☐ Can do   ☐ Will do

Who will? \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_

Completed date \_\_\_\_\_

*Use energy only when necessary.*

*Re-lamp high-usage light fixtures.*

*Reduce refrigeration use (such as refrigerated water fountains).*

*Install programmable thermostats.*

### • Conduct an energy audit of your facilities

Activity \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Have done   ☐ Can do   ☐ Will do

Who will? \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_

Completed date \_\_\_\_\_

*Review payment records for the past two years.*

*Review use patterns: Time period, amount of energy consumed by type, cost per energy unit, total cost, total consumption, total bill.*

*Record new measures taken and calculate their effect.*

*Monitor monthly.*

*Fine tune for best efficiency.*

*Ask local utility about infra-red scan to detect energy (heat) loss or intrusion.*

### • Identify the least costly energy for a task

Activity \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Have done   ☐ Can do   ☐ Will do

Who will? \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_

Completed date \_\_\_\_\_

*Examine utility-company regulations concerning commercial customers.*

*Obtain regulations on peak and off-peak energy use.*

### • Change personal habits and expectations about energy

Activity \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Have done   ☐ Can do   ☐ Will do

Who will? \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_



Completed date \_\_\_\_\_

*Dress differently to allow energy savings.*

*Use natural fabrics.*

*Use sun and shade effectively.*

*Adjust hot water temperature.*

*Change occupancy/work hours.*

*Adjust meeting times.*

*Install fans.*

*Educate people about prospective changes in building environment.*

- **Monitor building airflow**

Activity \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Have done    ☐ Can do    ☐ Will do

Who will? \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_

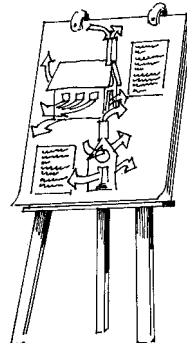
Completed date \_\_\_\_\_

*Trace air movement, leaks and intrusions with candles or incense smoke.*

Examine fireplaces, flues, exhaust vents, elevator shafts, skylights, windows, doors, grills, attic access, electrical outlets, building joints, cracks, piping entry/exit.

*Reduce moisture and study heat generated within building (ex. lamps generate heat also).*

*Reduce outdoor air-intake dampers to minimum standards.*



- **Maintain efficient cooling systems**

Activity \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Have done    ☐ Can do    ☐ Will do

Who will? \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_

Completed date \_\_\_\_\_

*Keep systems clean.*

*Adjust freon levels.*

*Study heat intrusion, not cold loss (heat moves, cold does not).*

*Document radiation heating effects of sun on brick walls, roof, siding, through windows, heat generated by light fixtures and equipment, stoves, food-warming appliances.*

*Measure and evaluate insulation values.*

## Notes

## Notes

### • Reduce energy use during peak hours

Activity \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Have done   ☐ Can do   ☐ Will do

Who will? \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_

Completed date \_\_\_\_\_

*Investigate different utility rates by time of day.*

*Re-lamp high-use lighting.*

*Install sensors for light only when people are present.*

*Install times and lighting controls (note: mechanical dimmers do not save energy).*

### • Use natural heating and cooling

Activity \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Have done   ☐ Can do   ☐ Will do

Who will? \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_

*Study sun and shade patterns for heating and cooling effects.*

*Plant deciduous trees and vegetation for cooling.*

*Install awnings or other shading devices.*

### • Change the conditions of unoccupied buildings

Activity \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Have done   ☐ Can do   ☐ Will do

Who will? \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_

*Calculate how many of the 168 hours per week various parts of the building are used and make energy adjustments.*

*Install timed or programmable thermostats.*

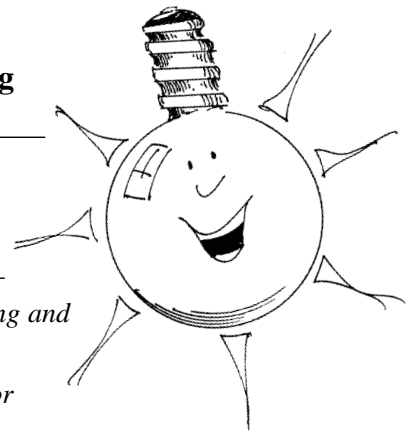
*Observe how quickly an empty building can be heated or cooled and adjust system on/off times accordingly.*

### Know your buildings

Thoroughly understand all operating systems.

### Keep and analyze your energy records

Don't repeat the past. An additional 16 pages of forms used to complete a congregation's energy audit are available online at the CSW site at <http://www.lcmsfoundation.org/stewardship>.



## Make your church a creation-awareness center

The internal changes made to effect energy savings can be publicized for members, who can take many of the same concepts and apply them at home (see “Creation care at home” below).

Other ideas for congregations that will model good stewardship of creation:

- Use natural fertilizers for church lawns.
- Use a mulching mower and compost yard waste for church flower beds.
- Use herbicides and pesticides only where necessary on the property.
- Reduce consumer waste by exploring local recycling possibilities for glass, cans, plastics and paper.
- Use recyclable or recycled products.
- Reduce the use of disposable cups and dinnerware.
- Develop a plan for sharing rides to church, Sunday school, Bible study and meetings.
- Set up a revolving fund for energy improvements funded by savings in energy use.
- Use church property for gardens, hiking, nature studies; establish nature areas.
- Explore activities of the local Soil and Water Conservation agency; distribute seedlings.
- Host a 4-H club or chapter of your state’s conservation department.
- Promote and provide access to an area outdoor education facility or camp.
- Arrange for demonstrations of various solar heating devices, both commercial and residential.
- Sponsor a community energy fair with help from local utilities and energy suppliers.
- Adopt a section of highway or a river or stream area for periodic clean-up.
- Include tips in bulletins and newsletters on creation care.
- Publish a regular list of readings from Scripture on creation and creation-care issues.
- Be a collection center for community recycling of newspaper, cans, phone books, etc.
- Organize a nature walk and devotion time for members and guests.
- Put up two bulletin boards a year with creation-care themes.
- Add a book on creation care to the church library each year (see bibliography).
- Subscribe to a magazine that promotes stewardship of creation (see bibliography).
- Invite guest Bible-study instructors who specialize in creation care.

## Notes

## Notes

- Invite members and the community to classes on Biblical foundations of creation.
- Organize a church group to spend their vacation as volunteers at a sustainable development or habitat preservation project.
- Get to know a congregation in your area that is being challenged by a toxic dump, incinerator, etc., and come alongside them to help and to learn from their experiences.
- Sponsor a showing of a video and panel discussion on a creation-care issue.
- Sponsor a missionary involved in sustainable environmental work as part of his ministry. Have him speak about it in person when on furlough.
- Hold at least one worship service each year with creation and its care as the theme (see “Rogationtide” on page 14).
- Hold at least one outdoor worship service each year.
- Have an annual retreat for staff (or the congregation) in an outdoor ministry facility or camp to explore and celebrate God’s creative work.
- Develop a sermon series on the themes raised in the biblical foundations section.
- Select and present a musical with a creation theme.
- Beautify your church’s sanctuary by adding plants.
- Start a neighborhood garden as a church outreach project.

**Exercise: Pick three to five things we can do from the list above.**

## Over-consumption—“Affluenza”

An over-arching barrier to being good stewards of creation in our society is the emphasis on consumption. The United States consumes an enormous percentage of the world’s resources to maintain our lifestyle.

*Supporting statistics: Every day Americans throw away 42 million newspapers (equivalent to 500,000 trees per week). We annually discard enough aluminum cans to replace the nation’s entire air fleet four times. The United States has 5 percent of the world’s population but consumes 30 percent of the world’s energy (From “50 Ways You Can Help Save the Planet,” by Tony Campolo and Gordon Aeschliman).*

Up through the 1950s there was an orange season, a strawberry season, a cherry season, an apple season and a grape season. Outside the few weeks or months when such produce was harvested, consumers could not buy these items. Today we can go to the supermarket and buy any kind of fruit and vegetable any time of the year. True, the broccoli in January may be three times the price of broccoli in August (because it is flown in from Australia), but it is available.

The media have made us conscious of fashion trends, consumer electronics gadgets and toys for the kids. Everyone over 16 needs a car.

*“After returning from shopping on the Mexican side of the Texas border recently, I heard a report about the average annual per capita income in Mexico. I realized that when I left to shop I had more than that amount in my pocket to spend. A whole year’s income to spend on a single shopping*

*trip! Something is wrong with this picture!”—Ronald Nelson*

Living simply has almost become a non-choice. Swept along with society’s tide, we all find ourselves as ravenous consumers.

What can we do? If stewardship is lifestyle, then gentle service to creation involves changing our lifestyle.

As with energy use, the changes can be simple. And if we put all the little changes together, they have a significant effect on God’s creation. Perhaps even more important, personal lifestyle choices and changes become part of our overall Christian witness to our belief we are to be in the Biblical servant role in relation to God’s creation.

## Try the following:

- Order the video “Affluenza” (see bibliography) and show it at a congregation meeting. Have panelists who have previewed it ready to discuss the main points and solicit reactions from the audience.
- Apply one or more of the short-term suggestions from the book “50 Ways You Can Help Save the Planet” (see bibliography) to your life.
- Hold a congregation forum on lifestyle issues, consumption, simple living, and let members suggest ways to live with less.

## Creation care at home

Many suggestions in the congregational energy-audit chart can be applied at home as well. Most will result in savings of both energy and dollars.

The “50 Ways ...” book (see bibliography) has many issues relating to the home environment.

Other ideas that can be applied to the home:

- Install an insulation blanket around the water heater.
- Wrap hot water pipes with insulating foam.
- Insulate air ducts.
- Practice environmental tithing—cut back 10 percent on energy use at home.

## Reclaiming Rogationtide

Since the introduction of the current Sunday reading system in the 1970s, the Christian church has virtually eliminated the old Latin names for Sundays of the church year. What is now the Sunday before the Ascension, numbered in some years as the fifth, and some years the sixth, “Sunday of Easter” was originally called “Rogate Sunday” in the old liturgical calendar.

Back in the 1920s and 1930s, and even into the middle of the last century, Arbor Day was a public celebration of creation care. Communities planted trees, sponsored speakers and presented pageants. Then, in the 1970s, Earth Day was initiated. This worldwide environmental emphasis day is normally celebrated in the last week of April, but, when originated, coincided with the old celebration of Rogate.

## Notes

## Notes

During the more than quarter century since its beginning, Earth Day has tended to be specifically environmental in focus. Pollution, recycling, habitat degradation and environmental justice issues have been the main themes. New Age philosophy has encroached on the creation-care issues.

One of the greatest witnesses of the church can be to reclaim Rogationtide. In the wake of corrupted thought on creation and the environment, your congregation can call attention to what it means to “have dominion over” and “serve creation” as God’s stewards.

## The history of Rogationtide

For many centuries, the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday immediately before Ascension Day have for many centuries, been associated with planting crops and praying for favorable weather and a bountiful harvest.

The observance of these days originated in a calamity occurring in the mid-fifth century: the devastation of Vienne in Gaul (France) by earthquakes, fire, rioting and looting. The Bishop of the city, Mamertus, called the people to observe a solemn fast and public supplication as atonement for their sin. The observance lasted three days and included a solemn procession with litany around the bounds of the city.

As the observance spread through the church, it developed a three-fold emphasis: (1) petition for forgiveness of sins, (2) petition for protection from calamities, and (3) petition for bountiful crops. The days became known as “rogation days” from the Latin *rogare*, to beseech, which was the first word of the Introit for the day and hence the name of what was then called the Fifth Sunday after Easter.

In England and elsewhere the emphasis of the rogation days came to focus on seedtime, planting and petition for an abundant harvest. The observance was marked by outdoor processions through fields and farms and the “beating of the bounds” of the parish boundaries with festive rejoicing. After prayers for God’s protection and favor were offered, the procession moved to the church building for the celebration of Holy Communion. The spiritual lesson of the observance of these days is that God and humanity are cooperators in the creative processes of agriculture, that tilling and care of the soil are humanity’s God-given tasks and privilege, that human life depends on God’s goodness in quickening the life-giving power in the sown seed, which results in the return to mortals of the bounty of the earth.

In recent decades the blessings of the fields, in one form or another, has been rediscovered. It has reconnected urban people with traditional rural roots. Such celebrations often took place on what the older calendars called Rogate, the Fifth Sunday after Easter (that is now accounted the Sixth Sunday of Easter).

Urban society seems far removed from the life and work of farmers, yet the themes are important nonetheless. Every human life depends on the work of farmers, and all of us depend on



## Bibliography and Reference Material

## A black and white line drawing of a stack of books and several CD-ROMs. The books are of various sizes and are stacked in a slightly irregular manner. In front of the books, there are four CD-ROMs, some showing their labels and others showing the reflective surface.

Wilkinson, Loren and Mary Ruth, *Caring for Creation in Your Own Back Yard*. Servant Publication, Ann Arbor, Mich. © 1992.

“Affluenza” © 1998. Bullfrog Films, Oley, Pa. Length: 56 minutes in two segments. With guide. Licensed copy for group showings available from LCMS Department of Stewardship, St. Louis, 1-800-325-7912.

## Notes

“The Church as a Creation Awareness Center.” Four 20-minute videos: The Biblical call to earthkeeping, how God has provided for His creation, how humans have degraded the earth, how your church can become a creation awareness center. © 1994; Audio-Visual Associates, Lake Edge Lutheran Church, 4032 Monona Drive, Madison, WI 53716.

### Supplemental Resources:

Forms for a Congregational Energy Audit. Sixteen pages to record data on energy use in the congregation. Available at the CSW Online site at <http://www.lcmsfoundation.org/stewardship>.

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) annual packet. Annual packet for Soil and Water Stewardship Week. NACD, Service Center, PO Box 855, League City, TX 77574-0855.

Evangelical Environmental Network, a clearinghouse for Christian environmental resources. 1-800-650-6600. E-mail: [een@esa-online.org](mailto:een@esa-online.org) or web site: [www.esa-online.org/een/](http://www.esa-online.org/een/)

Religious Campaign for Forest Conservation. Interesting web site with Luther quotes on environment: [www.creationethics.org](http://www.creationethics.org)