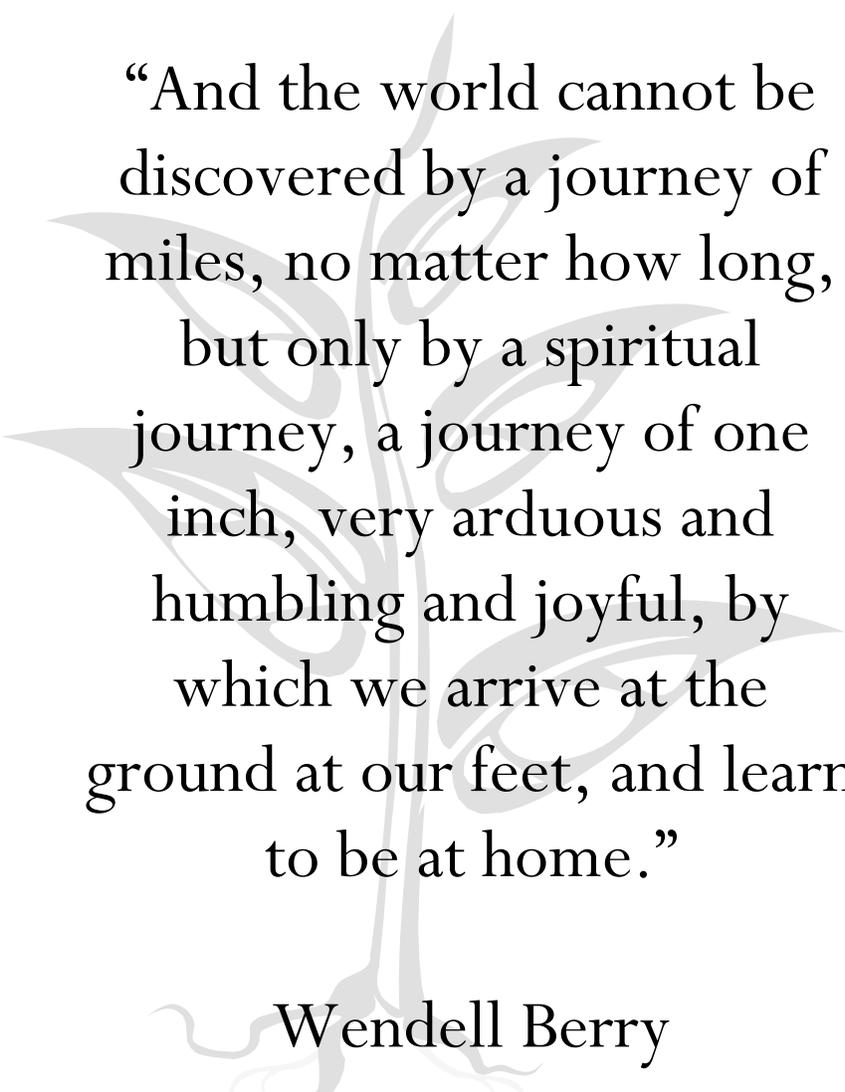


Stewardship of Creation: A Thirty Day Discipline

The Lord Reigns. . . Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy.

Psalm 96:10,12



“And the world cannot be discovered by a journey of miles, no matter how long, but only by a spiritual journey, a journey of one inch, very arduous and humbling and joyful, by which we arrive at the ground at our feet, and learn to be at home.”

Wendell Berry

Created By

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WATER

Daily Scripture:

And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:6-10

It is in hope of God's promised fulfillment that we hear the call to justice; it is in hope that we take action. When we act interdependently and in solidarity with creation, we do justice. We serve and keep the earth, trusting its bounty can be sufficient for all, and sustainable. From the ELCA Statement "Caring for Creation."

Fact:

In the lower 48 United States, 53 percent of wetlands have been lost in the last 200 years. Wetlands serve important ecological functions. They filter harmful chemicals, prevent flooding by storing water, and provide wildlife habitat.

Commitment:

Immediate- Though drinking bottled water is popular, the amount of waste generated from the disposal of plastic water bottles is astronomical! Today, purchase a reusable water bottle and commit yourself to using reusable bottles as much as possible.

Long Term- The average washing machine uses 40 gallons of water per load! Consider using a high efficiency washer, or combining laundry loads to use the washer less. Make a commitment to reduce the amount you use your washer!

Daily Prayer:

Holy God,

We, born of water and the womb, have long forgotten from where we have come. Help us to see you and ourselves in the crashing of waves, in the coolness of rain, in the sparkling blueness of our world. Amen.

<http://www.worldwatch.org/features/vsow/2005/06/07/>

<http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/homeandwork/homes/inside/appliances/washers.html>

PESTICIDE/ HORMONES/GMO'S ETC – EAT ORGANIC

Daily Scripture:

Then the Lord God formed the human from the soil of the ground and breathed breath into its nostrils the breath of life and the human became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east and there God put the human whom God had formed.

Genesis 2:7-8

Humanity is intimately related to the rest of creation. We, like other creatures, are formed from the earth. From the ELCA social statement “Caring for Creation”

Fact:

“Where once the primary public-health concern surrounding pesticides was the possibility of acute poisoning and the long-term potential for cancer, today's risk managers recognize that pesticides can also affect the nervous, endocrine, immune and reproductive systems, and that they pose heightened threats to infants, young children, the unborn, and other subpopulations that are especially susceptible to toxic pollutants.” And not just pesticides, hormones in our food and genetic engineering threaten more than just biodiversity. “Serious questions about the toxicity, allergenicity, cancer risks, and nutritional content of genetically engineered foods remain unanswered. Despite these risks, the USDA continues to approve these foods (such as milk containing a growth hormone called rBGH).

Commitment:

Immediate- Buy and eat organic foods, particularly fruits and vegetables. It tastes better, is great for your own body, and is good not only for the soil, but rural communities and for biodiversity

<http://www.ota.com/index.html>

Long term- Work to end pesticide use in your home, yard, neighborhood and congregation. Ask your local grocer to stock more organic products. Lobby for stricter standards on pesticide use, look on-line at the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides:

www.beyondpesticides.org

Daily Prayer:

Creator God, you made us out of the soil, help us to be advocates for our sibling the soil, that we honor and care for it and all that it yields. Amen.

<http://www.consumersunion.org/food/pest-fact.htm>

Cummins, Ronnie and Lilliston, Ben Genetically Engineered Food a self-defense guide for consumers (Marlowe and Company, New York 2000) 47.

WATER AVAILABILITY

Daily Scripture:

The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and all who dwell therein. For it is he who founded it upon the seas and made it firm upon the rivers of the deep.

Psalm 24:1-2

Such caring, serving, keeping, loving, and living by wisdom sum up what is meant by acting as God's stewards of the earth. God's gift of responsibility for the earth dignifies humanity without debasing the rest of creation. We depend upon God, who places us in a web of life with one another and with all creation.

From the ELCA Statement "Caring for Creation."

Fact:

Of all the water in the world, only 0.3 percent is available for human consumption. The vast majority of our planet's water is in the oceans, in the atmosphere, or frozen as glaciers. A clean, sustainable supply of water is vital for life to exist.

Commitment:

Immediate- Eat lower on the food chain, including foods that use less water. For example, it takes 16,000 liters of water to produce a kilogram of beef, but only 3,000 liters to produce a kilogram of rice, 1,350 liters for a kilogram of wheat, and 900 liters for a kilogram of corn! This week, when shopping for groceries, plan to eat at least one meat-less meal. Millions of gallons of water can be saved if we can all make this type of commitment!

Long Term- Check for leaks by stopping water usage and recording the water meter level before and after. Repair leaks immediately. A single dripping faucet can drip 2,777 gallons of water per year.

Daily Prayer:

It is through your waters, God, that we remember our baptism. As your children we pray for the creation which surrounds us, for the oceans and the rivers, for the streams and the brooks. Renew your world, and help us to be agents of that renewal. Amen.

<http://www.epa.gov/owm/water-efficiency/> <http://www.waterfootprint.org/> <http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/sc4.html>

BUY LOCAL

Daily Scripture:

You, O God, cause the grass to grow for the cattle, And the plant for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine And bread to strengthen the human heart.

Psalms 104:14-15

The principle of sustainability summons our church to support U.S. farmers who are turning to sustainable methods, and to encourage industries to produce sustainably. It summons each of us, in every aspect of our lives, to behave in ways that are consistent with the long-term sustainability of our planet.

From the ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

Food in the U.S. travels an average of 1,300 miles from farm to supermarket. Almost every state in the U.S. buys 85% of its food from someplace else. Likewise, the current trend towards large corporate farms that produce 'mono-crops' is destroying not only the environment but also the family farm and the local economy in rural areas.

Commitment:

Immediate- Find your local farmer's market. Buy fruits, vegetables and breads from local producers to support your local economy and remove the energy wasted in transporting of food products long distances. To find a market near you, look on the web at Farmer's Market Online: www.farmersmarketonline.com. Or to find a local food cooperative, in any of the 50 states use the US Food Co-op directory www.purefood.org/coopindex.htm

Long term- Join a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), by buying a share in a local farm, you are able to get a weekly supply of seasonal vegetables, support the long term sustainability of a local farmer and perhaps even get a chance to dig in the dirt yourself! CSA information can be found online at: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa/>

Daily Prayer:

God of the harvest, your earth brings forth harvest in due season. help us, in our eating, to honor the earth, the farmers and our bodies. Amen.

LOWER ON THE FOOD CHAIN

Daily Scripture:

The Lord said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day."

Exodus 16:4

The land and its inhabitants are often disenfranchised by the rich and powerful. The degradation of the environment occurs where people have little or no voice in decisions because of racial, gender, or economic discrimination. This degradation aggravates their situation and swells the numbers of those trapped in urban or rural poverty. From the ELCA social statement, "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

It takes 12 pounds of grain to produce one pound of hamburger. This could make 8 loaves of bread, or 24 plates of spaghetti. Cattle consume 70% of all U.S. grain.

It takes 2,500 gallons of water to produce one pound of hamburger. This could be used to grow more than 50 pounds of fruits and vegetables. Half of all water consumed in the United States is used to grow feed and provide drinking water for cattle and other livestock.

In addition, wastes from factory farms, for hogs, chicken and cattle emit high levels of ammonia into the air and waste from the animals puts dangerous levels of nitrogen into ground water.

Commitment:

Immediate- Cut out a portion of meat in your diet, either eating vegetarian for one day a week, or consider eating lower on the food chain throughout the week (limiting or fully excluding foods from animals- meat, dairy and eggs).

Long-term- Become vegan, in eating and lifestyle! Work to limit the power and influence of large-scale factory farms. Educate yourself on the mass production of meats in this country (check out www.themeatrix.com). Support local farmers and legislation that supports them. For further information look at <http://www.farmaid.org>

Daily Prayer:

God of provision, you gave to your people manna and quail in the wilderness. Help us not to be greedy with our hoarding of resources, the excess of our eating and the destruction of environment. Amen

Presbyterian Hunger Program Website, <http://www.pcusa.org/hunger/food/>
<http://www.sierraclub.com/factoryfarms/factsheets/air.asp>

WATER

Daily Scripture:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22: 1-2

By faith we understand God to be deeply, mysteriously, and unceasingly involved in what happens in all creation. God showers care upon sparrows and lilies (Mat 6:26-30), and brings “rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life” (Job 38:26). From the ELCA Statement “Caring for Creation.”

Fact:

It takes 2.5 billion gallons of water to support 4.7 million people, calculated at the minimum water use requirement recognized by the United Nations. However, this same amount—2.5 billion gallons per day—is the amount of water used to irrigate the world’s golf courses!

Commitment:

Immediate- When brushing your teeth and washing your face today, turn off the faucet! Gallons of water can be saved if we take the time to conserve the water we aren’t using while brushing our teeth! Commit yourself to turning off the faucet as much as possible.

Long Term- Lawns can waste incredible amounts of water. Consider watering your lawn as little as possible, if at all. If you must water your lawn, water only at dawn or at dusk to prevent extra evaporation. Consider using a rainwater collection system to water plants and trees in the future.

Daily Prayer:

God, your voice echoes over the waters. Allow us to appreciate and treasure the resources you have created. Our thirst is only for you, teach us to see your world as you see it. Amen.

<http://www.worldwatch.org/pubs/mag/2004/172/mos/>

PAPER

Daily Scripture:

Sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel.

Isaiah 44:23

The earth is a planet of beauty and abundance; the earth system is wonderfully intricate and incredibly complex. But today living creatures, and the air, soil, and water that support them, face unprecedented threats. Many threats are global; most stem directly from human activity. Our current practices may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner we know. From the ELCA Statement “Caring for Creation.”

Fact:

In our offices we use approximately 7 million tons of paper, or 1.4 trillion sheets of paper. For every ton of new paper that we consume we use 24 more trees, 7,000 more gallons of water, 4,100 more kilowatts of energy than to produce a ton of recycled paper. We also release an additional 60 pounds of pollutants into the atmosphere!

Commitment:

Immediate- Instead of using paper or plastic bags when shopping this week, begin using cloth bags- they are an easy way to reduce the amount of paper and plastic in our landfills!

Long Term-Go through your wastebasket after one day of use. How much paper have you thrown away that could have been recycled? How many paper products have you used that could have been replaced by re-usable products? Commit yourself to reducing the amount of paper in your wastebasket. Commit yourself to using both sides of paper, making recycling stations available in all areas of your church or office (including classrooms!), shred and recycle your classified documents, and refrain from using brightly colored paper which is more toxic.

Daily Prayer:

God, it is only you who can bring forth beauty out of nothingness. Help us to touch and taste, see and hear the beauty of your created world. Amen.

Center for New American Dream. “Responsible Purchasing Guide.”

HUNGER

Daily Scripture:

Jesus preached, “For I was hungry and you gave me food....[A]s you did it to one of the least of these you did it to me”

Matthew 25:35, 40

We recognize many forces that run counter to sufficiency. We often seek personal fulfillment in acquisition. We anchor our political and economic structures in greed and unequal distribution of goods and services. Predictably, many are left without resources for a decent and dignified life. From the ELCA social statement, “Caring for Creation”

Fact:

According to United Nations statistics, approximately 800 million people, out of a global population of six billion are either malnourished or on the verge of starvation. According to the UN the fundamental cause of world hunger is not a shortage of food in the world—in fact, there are immense surpluses, but rather that these 800 million hungry people are too poor to produce or buy the food that they need. Today the world produces more food per inhabitant than at any time in human history. The real causes of hunger are poverty, inequality and lack of access to food.

Commitment:

Immediate- When preparing, ordering and buying food, serve and take only what you and your household can eat. Try not to throw anything away.

Long-term- Educate yourself about the multiple ways that hunger is impacted by environmental degradation, unequal distribution of resources, war, and foreign debt (and your own dietary choices). Look to Bread for the World (www.bread.org). Donate a portion of your own food budget to support world hunger organizations. Host a monthly hunger meal with your church or family by eating a sparse and simple meal and donating the money to a hunger organization. (Perhaps the World Hunger Appeal at the ELCA). Work with national and international organizations (like Bread for the World) to advocate for debt relief, ending of farm subsidies and other political processes to work toward an end of hunger in the world.

Daily Prayer:

Loving God, who cares for the poor and hungry, help us to be generous with our abundance, to work for the fair distribution of food and a deep commitment to care for the hungry ones, the hungry ones with whom you abide. Amen.

Altieri, Miguel, and Peter Rosset, “Ten Reasons why biotechnology will not ensure food security, protect the environment and reduce poverty in the developing world” Food First/Institute for food and Development (October 1999)

A DIET OF SUSTAINABILITY

Daily Scripture:

“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the good will of all the people.” (Acts 2 43-47).

We pray, therefore, for the strength to change our personal and public lives, to the end that there may be enough. From the ELCA social statement “Caring for Creation”

Fact:

In the year 2000, each person in the United States threw away approximately 4.5 pounds of waste each day, totaling 231.9 million tons of municipal solid waste.

Food scraps accounted for 11.2% of that landfill waste, amounting to 25.9 million tons of food waste produced in the U.S. in 2000.

Commitment:

Immediate- Reduce the amount of processed foods that you eat. Try to cook from scratch, paying attention to the foods you eat, where they come from and how they taste. It takes more time to cook from scratch but is healthier, better for the environment and immensely more fun. (Also look to limit heavily packaged foods.)

Long term- Plan with members of your community times to share in sustainable community meals. Enjoy these opportunities to take time to prepare and enjoy the fruits of the earth with others. Perhaps you can use some wonderful recipes from around the world (the book “More with-Less Cookbook” is great for this!) Make eating something intentional and prayerful instead of fast and disembodied. Enjoy your food!

Daily Prayer:

Gracious God, we pray the words of Wendell Berry,

“I have taken in the light that quickened eye and leaf. May my brain be bright with praise of what I eat, in the brief blaze of motion and thought. May I be worthy of my meat.” And grain, and vegetables and fruit, and chocolate. Amen.

<http://learn.islandwood.org/wade/facts/usfacts.htm>

Wendell Berry, “Prayer, After Eating” in *Collected Poems, 1957-1982*, North Point Press, 1985.

PAPER

Daily Scripture:

He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'

Mark 4:30-32

Creation must be given voice, present generations and those to come. We must listen to the people who fish the sea, harvest the forest, till the soil, and mine the earth, as well as to those who advance the conservation, protection, and preservation of the environment. From the ELCA Statement "Caring for Creation."

Fact:

Since 1980, paper consumption has increased 74 percent. In 1999, in the US alone, each citizen used an average of 784 pounds of paper.

Commitment:

Immediate- Reduce, Reduce, Reduce! Consider how you can reduce the amount of paper communication in your life. Can you write emails instead of paper memos/letters? Can you read newspapers and magazines online? Today, commit yourself to reducing the amount of paper you consume!

Long Term- Visit www.fscus.org for a list of suppliers in your area of recycled non-chlorine paper. Refuse to use paper that does not meet the environmental standards of the Federal Stewardship Council. Additionally, visit <http://www.oldgrowthfree.com/suppliers.php3> for a list of kenaf and hemp paper suppliers in your area. Explore using these alternative papers to replace your previous paper consumption.

Daily Prayer:

God of green, open our ears to hear the cries of the forest. Open our lips to praise you in the joy of our creation. Open our eyes to see the wonders of the Earth. Open our hearts and stir us to action, strengthen our resolve and empower us to stand in love for creation. Amen.

Center for New American Dream. "Responsible Purchasing Guide."

JUNK MAIL

Daily Scripture:

Say among the nations, 'The LORD is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity.' Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.

(Psalm 96:10-13)

We see the despoiling of the environment as nothing less than the degradation of God's gracious gift of creation. From the ELCA Statement "Caring for Creation."

Fact:

Junk mail is one of the leading contributors to our over consumption of paper. It would take 340,000 garbage trucks to haul all of the un-recycled junk-mail to US Landfills and incinerators every year!

Commitment:

Immediate- Remove yourself from unwanted junk mail lists! Visit <http://www.newdream.org/junkmail/index.php> to fill out a simple form that can be mailed in to take you off general junk mail lists. Encourage friends and neighbors to similarly remove themselves from these lists.

Long Term- Join a political action campaign to call companies to reduce the amount of unnecessary paper sent to consumers. Write a letter to your congressperson or state representative encouraging them to support the environment. Visit www.ourforests.org for more advocacy ideas!

Daily Prayer:

God of forests and trees, how quickly we forget to see your face in the world you have created. Turn our hearts that we might see you more fully in the beauty of our world. Amen.

<http://www.newdream.org/Junkmail/facts.php>

LIGHTBULBS

Daily Scripture:

‘You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Parent in heaven.’

Matthew 5:14-15

We challenge ourselves, particularly the economically secure, to tithe environmentally. Tithers would reduce their burden on the earth's bounty by producing ten percent less in waste, consuming ten percent less in nonrenewable resources, and contributing the savings to earthcare efforts. Environmental tithing also entails giving time to learn about environmental problems and to work with others toward solutions. From the ELCA social statement “Caring for Creation”

Fact:

Replacing a single incandescent bulb with a compact fluorescent lightbulb (CFL) will keep a half-ton of CO₂ out of the atmosphere over the life of the bulb. If everyone in the U.S. used energy-efficient lighting, we could retire 90 average size power plants. Saving electricity reduces CO₂ emissions, sulfur oxide and high-level nuclear waste.

Commitment:

Immediate- Replace your regular incandescent light bulb with a compact fluorescent. They can screw into regular sockets and cast great light. Another benefit along with the environmental benefits is that the bulbs last a long time (up to 10 years or more) so you can save some of your own work as well. You can find these heavenly bulbs in your local home store or hardware store.

Long term- Watch how you use lights in your house. Turn off lights when you are not in rooms or at home. Look to ways where you can do a full retrofit of the lighting in your home, congregation or business both to save money on energy, but also to save energy and thus the environment.

Daily Prayer:

Lord of Light, you have called us to be light for the world. Help us to be lights for the created world, to use light and energy responsibly and to use our resources carefully and wisely. Amen.

http://eartheasy.com/live_energyeff_lighting.htm http://www.nesea.org/publications/NESun/lighting_three.html

HEAT

Daily Scripture:

Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace to be heated up seven times more than was customary, and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire.

Daniel 3:19-20

In our ministry, we learn about the extent of the environmental crisis, its complexities, and the suffering it entails. Meeting the needs of today's generations for food, clothing, and shelter requires a sound environment. Action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children's children. From the ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

42 percent of an average family's energy bills is spent to keep homes at a comfortable temperature. A two-degree adjustment to your thermostat setting (lower in winter, higher in summer) can lower energy bills by four percent and prevent 500 pounds of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere each year.

Commitment:

Immediate- Knock it down a few degrees. By reducing the temperature just a few degrees or raising it while using air conditioning, you can save a great deal of energy and money. Wear a sweater and grab a blanket and you can save even more. Turn off the air conditioning while you are away and in the middle of the night. Keep the heat at the lowest state to prevent broken water pipes during low active times.

Long term- Check out where you are losing heat or coolness. If you have leaking windows or doors, insulate them or think about getting energy efficient windows. Close off some parts of your house during winter or summer. If you are building a house, church or office think of energy efficiency in the design of your building. Consider contributing to a energy fund in your community to help lower-income neighbors pay the high cost of energy and energy efficient home improvements.

Daily Prayer:

Loving God, you surround us with the warmth of your love and the refreshing breeze in the summer. Give to us wisdom in our homes and hearths, that as we care for our own bodies and households, we also care for the earth. Amen.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/kids/energyfacts/saving/efficiency/savingenergy.html>

FORESTS

Daily Scripture:

Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

(Genesis 1:11-12)

According to Gen 2:15, our role within creation is to serve and to keep God's garden, the earth. "To serve," often translated "to till," invites us again to envision ourselves as servants, while "to keep" invites us to take care of the earth as God keeps and cares for us (Num 6:24-26). From the ELCA Statement "Caring for Creation."

Fact:

Over the last twenty years alone, 300 million hectares of forests have been cleared. Currently we have only half of the forests that existed when agriculture began 11,000 years ago!

Commitment:

Immediate- When purchasing paper products for your home this week, make sure to purchase products that are labeled recycled, and made of post-consumer waste. Shop around, there are many possibilities! Make sure to put these items on your list every time you shop.

Long Term- Explore implementing "paper guidelines" in your home or office. Some examples of these guidelines can be found in the environmental audit at www.webofcreation.org. Implement these guidelines and post them in all common areas in your church, office, or home.

Daily Prayer:

Creator God, It is you who drew the first seedlings out of the Earth. Inspire in us a love for the forests and lands you have created, that we would be good stewards of the vastness of your creation. Amen.

Orcutt, Andrea Lynn. *Restoring the Earth: Creating a New Religious Movement*. (Unpublished manuscript) 76.

PLANTS INSIDE

Daily Scripture:

Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Genesis 1:11-13

Humanity is intimately related to the rest of creation. We, like other creatures, are formed from the earth (Gen 2:7, 9, 19). Scripture speaks of humanity's kinship with other creatures (Job 38-39; Pss 104). God cares faithfully for us, and together we join in singing the "hymn of all creation" (Lutheran Book of Worship, page 61; Pss 148). We look forward to a redemption that includes all creation (Eph 1:10). From the ELCA social statement, "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

Indoor plants help reduce 'sick building syndrome'. Research has been conducted by NASA into the presence of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) in offices. Carpets, upholstery, copier machines and cleaning products emit VOCs. NASA's research recommended that the inclusion of indoor plants in the office environment would reduce substantially the amount of VOCs that employees are daily exposed to. The direct benefits of indoor plants to the air we breathe are twofold: Pollutants are filtered from indoor air; and oxygen is released and humidity levels are reduced.

Commitment:

Immediate- Bring into your home or office a small plant to add to your table or bookshelf.

Long-term- Add more and more plants. Consider planting an indoor herb garden. Share your plants with others. Learn the species of your plants and where they are from, name them! Consider getting a potted Christmas tree to plant each year.

Daily Prayer:

Loving Creator, all your creation is beautiful, help us to make the areas around our homes to bear witness to your stunning world that it might create a space of welcome and support of the whole environment. Amen.

<http://www.zone10.com/tech/NASA/Fyh.htm>

DISHES LAUNDRY AND OTHER APPLIANCES

Daily Scripture:

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

Revelation 22:14

Even more widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [is] the depletion of the protective ozone layer, resulting from the use of volatile compounds containing chlorine and bromine; and dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide. From the ELCA social statement, "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

Appliances account for about 20 percent of a typical household's energy use, with refrigerators, dishwashers, clothes washers and dryers at the top of the list. A load of dishes cleaned in a dishwasher requires 37 percent less water than washing dishes by hand. But if you fill the wash and rinse basins instead of letting the water run, you'll use half as much water.

Commitment:

Immediate- Wash dishes by hand. Use the energy efficiency setting on the dishwasher. On warm sunny days do not use the dryer, hang them outside! Up to 90 percent of the cost of washing clothes comes from heating the water, so use hot water only for very dirty clothes, and always use cold water in the rinse cycle. A dirty lint screen can cause your dryer to use up to 30 percent more energy. Keep your freezer and refrigerator full it helps keep the temperature down.

Long-term- Get an energy efficient appliance. If looking for new household products, look for ones that have earned the ENERGY STAR. They meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the EPA and US Department of Energy. Look online at their website it has calculators and tools for estimating savings as well as invaluable advice [http:// www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)

Daily Prayer:

Gracious God, you are our source of energy and life. Give us guidance in our use of energy and wisdom in our care for ourselves and our world. Amen.

www.eia.doe.gov/kids/energyfacts/saving/efficiency/savingenergy.html

www.consumerenergycenter.org/homeandwork/homes/inside/appliances/tips.html

WATER HEATERS

Daily Scripture:

As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.

Genesis 8:22

In a world of finite resources, for all to have enough means that those with more than enough will have to change their patterns of acquisition and consumption. Sufficiency charges us to work with each other and the environment to meet needs without causing undue burdens elsewhere. From the ELCA social statement, "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

Just by using the "off the shelf" energy-efficient technologies available today, we could cut the cost of heating, cooling, and lighting our homes and workplaces by up to 80%.

Commitment:

Immediate- Take shorter showers. Don't let the water run when you are washing the dishes. Check out the water heater in your home. Set your water heater to 120° F, which will produce plenty of hot water and still save energy. Wrap your water heater with a water heater blanket, especially if it's in an unheated area of your home. The blanket could save you up to 10 percent on water heating costs. (Some newer models are so well insulated that you don't need to wrap them. Check first to see if adding an insulating blanket to your water heater will affect the warranty.) Conserve hot water by installing water-saving showerheads.

Long term - high-efficiency water heaters (in this area one can also purchase what are called "instantaneous" or "tankless" water heaters—and they can reduce energy consumption up to 20%. Even better, install a solar water heater to reduce energy use and cut down on pollution.

Daily Prayer:

Holy God, with the waters of baptism you have claimed us as your children. Give us the commitment, as we heat the water that washes us, to use energy and your precious water as you would have us. Amen.

U.S. Department of Energy and Maryland Energy Administration

LAWN

Daily Scripture:

Who has cut a channel for the torrents of rain, and a way for the thunderbolt, to bring rain on a land where no one lives on the desert, which is empty of human life, to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground put forth grass?

Job 38:25-27

By faith we understand God to be deeply, mysteriously, and unceasingly involved in what happens in all creation. God showers care upon sparrows and lilies (Mat 6:26-30), and brings "rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life" (Job 38:26). From the ELCA social statement, "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

The insecticide diazinon, used in homes and on lawns and gardens, is one of the most frequently found pesticides in air, rain and fog. In one study, researchers estimated that after 2,4-D lawn application, indoor exposure levels for young children were ten times greater than before the applications—and that exposure levels from contact with exposed floors and tabletops were up to 30 times greater than dietary exposure levels.

Commitment:

Immediate- If you must have grass- water less and only in the early morning or late afternoon to save water. Refuse to use chemical pesticides. (Let it grow!)

Long-term- Think about eco-landscaping, using native plants in your garden. Depending on where you are in the country, maybe a rock garden with some cactus would be better, or a lawn of prairie grasses. For more information look online at: <http://www.ecolandscaping.org/>

Daily Prayer:

Loving Creator, all your creation is beautiful, help us to make the areas around our homes to bear witness to your stunning world that it might create a space of welcome and support of the whole environment. Amen.

Environmental Protection Agency, 2000
Environmental Health Perspectives, 2001, vol. 109, no. 11

BATTERIES

Daily Scripture:

When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

Psalm 104:29-30

God blesses the world and sees it as "good," even before humankind comes on the scene. All creation, not just humankind, is viewed as "very good" in God's eyes (Gen 1:31). God continues to bless the world: "When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground" (Ps 104:30). From the ELCA social statement, "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

Though batteries generally make up less than one percent of municipal solid waste they account for a disproportionate amount of the toxic heavy metals. Ni-cad batteries and small sealed lead-acid batteries accounted for 75 percent of the cadmium and 65 percent of the lead found in landfills in 1995.

Commitment:

Immediate- Buy rechargeable batteries. Recycle the ones you must dispose.

Long-term- Recycle the batteries you have, along with other hazardous waste around your home. Also, recycle or donate your cell phones. Wireless batteries and technology are becoming a huge waste problem! Advocate for drop off points in your school, church and community center, for more, look online at: <http://www.rbrc.org/call2recycle/>

Daily Prayer:

Good God, in our busy and moving culture, we use so many batteries. Help us to be mindful of the waste they carry in them that we might work to limit the toxicity that enters the earth. Amen.

Environmental Protection Agency, Enforcement Alert, March 2002, EPA 300-N-02-002

ALTERNATIVE RESOURCES

Daily Scripture:

God understands the way to it, and God knows its place. For God looks to the ends of the earth, and sees everything under the heavens. When God gave to the wind its power, and apportioned out the waters by measure; when God made a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunderbolt; then God saw it and declared it; God established it, and searched it out.

Job 28:23-27

This church will engage in dialogue with corporations on how to promote justice for creation. We will converse with business leadership regarding the health of workers, consumers, and the environment. We will invite the insights and concerns of business leadership regarding responsible environmental actions. We will urge businesses to implement comprehensive environmental principles. From the ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

The wind in North Dakota alone could provide about 1/3 of U.S. electricity. Additionally, about 20% of U.S. energy demand could be provided at an *economical* price by wind power.

Commitment:

Immediate- In certain states, for a nominal fee you can request that your electricity provider ensure that your energy come from renewable resources. Look online at:

<http://www.epa.gov/greenpower/index.htm>

Long term- Look into solar, geothermic, wind (turbine) energy for your home, congregation or institution. Advocate for the alternative energy use in your city, county and state. One faith based resource is The Regeneration Project at: <http://www.theregenerationproject.org/>

Daily Prayer:

Holy God, you are known in the wind, in the water, in the brightness of the sun. Help us to responsibly use all your power to be the energy which powers our lives. Amen.

Solar Energy International – www.solarenergy.org

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Daily Scripture:

Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Philippians 2.4

We celebrate the vision of hope and justice for creation, and dedicate ourselves anew. We will act out of the conviction that, as the Holy Spirit renews our minds and hearts, we also must reform our habits and social structures. From the ELCA social statement “Caring for Creation”

Fact:

Today nearly 92 percent of downtown Tokyo travelers commute by rail, and the Japanese do only 55 percent of their traveling by car. West Europeans now use public transit for 10 percent of all urban trips, and Canadians for 7 percent, compared with Americans at only 2 percent.

Commitment:

Immediate- Take the bus, train or other public transportation as you travel. In Chicago, plan your trip on CTA’s website at [http:// www.transitchicago.com/](http://www.transitchicago.com/)

Long term- Advocate for affordable public transit within your city or region, particularly in cities with inadequate transit. Contact your city governments and other legislators to work for public transit. Look online at the American Public Transportation Association <http://www.apta.com/>

Daily Prayer:

Gracious God, in our privilege and selfish actions we seek to avoid others and move on our own way, alone and independent. Not only do we hurt ourselves in this, but also we hurt others and your creation. We commit ourselves to service to the earth and joint travels with your people. Amen.

Worldwatch Institute, Special Focus: The Consumer Society, January 2004, ISBN: 0-393-32539-3

PESTS

Daily Scripture:

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.

Psalm 24:1-2

We see the despoiling of the environment as nothing less than the degradation of God's gracious gift of creation. Scripture witnesses to God as creator of the earth and all that dwells therein (Pss 24:1). The creeds, which guide our reading of Scripture, proclaim God the Father of Jesus Christ as "maker of heaven and earth," Jesus Christ as the one "through [whom] all things were made," and the Holy Spirit as "the Lord, the giver of life" (Nicene Creed). From the ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

The majority of Americans have common pesticides in their bodies. Studies have found a breakdown product of the roach, termite and flea insecticide chlorpyrifos in the urine of 92 percent of the children and 82 percent of the adults evaluated. Children who have been exposed to household insecticides and professional extermination methods within the home are three to seven times more likely to develop non-Hodgkin's lymphoma compared with children who have not been exposed to pesticides.

Commitment:

Immediate- Stop using chemical pesticides and insecticides in your home! Don't call the exterminator. Try traps instead, or look to boric acid which is odorless. Look online at: http://www.eco-pestcontrol.com/category_repellents.shtml

Long term- If you need to do something, contact a eco-exterminator, or make sure to talk with your neighbors, and remove children and pets from the area. Advocate for safer policies, other neighborhood problems that lead to pests and work with your community to become pest-free.

Daily Prayer:

Holy God, as the Egyptians experienced the curse of pests, so to do we experience pests in our homes. Help us to remove them safely for ourselves and your environment. Amen.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1999

CANCER, an international publication of the American Cancer Society, Dec. 1, 2000

CLEANING PRODUCTS

Daily Scripture:

When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

Psalm 104:29-30

God blesses the world and sees it as "good," even before humankind comes on the scene. All creation, not just humankind, is viewed as "very good" in God's eyes (Gen 1:31). God continues to bless the world: "When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground" (Pss 104:30). From the ELCA social statement, "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

It is estimated that people flush 12 billion pounds of traditional household cleaning products down the drain each year. These chemicals, such as sodium acid oxalate, break down slowly in the environment, cause water pollution, and are stored in the fatty tissue of wildlife.

Commitment:

Immediate- Make your own multi-purpose cleaning solution. Mix 2 Tbsp baking soda with 1 pint warm water. Add into a spray bottle with a splash of vinegar to cut grease.

Long term- Purchase earth and people-friendly cleaning products for your home. Advocate for its use in schools, churches and other public space. Look for them at your neighborhood store. If they don't have them, ask for them, and continue to ask. Or look online at Seventh Generation <http://www.seventhgeneration.com>. Earth Friendly Products <http://www.ecos.com>

Daily Prayer:

Gracious God, we have been blessed with a place to live and a home to care for, give us wisdom to keep our homes safe, clean and hospitable to all your creation. Amen.

"Household Hazardous Products." *Health Goods*. 2006 <http://www.healthgoods.com> (23 January 2006).
Jane Goodall Institute

YOU'VE GOT FEET, USE 'EM!

Daily Scripture:

You must walk the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you are to possess.

Deuteronomy 5.33

Human behavior may change through economic incentive, guilt about the past, or fear about the future. But as people of biblical faith, who live together in trust and hope, our primary motivation is the call to be God's. From the ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

Worldwide, bicycles outnumber automobiles almost 2 to 1, but of all the trips taken in the U.S. just 0.6 percent are made by bicycle.

Commitment:

Immediate- Walk to the grocery store and for your errands. Take the stairs. Buy a bike and ride it work. Use the energy of your own body to get around. The key here is not to drive! You might meet a new neighbor or catch the smell of a pine tree.

Long term- Advocate for safe and accessible bicycle lanes, ask your workplace for bike racks, showers and other opportunities to make commuting by bike easier.

(<http://www.bikeleague.org>) Work to make sidewalks safe and useable. Advocate for less sprawl so that it would be easier and more possible to walk and bike.

(<http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/>)

Daily Prayer:

Gracious God, you have created our bodies, and with creation, we are good. Help us to use these wonderfully crafted vessels to move through this world, so that we might work in partnership with creation and connect with our neighbors.

Northwest Environment Watch, John Ryan, "Small Wonders: Everyday Things for a Healthier Planet," 1999

REDUCE GAS MILEAGE

Daily Scripture:

The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants, for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt, therefore the inhabitants of the earth dwindled, and few people are left.

Isaiah 24. 5-6

As members of this church, we commit ourselves to personal life styles that contribute to the health of the environment. Many organizations provide materials to guide us in examining possibilities and making changes appropriate to our circumstances. From the ELCA social statement, "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

If fuel economy were improved by 5 m.p.g., American consumers would save 1.5 million barrels of oil per day, more than half of what the U.S. imports from the Middle East. Henry Ford's world-changing Model T got about 25 miles to a gallon of gas. In 2002, all of Ford's total fleet averaged 24.3 miles per gallon, while the entire fleet of American-made cars averaged 24.6 miles per gallon.

Commitment:

Immediate- There are simple things you can do to improve your gas mileage. Keep your car tuned up and your tires properly inflated. Keeping your highway speed at 55 mph can improve you gas mileage by as much as 25%, compared to 75 mph.

Long-term- Buy a hybrid or a car with low emission. (See www.fueleconomy.gov to make side-by-side comparisons of any model). This is not only good for the environment but it puts money into the development of efficient engines. Work to advocate for tougher standards in m.p.g. and tailpipe emission.

Daily Prayer:

Holy God, thank you for your many resources of your creation. Help us to use them wisely and carefully that we might not waste what we have extracted from your creation. Amen.

Environmental Defense, Carbon Emissions Fact Sheet, July 2002

www.environmentaldefense.org/documents/2209_CarEmissionsFactSheet.pdf

National Resource Defense Council, OnEarth Magazine, "Detroit Is Still Stuck in Reverse," Erik Ness, Winter 2005

<http://www.nrdc.org/onearth/05win/detroit1.asp>

WORK FOR PEACE

Daily Scripture:

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 11:6-9

We pray, therefore, that our church may be a place where differing groups can be brought together, tough issues considered, and a common good pursued. From the ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

While war has a obvious and devastating impact on humanity, it also is one of the great causes of environmental devastation. One study of tank tracks in the Arizona desert suggested full recovery of the soil only after 1,000 years. The Mesopotamian Marshes between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers have experienced decades of war. Since 1991, his wetland, once larger than the Florida Everglades, having been drenched in bombs, napalm, spilled oil and depleted uranium, has gone from 15,000 square kilometers (5,800 square miles) to just 50 square kilometers (20 square miles).

Commitment:

Immediate- Pray for peace and work for it in your daily living and engagement with others.

Long term- Write letters. Learn more on the intersection of environment and war.

Daily Prayer:

God of Peace, we come in great sorrow for the impact of war on all your creatures. We pray for the human loss, and for the environmental loss of war. Help us to stand up against the machine of war that all your creation may flourish. Amen.

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/05/0521_030521_iraqbirds.html

PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY- NATIONAL/GLOBAL

Daily Scripture:

For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. They acted shamefully, they committed abomination; yet they were not ashamed, they did not know how to blush. Therefore, they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the LORD.

Jeremiah 6:13-15

We will support those designated by this church to advocate at state, national, and international levels. We will stand with those among us whose personal struggles for justice put them in lonely and vulnerable positions. From the ELCA social statement, "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

A recent survey conducted by McCormick Tribune Foundation showed that while 52 percent of Americans can name at least two characters of the Simpsons TV cartoon family, only 28 percent are able to name more than one of the five fundamental freedoms granted to them by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Commitment:

Immediate- Educate yourself. Learn about what is happening in Congress and in your state. Look online at some environmental advocacy groups for this information, a list with links can be found at: <http://www.webofcreation.org/PublicMinAdvocacy/Advocacy%20Resources.dwt>

Long term- Write letters, make phone calls. Become an activist. Visit your representative and join others at Faith Based Advocacy Days at Capitol Hill once a year- www.advocacydays.org

Daily Prayer:

Holy God, we are thankful for the ways in which our system allows the voices of many people to be heard. Give us the will to use our voices, to be informed and advocate for what we believe with those who are powerful, that the powerless, people and creation, might have abundant life. Amen.

http://www.mccormicktribune.org/mccormickmuseum/pdf/Survey_Results_Report.pdf

TO WHOM DO YOU GIVE MONEY?

Daily Scripture:

Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your towns; the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake.

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

We challenge ourselves, particularly the economically secure, to tithe environmentally. Tithers would reduce their burden on the earth's bounty by producing ten percent less in waste, consuming ten percent less in nonrenewable resources, and contributing the savings to earth care efforts. Environmental tithing also entails giving time to learn about environmental problems and to work with others toward solutions. From the ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

Through donations, the ecology fund has planted over 17,000 trees and saved over 41,000 acres of wilderness space. Local organizations, like Chicago's Faith in Place, an interfaith organizing organization, receive grants but support most of their work through donations.

www.faithinplace.org

Commitment:

Immediate- Donate a small amount online to an environmental organization. It's quick and easy. For one that supports your favorite issues, look at <http://www.webofcreation.org/Links/index.htm>

Long term- Think about the ways in which you can tithe in various ways. What are some organizations that you can support with your tithe? What is something you are passionate about that you would spend your time, along with your money, on the issue? Use your money to support lobbyist and public policy organization who are working with our government.

Daily Prayer:

Gracious God, you have blessed us with so much. Help us to give back our many blessings for the good of all your creation. Amen.

http://www.ecologyfund.com/ecology/totals_home.html

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTING

Daily Scripture:

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Acts 4:32, 35

Advocacy on behalf of creation is most compelling when done by informed individuals or local groups. We will encourage their communication with governments and private entities, attendance at public hearings, selective buying and investing, and voting. From the ELCA social statement "Caring for Creation"

Fact:

SRI expands the traditional investment decision-making process by adding social and environmental standards to the mix of considerations. Assets in socially screened investment portfolios under professional management topped the US\$2 trillion mark for the first time ever in 2001. Those companies with negative environmental standards and/or which are subject to environmental controversy are increasingly being dropped from SRI portfolios.

Commitment:

Immediate- Invest locally. Shop at a local store. Use your local bank.

Long term- If you are investing or are interesting in investing, consider socially responsible investments. With this priority, you can use your mutual funds and other stock investments to support companies that align with your own ethical values, rather than companies that are doing opposite your ethical and environmental commitments. This can also move towards the movement in corporations to taking seriously social issues in their organizations. For more information look online at the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility www.iccr.org, or at www.socialfunds.com

Daily Prayer:

Gracious God, in our seeking to further our own wealth, help us to do so in mindfulness of all your people and all creation. Give us courage to let our investment speak our faith. Amen.

<http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/usa/press/reports/kimberly-clark-investing.pdf> This article highlights the way in which socially investors can create change in transnational corporate policy.

PUBLIC ADVOCACY AND POLICY, LOCALLY

Daily Scripture:

God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8

It is in hope of God's promised fulfillment that we hear the call to justice; it is in hope that we take action. When we act interdependently and in solidarity with creation, we do justice. We serve and keep the earth, trusting its bounty can be sufficient for all, and sustainable. From the ELCA social statement, "Caring for Creation"

Commitment:

Immediate- Vote, even for local elections. Ask you neighbors about the ecological history of your neighborhood or bioregion. In these conversations, learn what environmental justice concerns are important for your community.

Long-term- Find out who your representatives are in your local government.

<http://www.statelocalgov.net>. Now that you know that, give them a call and see what they think about environmental policies. Begin to have conversations about what your community needs to be more sustainable and safer for all creatures. Take this to your government and use your vote. Put your community organizing practices to work, [http:// www.elca.org/organizing/](http://www.elca.org/organizing/)

Daily Prayer:

Gracious God, we are thankful for this place which you have placed us our neighborhood and city. Help us to be mindful of the ways in which our political and organizing voice can influence our government. Give us courage and hope. Amen.