
ECO-JUSTICE

"The Earth is the Lord's and all that's in it." Psalm 24: 1

Winter 2000

Tree of Life

An Ethical Approach to Environmental Protection

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama

Peace and the survival of life on earth as we know it are threatened by human activities that lack a commitment to humanitarian values. Destruction of nature and natural resources results from ignorance, greed and lack of respect for the earth's living things.

Our ancestors viewed the earth as rich and bountiful, which it is. Many people in the past also saw nature as inexhaustibly sustainable, which we know is the case only if we care for it. It is not difficult to forgive destruction in the past that resulted from ignorance. Today, however, we have access to more information, and it is essential that we re-examine ethically what we have inherited, what we are responsible for, and what we will pass on to coming generations.

As people alive today, we must consider future generations: a clean environment is a human right like any other. It is therefore part of our responsibility towards others to ensure

continued on page 2

The Breath of God

Rev. Bob Werme

I have been learning how to breathe. Yes, that does appear in print as a puzzling notion, but I've been learning "conscious breathing" as a form of meditation. There are numerous benefits, and I would encourage anyone to work on their breathing as a way of deepening the experience of being alive.

"Breath" is the root meaning of two principle words (Hebrew, "ruach" and Greek "pneuma") which are translated in the Bible as "spirit." Of course, folks have seen the deep connection between "breath" and "life" since long before there were "religions." Until the advent of modern medical science, breath was the signal that life either was or wasn't going on in a person. Today we know that biological life cannot be measured by respiration alone, and we have artificial way to sustain breathing when other systems need repairs. When other of our systems fail, respiration alone won't return life to a body. Yet, breathing is a physical function from which all other systems derive tremendous benefit, and which, through conscious attention, can be even more beneficial.

As we've learned about all the other life-sustaining systems within the body, we've also been learning much about the many systems that sustain life within the biosphere. Breathing is the activity, which connects us most intimately with all life. There is no new air; we depend on recycling. There's a very good chance that we've all breathed in a molecule or the same air that Jesus breathed. Chinese air some day gets to be American air. If we allow the air to be degraded by industrial pollution, we are unquestionably impoverishing life for generations to come. It is a simple as

continued on page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1** Tree of Life
- 1** The Breath of God
- 2** St. Ann's of Avon Holds Creation Celebration
- 2** Traditional Navajo Prayer
- 3** Recyclable Wrapping Paper: Your Gift to the Earth
- 3** Eco-Justice to be featured on ABC Nightly News
- 4** Calendar of Events
- 4** Prayer for the Redwoods

that the world we pass on is as healthy, if not healthier, that we found it.

Many of the earth's habitats, animals, plants, insects and even micro-organisms that we know to be rare may not be known at all by future generations. We have the capability and the responsibility to act; we must do so before it is too late.

Just as we should cultivate gentle and peaceful relations with our fellow human beings, we should also extend that same kind of attitude towards the natural environment. Morally speaking, we should be concerned for our whole environment.

This, however, is not just a question of morality and ethics, but a question of our own survival. For this generation and for future generations, the environment is very important. If we exploit the environment in extreme ways, we will suffer, as will our future generations. When the environment changes, the climatic condition also changes. When the climate changes dramatically, the economy and many other things change. Our physical health will be greatly affected. Again, conservation is not merely a question of morality, but a question of our own survival.

Therefore, in order to achieve more effective environmental protection and conservation, internal balance within the human being, himself or herself, is essential. The negligence of the environment, which has resulted in great harm to the human community, resulted from our ignorance of the very special importance of the environment. We must now help people to understand the need for environmental protection. We must teach people to understand the need for environmental protection. We must teach people that conservation directly aids our survival.

If you must be selfish, then be wise and not narrow-minded in your selfishness. The key point lies in the sense of universal responsibility. That is the real source of strength, the real source of happiness. If we exploit everything available, such as trees, water and minerals, and if we don't plan for our next generation, for the future, then we're at fault, aren't we? However, if we have a genuine sense of universal responsibility as our central motivation, then our relations with the environment, and with all our neighbors, will be well balanced.

Ultimately, the decision to save the environment must come from the human heart. The key point is a call for a genuine sense of universal responsibility that is based on love, compassion and clear awareness. ♦

ST. ANN'S OF AVON HOLDS CREATION CELEBRATION

By Terri Eickel

St. Ann's Church in Avon kicked off their Jubilee of the Environment Celebration on October 15 with a workshop by Jeanie Groustein of the Archdiocese of Hartford's Environmental Committee. The workshop, entitled *Caring for Creation: Answering God's Call to be Stewards*, addressed not only the relationship of Church and the environment, but also covered local issues including trash incineration and air pollution. Groustein also discussed the health impacts of pollution, emphasizing that environmental justice is everyone's responsibility. "I was thrilled with the response from the parishioners. They were very receptive," stated Groustein.

The next portion of the Celebration took place at the Sessionswoods Wildlife Management Area on October 21. Called Parish Jubilee Day, it featured Nature Walks, a workshop on backyard habitats and a prayer service. Organizer Pat Piano commented, "Jubilee Day calls for a day of rest. We wanted to take a day to be in nature." Over one hundred people attended the activities at Sessionwoods.

The Jubilee wrapped up with a poster contest. Children in grades K-8 participated, designing posters around the theme, "Caring for Creation." Over eight hundred entries filled the halls of St. Anne's and the parishioners voted for their favorites. After one month of voting, twelve winning entries were selected and will be in St. Ann's 2001 calendar. Piano said, "We hope that the theme of Jubilee and Justice will be hanging from kitchen walls throughout the year."

For more information on Catholicism and Environment contact Jeannie Groustein at (203) 777-7279. ♦

**As I walk, as I walk
The universe is walking with me
In beauty it walks before me
In beauty it walks behind me
In beauty it walks below me
In beauty it walks above me
Beauty is on every side
As I walk, I walk with Beauty.**

-Traditional Navajo Prayer ♦

RECYCLABLE WRAPPING PAPER: YOUR GIFT TO THE EARTH

By Mindy Shilansky

Before we know it, the holidays will be upon us. Many of the holidays we celebrate include gift giving in the festivities and that means wrapping paper. Wrapping paper, unfortunately, is not recyclable nor is it often made from post-consumer recycled material. What is a concerned gift-giver to do?

Some environmentalists do sell wrapping paper made from recycled material. Most of this, however, is still not recyclable. My best suggestion, then, is to make wrapping paper at home. Craft stores sell stamps, stamp pads, paints, brushes and craft wrapping paper. I was pleasantly surprised to note that the craft paper I purchased was not only made from recycled material, it also utilized the skills of residents from a shelter for the disabled. If craft paper cannot be found, newsprint is another excellent option.

Craft paint or stamp pads? To answer this age-old question, ask yourself what kind of decoration you would like. The benefit of craft paint is that it allows you to use more than one color on a stamp and is very effective with stamps too large for stamp pads. The possibilities for multi-colored flowers, fish, etc. are endless. It does take time to dry, however, and if you have small children, smocks are recommended. Stamp pads, on the other hand, dry almost instantly and bring out terrific detail in intricate stamps. You are limited to one color per stamp, but with a few stamps and a variety of stamp pads, you can make creative and colorful paper.

As an Advent workshop or just at home, this is a great holiday activity for children. Making wrapping paper gives kids the chance not only to consider the impact of their actions, but also to give something back during the hectic season. This is a fun pastime that illustrates the importance our everyday actions on the earth. ♦

that. So, I'd like to share with you a prayer that many Christians will recognize. Based on the hymn, "Breathe on me, Breath of God," it is actually an adaptation I have made of the text written by Edwin Hatch in the mid-nineteenth century. Think about what "divine breath" means in the context of our environmental struggles.

Breathe in me, Breath of God.

Fill and focus my life in love,

And make my actions reflect my faith.

Breathe in me, Breath of God.

Stretch me, like a balloon, to the full expanse of my soul,

That I may nurture wholeness in all I do.

Breathe in me, Breath of God.

Fan the flame of compassion in my heart.

That I may exhale my life in love and service.

Breathe in me, Breath of God.

Send molecules of spirit into every cell and tissue,

Open every channel; invite every dark emotion into the radiance of respiration.

Breathe in me, Breath of God.

Relax every contracted thought; unwind every knot of fear.

Make death, like a daily cross, my companion upon the ageless journey of life.

♦

ECO-JUSTICE TO BE FEATURED ON ABC NIGHTLY NEWS

By Terri Eickel

ABC Nightly News is planning a story on religious communities and their role in protecting the environment. Set to air during the holiday season, ABC will be featuring groups from across the country. ECO-Justice has been selected for their work promoting stewardship of the earth. The two-minute spot will highlight the group's work on the Filthy Five, five fossil fuel burning power plants that do not meet modern emission standards. ECO-Justice will be sponsoring a prayer service on Sunday, December 10 at 3:00 pm in front of the Bridgeport plant. (see enclosed flyer) The thirty minute service will feature scripture and song, as well as reflections from leaders of different faiths. A camera crew will be there to record this event, as well as the Earth Prayers meeting on Monday, December 11 at 7:30 pm, First Baptist Church of West Hartford. For more information, contact Terri Eickel at (860) 286-1085 or Rev. Tom Carr at (860) 521-9460. All are welcome; come join us as we speak for justice and the earth. ♦

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DECEMBER

HARTFORD ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NETWORK

Thursday, December 7, 5:30 PM
Hispanic Health Council
175 Main Street, Hartford
(860) 548-1133

FILTHY FIVE PRAYER SERVICE – PLEASE ATTEND!!!!

Sunday, December 10, 2:00 PM

Bridgeport Power Plant

(860) 286-1085

See enclosed flyer

EARTH PRAYERS

Monday, December 11, 7:30 PM
First Baptist Church of West Hartford
90 North Main Street, West Hartford
(860) 521-9460

JANUARY

HARTFORD ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NETWORK

Thursday, January 4, 5:30 PM
Hispanic Health Council
175 Main Street, Hartford
(860) 548-1133

CALL IN DAY FOR CLEAN AIR

Wednesday, January 10 – ALL DAY
Call your legislators and ask them to
Clean Up the Filthy Five!

EARTH PRAYERS

Monday, January 8, 7:30 PM
First Baptist Church of West Hartford
90 North Main Street, West Hartford
(860) 521-9460

FEBRUARY

HARTFORD ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NETWORK

Thursday, December 7, 5:30 PM
Hispanic Health Council
175 Main Street, Hartford
(860) 548-1133

EARTH PRAYERS

Monday, February 12, 7:30 PM
First Baptist Church of West Hartford
90 North Main Street, West Hartford
(860) 521-9460

Prayer for the Redwoods

By the International Task Force to Save the Redwoods

PRO
TECT
THESE
ANCIENT TREES
FROM ALL WHO WOULD
HARM THEM. SECURE
THEM FOR OUR
CHILDREN, AND FOR THE
CHILDREN OF ALL THE CREATURES
WHO DWELL BENEATH THEIR
BRANCHES. SAVE THEM FROM OUR GREED.
SAVE THEM FROM OUR
SHORTSIGHTEDNESS.
SAVE THEM FOR THE SAKE OF
LIFE ITSELF. SAVE THEM FOR THE
REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO WALKED
AMONG THEM IN DAYS
OF YORE, AND THOSE
WHO WILL WALK AMONG
THEM IN DAYS YET TO COME. SAVE
THEM NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE GRAND, BUT
BECAUSE THEY ARE
FRAGILE. SAVE THEM FOR
THE DIGNITY OF NATURE AND THE
GLORY OF CREATION, AND FOR THE JOY OF
THE HUMAN SPIRIT. FOR THESE TREES WE PRAY, AND
BESEECH YOU, O GOD, FOR WE ARE THEIR ROOTS, AND WE
ARE SEEDLINGS AND WE ARE
THE CANOPY
THAT REACHES
TO HEAVEN; ALL
OF US, IN ONE
VOICE. ALLOW
US THIS DAY TO
FULFILL YOUR
COMMANDMENT
TO GUARD AND
PROTECT THIS,
YOUR GIFT TO
ALL HUMANKIND
THE BOUNTY OF
NATURE, AND
THESE ANCIENT
REDWOOD TREES.

