

2007 Creation Care

Presented by the Young Pietists adopted by the delegates to the 122nd Covenant Annual Meeting.

Overview

There has never been a moment in human history in which we have not been intrinsically connected to and reliant upon all of God's creation. Recently, this interconnection has received heightened publicity, political debate, and biblical/theological study as we are becoming more and more aware of our effect on the global environment. There is an urgency for improvement and change in how we practice creation-care for the air we breathe, the oceans we fish, the land we cultivate, and the water we drink so that we and the generations to come might live in sustainable and productive relationships with all of creation and fulfill our call to be good stewards. Therefore, the Young Pietists recommend that the 2007 Annual Meeting of the ECC resolves to encourage The Covenant to practice good stewardship of God's creation, and provide education and advocacy to this end.

Biblical Understanding

In Genesis we read that God created the heavens and the earth and all that fills them. God delighted in creation and called it "good." God also gave dominion over this good creation to humanity. As Christians we affirm that this world is not our possession; it belongs to God. While we have been given dominion, as stewards, we have the responsibility to discern between good dominion and bad dominion. Psalm 24:1-2 proclaims, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers."

As we continue to understand what it means to practice creation care and good dominion, we must recognize that we are the voice that speaks for creation when it is not heard, and that part of creation care is to affirm its worth and protect its beauty even beyond its usefulness for human sustenance. For we read in Psalm 19:1-4 that, "The heavens are telling the

glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words. Their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." All of God's creation reveals and worships its creator; and our stewardship is an act of glorifying God.

Thus creation's witness to the glory of God is marred by poor stewardship. Bad dominion resulting from the fall causes deprivation and suffering for all of God's creatures, including our fellow human beings. Careless dominion robs both humans and non-humans of God's promise of abundant life. Paul writes in Romans 8:21-23, "that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies." Destruction of ecosystems, extinction of species, alteration of the atmosphere, and unsustainable agriculture practices mean that all of creation, non-human and human, cry out for the redemption of God.

As Christians we await the second coming of Christ, God's final redemption, and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1). However, we do not passively await the coming kingdom of God; we actively seek it and work with God toward it during our lives on earth. We show our faith in the coming kingdom by participating in its reality now. As people who are charged by God to care for creation, we are to do so in such a way that it can continue to sustain human life and proclaim the glory of God. As people who pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," we join creation in actively preparing for the newness to come.

Declaration

This is a biblical issue, and part of the tradition of our denomination.

In a 1992 resolution on the environment, the Covenant resolved that: “this Annual Meeting call upon our denominational, conference, institutional, and local church constituencies to become more aware and involved in sound environmental practices; and be it further

“RESOLVED, that each Covenanter examine his or her personal environmental stewardship; and be it further

“RESOLVED, that this Annual Meeting commend Covenant churches and institutions that are studying and practicing environmental conservation; and be it further

“RESOLVED, that we encourage churches to teach environmental awareness from a Christian perspective.”

Our Covenant leaders have sought to fulfill this resolution in varying ways. Recently our President, Glenn Palmberg, co-authored an article entitled, “Animals and Ecosystems Deserve Protection.” The article calls for a financial commitment from the wealthiest nations to combat global warming, and for Christians to be committed to preserving species in the spirit of God’s covenant with Noah so that our practice of stewardship of creation might be “the modern-day equivalent of the ark.”

Response

As care for the creation is biblical, part of the tradition of our denomination, promoted by our current leaders, and a pressing global justice issue, we ask each Covenanter to proclaim the Christian witness of creation-care in thought, word, and deed.

To this end we encourage:

- the continued practice of recycling, and furthermore a practice of conservation and reduction of consumption.

- heightened awareness of the processing and disposal of our garbage.
- use of carpools, public transportation, and non-polluting forms of travel where available.
- advocacy for God's creation in the pulpit, workplace, local, state and national governments, as well as other social settings.
- congregational and household support and use of local, sustainable food, and products purchased at a fair and livable price.
- calling upon groups and institutions such as appropriate ECC departments and commissions, conference offices, Young Pietists, congregations, and local interest groups to develop and make available more educational resources.

May we all respond to God's call to exercise good dominion over the non-human creation with ever more urgency, stewardship, and care.