Environmentalism

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Our planet is changing due to human causes we learned from previous classes.
How we can use this crisis toward Christian conversion of others.
Steps we all can take to help reduce our impact.
What we as a Church should be pursuing with our general assembly.
Ecological Relationship

- Referencing Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si*
  - Spiritual sickness produces environmental sickness.
  - Environmental destruction degrades humanity.
  - Our throwaway culture discards persons as well as things.
  - The worst impacts of climate change will be felt by poor countries and poor peoples.
Society engaged in the religion of Consumerism creates the throw away society.

Consumerism restricts a person’s acceptance of responsibility toward anything outside the self.

- Lessened concern with others’ economic needs, justice
- Lessened concern with the environment

Source: “Shopping for Meaningful Lives” by: Dr. Bruce Rittenhouse
Worshipping a False God?

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment.

- Matthew 22:37-38 (NRSV)

A “god” is . . . that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. . . . Anything on which your heart relies and depends . . . is really your God.

- Martin Luther, Large Catechism

Who is our societal God?
Man’s nature . . . Is a perpetual factory of idols. . . . Man’s mind, full as it is of pride and boldness, dares to imagine a god according to its own capacity.

- John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

What are “we” as a culture worshipping ahead of the one true God?
Consumerism (a form of idolatry) preempts and subverts a true encounter with God through distraction from the human situation and empty promises of meaning. - Dr. Bruce Rittenhouse

No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

- Matthew 6:24 (NRSV)
Christian Conversion

A recognition of this idolatry can lead members of society to Christian Conversion.

Recognizing the importance of others and the needs of the less fortunate.

Recognizing the self living for the sake of selfish desires is destructive both spiritually and ecologically.
Christian Conversion

- Throw away culture / disposable lifestyles, ultimately disregards humans, namely the poorest amongst us.

- How do we change the culture toward spiritual healing?
  - Provide people with a new meaning for their lives secured in Christ.

- If degrading environment degrades humanity, how do we transform culture toward building the environment and building humanity?
Focusing on the Environment and the truth of the Christian message as a church can bring others to Christian Conversion

If the culture were entirely Christian would these problems go away?
- Self identified Christians seem largely unaware of their own idolatry.
  - Materialism, Consumerism, & Greed worship a god ahead of true God.
- False teachers and leaders leading to a false Christian identified solution not recognizing their own sin?
  - Prosperity Gospel as Self Centered Greed leading to environmental destruction.

Self identified Christians, need to recognize our sin(s).
Looking at ourselves

- Recognizing our own sin(s).
- Live more conscientiously in Christ.
- How can we begin to change.
  - Electricity
  - Transportation
  - Water Usage
  - Garbage
  - Household Products
  - Diet
  - Politics
Electrical Consumption

- Change energy source.
- ComEd allows consumers to choose energy providers.
- Choose 100% Green Energy as a provider.
  - Offsets Green House Gases by Wind Turbine energy
  - Promotes more Wind Turbine production
    - Ethical Energy will give donation to Sierra Club just for signing up.
Change your light bulbs.

Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) last 10 times longer than a standard incandescent bulb and use at least two-thirds less energy.

Light-Emitting Diode (LED) Bulbs last 50 times longer than a standard bulb and uses $\frac{1}{6}$th the energy.

LED bulbs are the way to go!
When shopping for new appliances or even home electronics, look for higher efficient rated products, which at a minimum have met EPA and U.S. Department of Energy guidelines for energy efficiency.

As of December 2013, ENERGY STAR had helped families and businesses to save an estimated $295 billion on utility bills and prevented more than 2.1 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions from being released over the past two decades [source: ENERGY STAR].
Electrical Consumption

- Reduce consumption.
- Turn off lights, computers, televisions, and fans when not in direct use.
- Unplug or Turn off Power Strips when electronics are not in use. Prevents power from being drawn by electronics that appear off.
- Turn the thermostat up in the summer to use less air conditioning and use more fans for direct cooling.
Electrical Consumption

 Install Solar Panels
    Expensive but return on investment is better today than it has ever been.
    Sell back unused electricity to Com Ed for credit on your bill
    Produces energy when it's needed most in summer time peak hours.

 Any other ideas?
Transportation

Leave your car at home. If you can stay off the road just two days a week, you'll reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 1,590 pounds per year [source: EPA].

Walk or Bike for nearby activities or errands.
Walk or Bike to Church.
Transportation

- Combine your errands -- hit the post office, grocery store and hardware store in one trip. It will save you gas and time.

- Public Transportation for commuting into the city.
  - Use the train from La Grange or Brookfield.

- Carpool to work, train station, shopping and/or church.
Transportation: Cars

- Buy energy efficient vehicles.
  - Diesel technology for a lot highway miles
- Buy Hybrid Cars
  - All major car companies are currently selling hybrid cars.
  - Most Popular Toyota Prius (I average over 45 mpg city)
  - Plug in Hybrids are the most efficient type of hybrid
    - Chevy Volt, Prius Plug-In
- Buy Electric Cars for maximum energy efficiency
  - Nissan Leaf most affordable
  - Tesla most technically advanced
    - helps promote & improve technology
Transportation Cars

- Maintain your car so it runs more efficiently and lasts longer.
  - Go to Jiffy Lube in Melrose Park exclusively :)

- Inflate Tires Properly
  - Underinflated tires decrease fuel economy by up to 3% and lead to increased pollution and higher greenhouse gas emissions
  - Under inflation also increases tire wear, so it will save you money in the long run.
Transportation Cars

- Drive smarter. Slow down -- driving 60 miles per hour instead of 70 mph on the highway will save you up 4 miles per gallon.
  [Source: Consumer Guide Automotive].
- Accelerating and braking too hard reduces your fuel economy, so take it easy on the brakes and gas pedal.
  This will also help your car parts last longer especially your brakes and transmission.
- Understand concepts behind Hyper-Miling.
Pay attention to how you use water.

The little things can make a big difference. Every time you turn off the water while you're brushing your teeth, you're doing something good.

Try drinking filtered tap water instead of bottled water, so you aren't wasting all that packaging as well. Use a refillable bottle.

Using Bottled water is VERY wasteful practice.

- C0₂ emissions for creating bottle and transporting
- Plastics are not biodegradable
- Oil and chemicals used in creating plastic
Showering using less water.

- Get Wet
- Shut off shower
- Lather Up from Head to Toes
- Rinse
- Shut off Shower
- This process will save both water and the natural gas needed to heat hot water.
Water

- Got a leaky toilet? You might be wasting 200 gallons of water a day [source: EPA].

- Buy water saving toilets that use 1.5 gallons or less per flush.

- Wash your clothes in cold water when you can (saves energy not water) and use environmentally friendly detergents.
Water

Water your lawn at night or early in the morning to maximize water getting to the roots by minimizing evaporation.

Landscape with native plants that require less watering.

Other Ideas?
Thinking more about what we waste helps to protect the environment by saving energy, reducing pollution, cutting costs and preserving our natural resources.

Look at packaging. Are products being over packaged?
Recycle! (As much as possible)

- You can help reduce pollution just by putting that soda can in a different bin.
- If you're trying to choose between two products, pick the one with the least packaging.
- If 7,000 office workers recycled all of its office paper waste for a year, it would be the equivalent of taking almost 400 cars off the road [source: EPA].
Compost!

Unwanted or leftover food such as tea bags and potato peelings can be added straight to a compost heap.

Insects and worms help break down food and plant matter and make it into a great natural fertilizer.

Reducing the amount of solid waste you produce in a year means taking up less space in landfills.

Many local councils now include compostable waste in their recycling collections.
Donate or Give away your unwanted stuff instead of throwing them out.

- Clothes
- Shoes
- Appliances
- Sports Gear
- Anything you may think another person may want or need.
Garbage

- Carry your own bags for Groceries.
  - Store bags in your car
  - Use the stores cardboard boxes and recycle
  - Don’t accept plastic or paper; use neither

- Any Other Thoughts?
Energy Efficiency Home

- Make sure your home is properly insulated and sealed.
  - Make your home more energy efficient (and save money).
- Get a programmable thermostat so you aren't wasting energy when you are not home.
  - When you go to bed, reduce the thermostat setting -- you won't miss those extra degrees of heat (or air conditioning) while you're asleep.
- Frequently change your air filters so your AC system doesn't have to work overtime and prevent heat exchanger problems.
Energy Efficiency Home

- Natural Gas is a clean burning carbon fuel but still produces CO₂’s when burned.
- Buy Highly Efficient
  - Central A/C units, Water Heaters and Furnaces.
- Use less hot water, when doing laundry or showering.
- Use a programmable thermostat
- During winter bundle up inside and under a warm comforter or two.
Some chemicals like phosphorus cleans great but creates problems when discarded.
Try using environmentally friendly cleaning products. They are widely available.
Avoid using toxic chemicals around the house when possible.
Household Chemicals

- Vinegar is acidic and works great at cutting through organic items like foods, also good for windows.
- Baking Soda is alkaline and works great with tough scrubbing jobs like stove tops.
Diet and your Carbon Footprint

- Buy Locally Grown Foods
  - Less Transport = Less Green House Gasses
- Eat LESS Meat. (Healthier for you too.)
  - Meat production can carry a heavy carbon load.
    - Lamb, Beef and Pork carry a very large carbon footprint.
    - Locally raised Grass Fed Beef and Bison carry a very low carbon footprint.
  - Locally farmed Chicken and Fish carry lower carbon footprints, yet higher than Grass Fed Beef.
- Lentils and Legumes (Beans) are the best source of protein when considering carbon footprint.
- Vegetarians have the lowest Carbon Footprint on average.
As a Consumer

Tell Friends what practices, products or companies are the best choices from the environmental standpoint.

Avoid buying from companies who don’t care.

Tell friends about companies you think are the least environmental in policies and practices, so they too can avoid their products.
Our own personal purity is irrelevant since we are nevertheless sinners dependent on the grace of God. Love of neighbor should consider only the most effective way to serve the neighbor’s good given one’s limited time and resources, and not worry about one’s moral standing. -- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*.

Private virtue in the absence of global political action will not make a big difference to the global problem.
Political Action!

- Cap and Trade
- Emissions Trading
- Carbon Tax
A central authority (usually a governmental body) sets a limit or *cap* on the amount of a pollutant that may be emitted.

The limit or cap is allocated and/or sold by the central authority to firms in the form of emissions permits which represent the right to emit or discharge a specific volume of the specified pollutant.

Unused permits can be traded into a secondary market.

- Efficient firms can make money by trading away permits
- Inefficient firms would buy permits to maintain production
Such a measures would levy a simple per-ton tax on the carbon content of fossil fuels at the wellhead, mine head, or dock. Inevitably, fossil fuel companies would add the amount of the tax to the cost of the fuel they sell, raising the price of these fuels, along with the downstream prices of a broad array of products and services that currently depend on fossil fuels. Giving a fair expense for using these fuels.

To cope with higher prices, companies that use fossil fuels would compete to become more energy efficient and change energy sources from carbon fuels to renewables.
We as a Church should encourage our representatives to push forward on Carbon Tax and Cap and Trade initiatives.

Carbon Tax would be more effective

Cap and Trade probably more politically feasible.
Other Initiatives

- Minimum efficiency standards
  - vehicles
  - appliances
- Subsidies
  - renewable energy investments
  - low emission technologies
- Research investment in renewables
  - energy storage
  - energy efficiency
Global Treaties

If the USA implemented such plans on its own there would be a large global benefit, however, this is a global problem requiring agreements amongst nations.

Treaty negotiations on environmental problems need to be encouraged
Is it by spiritual conversion we make this happen?

Encouraging participation by inviting people toward helping finding meaning in Christ in an effort to achieve such lofty goals.

By teaching how spiritual understanding leads to the recognition of sin and the practices of environmental destruction harshly affecting the least amongst us.

How we treat the least amongst shows us something of about our understanding of Christ. Therefore, the way we treat our environment shows us the same.
As a Church Spiritual Conversion should be our focus as a first step toward environmental and global healing.

In so doing we need to recognizing our own idolatrous behavior and convert ourselves as we work to convert others.

- We are all sinners needing of God’s grace.
- But doesn’t mean we carry no responsibility for others or future generations.
We as a Church need to recognize our broken relationship with our environment.

This is an opportunity for our Church to bringing others to Christian Conversion.

We should consider steps we can take toward improving our personal relationship.

We as a Church should support national and global initiatives to help bring real change with our environmental relationships, both ecologically and with the poorest inhabitants of our planet.
Appreciation?

If you feel it in your heart to help promote more informational projects like this.

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