

**Cathedral Church of St. Paul
2 Cherry Street
Burlington, VT 05401**

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Adopted by the Vestry on November 10, 2004

Preamble

Christians believe that God created the universe and confirmed its goodness. In the first creation account (Genesis 1) God created humanity, male and female, in God's image and gave it a special role in the care of the creation. The second account (Genesis 2) emphasizes companionship: the humans' companionship with God; their companionship with the animals; and with each other. These sacred stories tell us who we are and what our human vocation is.

The second story also tells of our disobedience. Thus, these stories portray both human creativity in partnership with God and also our propensity to damage and destroy what God has given us.

Job's story reminds us (in Chapter 38) that we humans must maintain humility in relation to God and God's creation and that we are not and will never be in charge of Earth. "The Earth is the Lord's and all that dwells in it" (Ps 24:1).

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan urges us to care for our neighbors. In the light of our current environmental crisis we must now extend that care to our non human neighbors as well.

Christians have to take a large share of responsibility for the degradation of creation. Our understanding of God's mandate in Genesis for humans to exercise "dominion" over creation has given tacit approval for the exploitation of the natural world. We have failed to honor our intimate relationship with the Earth which is our home and also our partnership with God to care for creation. The predominately Christian Western nations have taken more than their share of Earth's bounty for their use, ignoring the needs of future generations. Admitting our guilt, we pray to God in the eucharist, "But we turned against you, and betrayed your trust; and we turned against one another" (Book of Common Prayer, Eucharistic Prayer C).

The Christian understanding of repentance includes a change of direction, and so we now witness, on the part of the faith community, to restore a gentler, more cooperative relationship with Earth, recognizing it as God's creation, beautiful and valuable in its own right and not just as a resource for human consumption. We celebrate God's glory in the richness and diversity of creation. We honor all the elements of it as worthy of respect and praise. We will no longer look upon Earth, its plants, animals, air and water, as objects for human use only but will recognize them as beloved by God and worthy of our attention and care.

We commend the Province I Bishops Pastoral Letter "To Serve Christ in All Creation" (February 2003). Individually and as a faith community we seek conversion of life as we strive to undertake a more enlightened and responsible role in caring for God's creation.

Policy

We the Vestry of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul commit ourselves and the people of St. Paul's:

- To act together to honor the goodness and sacredness of God's creation;
- To acknowledge the urgency of the planetary crisis in which we now find ourselves;
- To pray and take action, both within our parish and in the greater communities of Burlington, Vermont, and the world, to restore a right relationship between humankind and creation;
- To educate ourselves about the natural world and the threats to it;
- To lift up prayers in personal and public worship for environmental justice, human rights, and sustainable development;
- To seek simplicity of life while becoming aware of our greed and waste in our lives;
- To commit ourselves to energy conservation and the use of clean, renewable sources of energy;
- To reduce, reuse, and recycle, and as far as possible to buy products from recycled materials;
- To realize that, through participation in community, public policy, and business decision-making, we have corporate as well as individual opportunities to practice environmental stewardship and justice;
- To seek to understand and uproot the political, social and economic causes of environmental abuse;
- To learn from other faith communities, particularly those in which nature is paramount and is respected as the source of divinity and life.
- And in order to support these commitments, we will establish and sustain a process and structure to inform and keep ourselves accountable for environmental stewardship.

Guidelines for Action

I. PARISH ADMINISTRATION: In preparation for providing education and advocacy in the greater community, we will put our own house in order by examining, and where needed improving, our own environmental stewardship.

II. EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY: Within the parish and in the greater community, we will work to raise up consciousness about nature and environmental stewardship, and will work with others to improve our stewardship of nature.

III. PARISH LIFE: We will strive to bring a greater understanding of the importance of the natural world and its stewardship into our worship and fellowship.

IV: ACCOUNTABILITY: We will regularly audit our progress in complying with our Environmental Policy.

Draft sources: Preamble written by Nancy Bloomer, St. Paul's Environment Task Force (September 2004). Policy adapted from the Province I Bishops' Pastoral Letter: "To Serve Christ in all Creation" (February 2003).