

PARTNERS

A Resource for Church Leaders from Diaconal Ministries Canada



Churches working together to restore creation

By Karen Bokma

When God created the world, He called Adam and Eve to be stewards of creation. They were called to: “Prosper! Re-produce! Fill earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1: 28, *The Message*). Adam and Eve were given the responsibility to care for His creation. As their successors, we live under that same charge of stewardship.

The earth that we live in today is very different from that of Adam and Eve. Technology has changed the world and the way we live in it. The

environment is in dire need for redemption. We live in a world where we can be overwhelmed by reports on the environment. Is there anything we can do? Will our actions really change the world? Do our doubts over the impact we can have give us a free pass to not be the stewards we were called to be?

What might happen when we combine the notion of the steward with the idea of ecumenism?

Ecumenism is defined as “a movement promoting unity among Christian churches and denominations.” Doesn’t

it make sense for us as we are asking the hard questions related to justice and the environment to explore with other brothers and sisters in Christ who we can work with towards a common goal? Doesn’t the idea of working with others make this venture seem less daunting? What if we value the resources other churches around us have so much that we are willing to combine ours with theirs in order to form something stronger for God’s kingdom? What if working together means we can care better for God’s creation?

When we assess the impact that we as individuals and communities have on God’s creation we see a cumulative effect. When we see the work that we can do in common with our brothers and sisters in Christ we can see that same cumulative effect. Letting the notion of ecumenism and community infect the work we are doing in caring for creation makes good sense. It is a wise use of God’s resources as we are being stewards of God’s creation. It is an act of working for justice and healing together. It is an act of reconciliation between our churches and the environment.

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Will our actions really change the world?



TAKE NOTE

A mini-workshop accompanies this issue of *Partners* online, providing a venue for further exploration on this topic personally and with other deacons. www.diaconalministries.com

For more information, go to:

- KAIROS (Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives) Re-Energize project challenges us to change ourselves, our communities and the world at www.re-energize.org.
- Christian Stewardship Services – Stewardship happens at many levels. Find out how CSS can help at: www.cssservices.ca.
- A Rocha (Christians in Conservation) – A Rocha works to show God’s love for all of creation. Check out <http://en.arocha.org/canada/> for educational and worship resources for your church. Contact Cindy Verbeek at cindy.verbeek@arocha.org

Working together

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It's important to ensure that we see the act of creation care and environmental stewardship as an act of justice in our churches. If justice is an act of reconciliation, then our role in the process is to bring renewal and restoration to the earth, the care with which we were entrusted in the very beginning.

If these acts of creation care are acts of justice, then there is an implication for advocacy that comes alongside. Our advocacy on behalf of creation can happen in many ways: in the simple act of recycling in our homes, in asking how we use our church buildings, or in looking at how we relate to the neighbours around our churches. It means asking what the impact of our nation's resource consumption might have on other nations. It means asking our governments to make changes and choices without adverse outcomes for the environment.

Read the other stories in this issue of *Partners* to begin/continue/renew your journey with other believers for His creation.

Karen Bokma is the Social Justice Coordinator for the CRC in Canada.



Thinking 'Green' brought them together

The Oxford County Social Justice group in Ingersoll, Ontario has always looked for ways to work with other churches on their projects and events to highlight the need for social justice.

They value and promote the experience of working with other churches as a powerful and productive way to educate about justice-related issues in their community. This has often made their gatherings a space in which learning and growing happens and unity amongst Christian churches is experienced.

When the Oxford County social justice group learned that Trinity United Church was planning to host a Green Fair—another important issue to the group—they jumped on board to support and assist with the event. A number of local businesses who are involved in “green” activities were invited to



Displays at the Green Fair are intended to increase awareness and spur action.

participate. Exhibits related to water and energy conservation, green practices and products, recycling, and gardening were some of the many displays. Workshops on a number of topics were also hosted during the Green Fair.

More than 150 people from the community attended. The experience was positive for highlighting environmental issues in the community, but also for bringing church groups together, working towards a common purpose: caring for and restoring God's creation.

Make a change for less impact (on the planet)

Make the switch to reusable shopping bags!

Plastic shopping bags are made of oil or natural gas and take between 400 to 1000 years to decompose. With Canadians using about 6 billion plastic bags a year, your switch could have a positive difference for the earth.

Switch on a new kind of light!

Compact Florescent Light bulbs (CFLs) might be a little more expensive at the offset, but estimates say that if each of the 12 million households across Canada were to replace 16 incandescent bulbs with CFLs, the annual cut in greenhouse gas emissions could be as much as 6.3 million tonnes (about the equivalent of removing 1 million cars

from the road). Make the switch now; the Canadian government hopes to ban incandescent bulbs by 2012.

Recycle and compost!

Take part in your city or town's recycling and compost program. Ensure that you are recycling as much as your area allows. Compost your household waste. This has a significant impact on the amount of garbage that reaches a landfill.

Challenge yourself!

Take the Carbon Footprint quiz at www.Re-Energize.org. Measure where you are today and pledge to lower the amount of carbon you and your family use.

www.DiaconalMinistries.com