

DYNAMIC Steward

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April-June, 2013

Stewards of the Earth

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*Our Dominion
God's Domain*

DYNAMIC Steward



My all in response to God's all!

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The articles in this publication have been revised slightly or updated to conform to the intended audience and nature of the *Dynamic Steward*.

inside ds

The Bible is clear. Our origin began in what might be called a garden-sanctuary. In both Genesis 1 and 2 we find God at the center and with Him came life. With the entrance of sin came the attempt to move God from the center and that began a degradation of all that He had created. Today that attempt continues. The footprints of this cosmic battle can be seen and the results of this struggle have a definite impact upon our role as stewards of the earth.

Entwined in our relationship with the Creator is both the privilege and an accountability of our stewardship for all of God's creation. From the very beginning we see God's hand transforming chaos into His designed purposes. Never was there any intention for man to be at war with nature or for beasts to ravage the earth. The formless mass had become an earth filled with harmony among all creation but this did not last. Sin changed God's original design but not His purpose. Unfortunately with the entrance of sin man moved himself into the center and the Giver of Life was moved to the sidelines.

That first question, "Where are you?," was not a question of God's bewilderment in trying to locate Adam and Eve. It was a question about their relationship with Him as their creator and sustainer. The once peaceful harmony was being displaced. And so it was and now is. But God did not leave it there. He placed man in the earth, now tarnished with the effects of sin, to continue as His stewards. An appointed role given to us at the very beginning was that of being "stewards of the earth." And yet, even that would not be sufficient. The Creator Himself would return to the earth where He had once walked with Adam and Eve. He would provide the means for the needed "recreation" by giving Himself for the restoration of His original design. So it is with a sense of sacred awe that we step back and allow God back into the center of His own creation. As His stewards, our respect for all life is inherent in our vocation. Our testimony is clear: "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Ps. 139:4).

Throughout this issue of the *Dynamic Steward*, we will explore the footprints of God's activity and our vocation as stewards of His earth. We believe that you will be enlightened, inspired and challenged by each author as we become sensitized to our unique role as stewards of God's earth.



Larry R. Evans
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Editor



resources

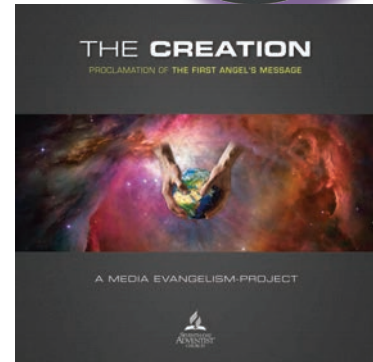
Elder Ted N. C. Wilson, President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, says, "I am delighted to introduce *The Creation Project*, a wonderful program and powerful tool for evangelistic outreach....Many people have already been blessed through *The Creation Project* and we hope that this project will be a blessing of the evangelistic outreach for every church around the world where possible....The program can be adapted as needed for various localities....[it] is a tremendous tool that fits well with our "Tell the World" initiative and presents a powerful opportunity for "Mission to the Cities.""

The Creation Project is part of a worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church initiative striving to place our belief in the Biblical account of creation in the spotlight. We believe God set apart the seventh-day Sabbath as a permanent and constant reminder of His creative power. Therefore, we cannot adequately share our faith without emphasizing a literal account of creation.

Adventist scientists, filmmakers, artists and theologians worked together over several years to assemble this unique resource. We believe *The Creation Project* underscores the vital role creation plays in our faith and we pray that this exhibit will bring a blessing to your ministry and reinvigorate your outreach efforts.

Components of *The Creation Project* include a scientific lecture; the movie, materials for a creation expo; a children's program and the follow up program.

The Creation Project, an initiative of the General Conference Communication Department. Contact: Creationinfo@gc.adventist.org.



As science and the scientific method dominate public opinion, the minority with a different worldview are often treated with contempt. Seventh-day Adventists, former Adventists and many others with Evangelical roots have shifted their attitudes toward the biblical teaching on a literal six-day Creation. Theistic evolution is accepted as they bow to the perceived weight of scientific evidence against the literal, biblical 6-day Creation.

In The Beginning provides a sound, intelligent, reasoned basis for continuing belief in the creatorship of God. Especially in the light of its end-time proclamation it is important for the Adventist church to speak with one voice on origins.

In The Beginning's credibility lies in no small way in the scholarship, reputations and integrity of the book's contributors. This book is an important contribution to the creation/evolution debate and to the defense of the biblical view of origins.

In The Beginning, edited by Bryan W. Ball. Pacific Press Publishing Association. <http://www.pacificpress.com>.



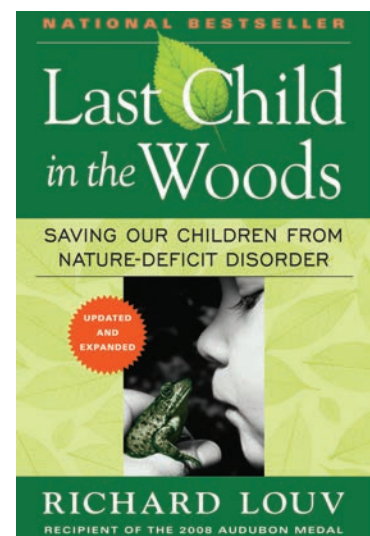
In this influential work about the staggering divide between children and the outdoors, child advocacy expert, Richard Louv, directly links the lack of nature in the lives of today's generation—he calls it nature-deficit—to some of the most disturbing childhood trends, such as the rise in obesity, attention disorders, and depression.

Last Child in the Woods is the first book to bring together a new body of research indicating that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development and for the physical and emotional health of children and adults. Louv offers practical solutions and simple ways to heal the broken bond—many in our own backyard.

This new edition reflects the enormous changes that have taken place since the book was originally published. It includes: 100 actions you can take to create change in your community, school, and family; 35 discussion points to inspire people of all ages to talk about the importance of nature in their lives and a new progress report by the author about the growing *Leave No Child Inside* movement.

Last Child in the Woods has spurred a dialogue among educators, health professionals, parents, developers and conservationists, and it will change the way you think about the future and your children.

Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder, by Richard Louv. Workman Publishing Co., Inc. <http://richardlouv.com/books>.



The content or opinions expressed, implied or included in or with these resources are solely those of the authors and not those of the publishers of the Dynamic Steward. The publishers do however, advocate these resources on the basis of their rich contributions to the area of stewardship ministry, and assume that readers will apply their own critical evaluations as they make use of them.

concept

"And God saw that it was good"



Erika F. Puni
*Director,
GC Stewardship Ministries*

In the beginning God made everything beautiful. The universe, the earth, the trees and animals of all sizes and colors including birds and butterflies were wonderfully made. Of this creation, the Bible declares that, "God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:4,10).

David, the psalmist, who experienced the awe of the majesty and glory of God in nature testified of this reality in the following way:

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a

tent for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat" (Psalm 19:1-6; *NIV*).

While it is true that God's creation in our world today is marred and affected by sin, the fact is that nature still speaks of the wisdom and power of God as Creator. It is a statement of fact that nature, with all of its unique design, was created for the glory of the Maker and for our enjoyment. In this sense, we see an expression of God's love and care in the natural environment that surrounds us daily. This is a general revelation of God. It makes the statement that He is both Creator and Owner of everything.

Volcanoes and Vegetation are Good

In a visit to Iceland for the Trans-European Advisory for treasurers, stewardship ministries and trust services directors in 2012, my spirit was moved as I looked out on the vast open spaces and contrasting landscapes displaying fresh remains of volcanic activity. In fact, there were still tremors and small earthquakes being registered many miles below ground while we were there. Even today the possibility of future volcanic eruptions is very real. And yet, above ground on this active volcanic landmass, one can see green ground cover spotted with colorful wild flowers, gentle thermal streams, snow and ice, and picturesque waterfalls. In many ways, I felt as if I were experiencing, first hand, the creative acts of God. These were the expressions of God's mind and grace. As a steward, I can only say that, "God made all these things beautiful." He saw that this land was good.

Waterfalls and Rainbows are Good

While visiting our church members and the local congregation near Victoria Falls, on the border of Zimbabwe and Zambia, in May 2012, I was privileged to hear and see the largest curtain of water in the world thundering down the gorge. What amazed me about this wonder of nature, was the volume and the power of the water as it rushes through this part of the Zambezi River and down into the gorge. It was an incredible scene to behold. As a matter of fact, we heard the deafening roar of the water crashing down the falls many meters away, long before we were able to see the falls. At about the same time, we also experienced a cool and refreshing shower from the mist generated by the falls carried on the breeze coming from the direction of the Zambezi Gorge. This was a moment to savor and remember. As I was clicking away on the camera, trying to capture this amazing display of water-power, there, right above the falls, was another expression of God's presence and promise—a rainbow in the mist. In the language of the Bible, "God saw that it was good."

Rainforests and Sand Dunes are Good

And so as I reflect on these varied scenes and sounds, not to mention those also of the Amazon rainforest of South America and the sand dunes of the United Arab Emirates in Dubai, I'm just in awe of this great Master Designer who made all of these things so different and yet so beautiful. At the same time, I am also reminded, and indeed challenged that as a Christian steward, I'm called to protect and care for these natural resources of the earth for the benefit and enjoyment of others to follow. This is a critical aspect of Biblical stewardship.



Lion

From the Director's Desk...

Erika Puni and Larry Evans conducted an extensive series of stewardship training programs in Tampere, Finland; Tartu, Estonia; Riga, Latvia and Kaunas, Lithuania, from February 1-9, 2013. Here is a report on the Tampere seminar from Pr. Kalervo Aromaki, president of the Finland Union Conference: "Your message helped to shape our understanding of stewardship as a whole person response to "all of God." Participants went home with new vigor to give their best to the Lord."



From top left (clockwise): Church groups participate in Stewardship Ministries training programs in Tampere, Finland; Tartu, Estonia; Riga, Latvia; and Kaunas, Lithuania.

In February 2013, Erika Puni and Penny Brink from GC Stewardship Ministries, with Paulo Benini and Corrado Cozzi from the Stewardship Ministries of the Inter-European Division, joined about one hundred and twenty-five Romanian Union church administrative leaders, pastors and delegates for a 3-day stewardship advisory at Stupini, an Adventist facility in the Romanian city of Brasov. The GC team also took preaching appointments in Bucharest the following Sabbath. Speranta TV produced two reports covering the event. They can be viewed at the following links:

<http://vimeo.com/66082807>
<http://vimeo.com/66082808>



Top Left: About 125 ministers and leaders from the Romanian Union attended the Advisory at Stupini (bottom left), an Adventist facility in Brasov, Romania. Bottom right: Stewardship Ministries and Treasury leaders from the GC, EAD and Romanian Union and Conferences.

interview

Let Them Praise the Name of the Lord!



Jo Ann Davidson (JAD), above, is interviewed by DS Editor, Larry Evans (LRE).

Dr. Jo Ann Davidson is a fourth generation Seventh-day Adventist, born to missionary parents.

Formerly a home schooling mom and music instructor, Jo Ann now teaches in the Andrews University Theological Seminary—the first woman to teach in the Theology department. She earned her Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Deerfield, Illinois, USA) in 2000.

She has been published in the Adventist Review, Signs of the Times, and the Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, along with a column, "Let's Face It," in the journal Perspective Digest. She has also authored the books Jonah: The Inside Story (Review and Herald), Toward a Theology of Beauty: A Biblical Perspective (University Press of America), and Glimpses of Our God (Pacific Press).

Jo Ann finds great fulfillment in her many roles as wife, mother, daughter, sister, auntie, teacher, musician, student and Seventh-day Adventist Christian.

LRE: *How did you personally become involved with the idea of being a “steward of the earth?”*

JAD: I think it all started when I was about 10 years old. My parents were missionaries, and I remember riding the city-bus and seeing the man in front of us throw a banana peel out the window. I saw a little boy on the sidewalk just pick that up and start chewing on it. It horrified me, because I thought he simply didn't know that one eats the banana but not eat the peel. So I tugged at my dad and said, “Daddy, why is he eating the peel?” And my very wise father said to me, “JoAnn, that may be all he has to eat today.” This was the first time I realized that not everything is right in the world. That hit me really hard. I know we can't save the whole world, but each one of us can do something to show God that we realize how precious life is, and what a wonderful place this planet is.

LRE: *So ecology for you includes making a statement to God about the earth He created.*

JAD: For me, it does. I'm a creationist. I believe God is the creator, and as I read the creation story, I see how much He loves this place. After every day when He created something, whatever it was, it was “Oh, this is good!” And finally, on the sixth day, “Oh, it's just very good!” And He rejoiced in what He made. We're created in God's image. Why shouldn't we be rejoicing in the great wonders of life, just as God did?

LRE: *Do you see a link between creation and a responsibility for us to be stewards of the earth?*

JAD: Yes, I do, as a matter of fact. All we have to do is go to the Ten Commandments, where God describes in the fourth commandment His own activities and then says that this Sabbath blessing is for every living being in your family, a guest visiting the family, and even the animals are to have this precious rest. And I'm thinking, “Ah, God believes that even animals deserve the blessing of the Sabbath.”

LRE: *Should our stewardship include care and compassion toward animals?*

JAD: Yes! Our modern culture, due in part to the influence of the evolutionary mindset, has caused us to become insensitive and to devalue 'lower' forms of life. This can influence us even if we are not evolutionists. We somehow conclude that other life isn't as valuable or as important because we're on a higher level. But look at the flood story. God spares the animals by having them come into the ark with Noah. After coming out of the ark, in Genesis 9, He establishes a covenant with Noah “and all the animals.” Yes, God cares for the animals too!

LRE: *Will God hold us accountable for the way we take care of the earth?*

JAD: Well, frankly, I think so. There are examples in both the Old



and New Testaments where God reveals His care and concern for the earth and our accountability to do the same. Revelation 11:18 really makes that clear. In this passage the elders around the throne pray to God. “Isn’t it time to destroy those who destroy the earth?” So even the heavenly beings are noticing how we are damaging the wonderful systems of life that God put in place. We think we know better. Paul reminds us in Romans 8 that the earth is groaning. If it was groaning then, think of what it’s doing now!

LRE: *We are reminded by some that we are living at the end of time. They suggest that our focus should really be on the Second Coming of Christ and not on areas of ecology.*

JAD: But why do those have to be two separate things? If we’re teaching people to know who God is, what He’s like, what He has done, what He will do, that we’re created in His image, that He loves this place, and that salvation itself is going to be a reclamation of the earth—then surely this is relevant now as well! It is a natural response to care for the earth because God cares for all of His creation. We care for what God loves and has made.

LRE: *So being a steward of the earth is really a carry-over of our being created in His image. We’re not taking care of the earth so that we’ll have more crops and to avoid global warming.*

JAD: See, that’s the key. We’re not trying to solve the global warming debate. That has nothing to do with this! This has to do with restoring in our minds the high value that God places on this place—not just us, but everything!

LRE: *You see a continuing relationship between God and His creation then?*

JAD: In a very real sense it is part of our worship. God has a reverence for this place. If we believe God is the Creator, then we will naturally have a reverence for the earth.

The results of sin have affected all life—the soil, the plants, humans. Sin is a lot more terrible than we think. We have a hard time understanding the life-destroying effects of sin.

LRE: *Should the church include the stewardship of the earth as part of its regular teaching about stewardship?*

JAD: Oh, I’m so glad you asked that. I think we’ve been delinquent not to have emphasized that more because stewardship involves so much more than our wallets. We return tithe because it’s God’s. We give offerings to praise God. We take care of the earth because it’s God’s, and we take care of the animals because they’re singing praises to God—like the many voices in the “choir” of Psalm 148. We take care of the very voices that praise God with us.

LRE: *What practical things can we do in this regard?*

JAD: What can churches do? One way is to start recycling. At the seminary we have containers for recycling plastic water bottles. We keep encouraging students to bring their own reusable containers rather than recycling so many. And we recycle paper rather than just throw it away. Telephone books and packing foam can be recycled as well. Churches could be wonderful recyclers if they use foam dishes or cups. Those should be rinsed and recycled. I recycle plastic bags. Often I carry my own cloth bag which, of course, is reusable. Actually I have my own little system where I reuse nearly everything. So I feel like I’m back in the mission field, reusing everything as much as possible rather than just

throwing it away.

LRE: *You seem to see that being a “steward of the earth” is an extension of one’s relationship with Christ.*

JAD: I think that the closer we come to Jesus, and understand that we’re made in His image, the more it will become a natural response. Today the scientific world is catching up to these principles. They don’t tie them to God, but they talk about how we’ve wrecked the systems of life on this earth. Our water is being polluted, our air is a mess, the soil is being depleted and we’re realizing something’s wrong. A Christian recognizes that God has invited us into a partnership with Him in the care of His earth. Accepting this invitation shows our appreciation for what He’s made.

LRE: *Do you think it’s a message that will become stronger as we get closer to the Second Coming?*

JAD: I don’t see why not. Jesus says He’s coming again, and yet we believe in having hospitals and medical clinics to help people even though we know we’re going to get old and die and that Jesus will raise them from the dead. But even now we can improve life and do all we can to improve life for people who are sick, or for the handicapped. Shouldn’t we do the same for animals and for all forms of life that God has given?



Buffalo





Creation Care in a Careless World



Zdravko Plantak

*Dr. Zack Plantak, Chair of the Religion Department and Professor of Christian Ethics and Theology at Washington Adventist University for 14 years, also worked as administrator and pastor in the South England Conference for 10 years. He holds a BA in Theology (Newbold College), an MA in Religion (Andrews University) and a PhD (King's College, University of London). Among his published works is *Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics*.*

It was Ludwig Feuerbach who claimed that, “Nature, the world, has no value, no interest for Christians. The Christian thinks only of himself and the salvation of his soul.”¹ On the contrary, “a recent college graduate observes that, ‘[Christians] claim that we have something worth living (even dying) for here: we believe in a God who created this world, loves it and calls us to take care of it; and the world today is in a mess.’ Might not creating a sustainable society be a worthy goal for a church, a nation, the international global community, as well as for individuals?”²

It would do us much good to start thinking about the concepts of creation care and sustainable living for biblical and environmental reasons, but also to answer the question, “**Why should we care?**” **Well, we care because:**

God Cares

Genesis 1:1 tells us that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This dual expression indicates that, “the heavens and the earth and everything that is in between—all things—come to be as result of God’s creative Word and energizing Spirit....” “Through [Jesus] all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (Jn 1:3), i.e., both the regions of the cosmos (days 1-3) and their various inhabitants (days 4-6). God cares for creation (Job 38 and 39) and sustains it.”³ “[Jesus] is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word” (Heb. 1:3). Furthermore, “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps. 19:1) and, according to Psalm 148, the sun, moon, stars, water, mountains, hills, vegetation, animals, birds, and sea creatures all praise the Lord.

To such ‘creation-care’ by our God, the material environment responds. It gives glory to God. It sings to and delights in God’s love for it: “...The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with corn; they shout for joy and sing” (Ps. 65:9-13).

When we realize how much God cares for the earth and all its animate and inanimate inhabitants, we cannot purposefully destroy it or even hurt it without directly hurting our Creator who delights in the worship, shouts of praise, and joyful noise of the meadows and the grasslands. As Bouma-Prediger points out, “From the environmental perspective, by caring for the non-human created order we are also worshipping God by allowing it to give glory to God as he intended it to.”⁴

We Are Part of the Earth

We are cognizant that we are also a part of that same creation, moreover, of the very ground that we walk on daily. The substance that we humans were created from is the very soil that the earth is made of, and upon our death we return to this dust. The opening chapters of the Bible teach us about the commonalities human beings and the rest of the creation share. In Genesis 2:7, the same word is used to describe how animals, birds and humans were ‘formed’ from the dust of the earth (see also 1 Cor. 15:47). Humans and animals were created on the very same day. Humanity also shares the same food given to the animals (Gen. 1:29-30) and the same breath of life is given to all the new creatures alike (Gen. 1:30; 2:7; 6:17; Ps. 104:29.). The most extraordinary description in Psalm 104 shows how humans and animals have the same needs and how God provides abundantly for all creatures. As it is concluded by the authors of *Christianity, Climate Change, and Sustainable Living*, “To care for creation is therefore to care for a system of which we are a part and upon which we utterly depend.”⁵

Anderson concludes that, “In view of the overall pattern of the [creation] account, it is apparent that the emphasis falls not so much on anthropology, that is, on the supremacy of humanity, as on ecology, that is, the earthly habitation that human beings share with other forms of ‘living beings.’”⁶

We Care For Our Neighbor

We care for our environment because, alongside our God, we care for our neighbor. Christians are invited to love their neighbors and such love is not restricted to those with whom we share ethnic, geographic or national identities. The Samaritan story illustrates this well. We love our neighbors who are close and also who are very distant on other continents or in abject poverty. “Space is not bar

to neighborly love. Nor is time.” As helpfully described by Spencer, White and Vroblecky, “Just as those living on the other side of the planet are our neighbors, so are the unborn, the men and women of future generations whom we cannot see but who will inherit from us the consequences of our actions, and flourish or suffer accordingly.” We love people genuinely “from the other side of the planet to the other end of the century.”⁷ Francis of Assisi, 700 years previously, said: “If you have men who will exclude any of God’s creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men.”⁸

The Sabbath Teaches This

The Sabbath has a clear environmental scope and impact. It is a reminder of the creation (Exodus 20:8-11), God’s ownership of the entire earth and that we are His stewards. Deuteronomy chapter 5 indicates that God is interested that all of His creation should find a Sabbath rest: “your son or daughter ... male or female servant ... ox ... donkey or any of your animals, ... any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do” (verse 14). The Sabbath should be a way to protect the vulnerable as the Israelites remember that they “were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there,” (verse 5). This implicit inclusion of the livestock might seem odd unless we recognize the environmental implications.

The Sabbatical principle and its environmental impact is further clarified in the passages on the ‘Sabbath of Sabbaths’ and the Jubilee principle by corresponding legislation of the Sabbatical year in Exodus 23 and especially in Leviticus 25.

“For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unploughed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what is left. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove. ‘Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest.’⁹

Spencer, White and Vroblecky insightfully conclude that, “These verses make clear, there were environmental and social concerns behind the Sabbatical Year. The land was not to be exhausted by overuse. The poor were to be given access that would not otherwise have been theirs. The law even allowed for wild animals to consume what the people left, thereby suggesting that agriculture (and other human activities) should not be permitted to destroy non-human life, ascribing value to non-human ecology, and implying that awe and respect for God’s creation should not ‘give way to an exploitation and managerial approach to nature.’”¹⁰

Leviticus 26:34-35 shows how seriously God takes comprehensive creation care. If the Israelites will not allow the land its Sabbath, “Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths.” God cares about the Earth to the point of destroying those who destroy the Earth.¹¹ If one truly observes the

Sabbath, one cannot remain satisfied only with one’s own redemption, restoration and liberation. One must show concern for one’s neighbor spiritually and physically along-side expressing genuine love toward the non-human created order.

Our Salvation Draws Near

In *The Irresistible Revolution*, Shane Clairborne said: “What the world needs is people who believe so much in another world that they cannot help but begin enacting it now.”¹²

God’s plan to “reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven”¹³ speaks volumes about God’s desire and plan that will have its final fulfillment in the eschatological sphere. Our desire needs to be to work closely with God for the restoration and flourishing of creation (which is groaning for that fulfillment and final redemption as much as our bodies are groaning),¹⁴ as part of our work for the kingdom of God in order to see that fulfillment of the Lord’s prayer become a reality, that God’s “will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”¹⁵

The new earth, restored at the final consummation of history will be the pristine garden of delight in which there will be unsurpassed beauty and which

will flourish with continual crops of fruit and whose river and trees will continually produce life giving leaves that will heal the nations and make the original vision of God effective and real.¹⁶ This is not a far distant place on another galaxy, or in far away ‘heaven’, but a place on the very earth we now live on that will be purged of the sin—and all its consequences—and renewed. And the dwelling for God’s people will be sustainable and healthy for eternity, just as God desired it in the first place. We need to allow that kind of Kingdom of Glory to penetrate into the here and now of the already inaugurated Kingdom of Grace which, by proxy, we live in today and, furthermore, anticipate soon to be fully realized in the second appearing of our Lord Christ Jesus.

A Christian would do well to repent from the way s/he has thought at times about the responsibilities towards God’s creation and to pray the prayer of Walter Rauschenbusch:

“... Grant us, we pray you, a heart wide open to all this joy and beauty, and save our souls from being so steeped in care or so darkened by passion that we pass heedless and unseeing when even the thorn-bush by the wayside is aflame with the glory of God.”¹⁷

1. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 287.
2. Nick Spencer, Robert White and Virginia Vroblecky, *Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living* (Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 219.
3. Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be*, (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 153.
4. Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care* (Grand Rapids: MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 95.
5. Nick Spencer, Robert White and Virginia Vroblecky, *Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living* (Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 86.
6. Bernhard Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994), 139.
7. Spencer, White and Vroblecky, *Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living* (2009), 91.
8. Saint Francis. In “Quotation Archives, *All-creatures.org*: <http://all-creatures.org/quotes/francis+saint.html> (accessed April 6, 2013).
9. Exodus 23:10-12a.
10. Spencer, White and Vroblecky, *Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living* (2009), 139-140.
11. Revelation 11:18.
12. Quoted in Ben Lowe, *Green Revolution: Coming Together to Care for Creation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 11.
13. Colossians 1:20. 14. See Romans 8:18-24. 15. Matthew 6:10.
16. See Revelation 21 and 22. Furthermore, see more elaborate exposition on this issue of the Adventist eschatological vision in Zdravko Plantak, “For the Healing of the Nations: Repairers of Broken Walls and Restorers of God’s Justice – Adventist Society for Religious Studies Presidential Address 2009”, in *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol 48, No. 1. (2010): 1-11.
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Zebra

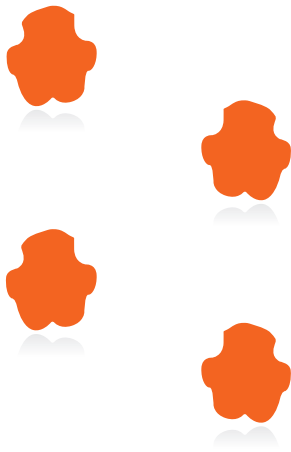


God's Stewards of the Earth



Jim Gibson

Dr. L. James (Jim) Gibson is Director of the Geoscience Research Institute in Loma Linda, California. He is co-editor, with Steven Dunbar and Humberto Rasi, of the book, Entrusted: Christians and Environmental Care. For more information about the Geoscience Research Institute, visit: www.grisda.org.



Black Rhinoceros

Fast Facts: <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/black-rhinoceros/>

Type: Mammal

Diet: Herbivore

Size: Head and body, 11 to 13.75 ft (3.4 to 4.2 m); tail, 20 to 27.5 in (50 to 70 cm)

Weight: 3,168 to 7,920 lbs (1,440 - 3,600 kg)

Protection status: **Endangered**

When God created the first humans, He gave them three responsibilities that relate to care for the earth (Gen. 1:28, NKJV). The first of these was to fill the earth. The second was to subdue (*kabash*, to subdue) the earth, and the third was to have dominion (*radah*, to rule) over the other creatures. Adam was placed in Eden in order to tend (*abad*, serve) and keep (*shamar*, to observe) it (Gen. 2:15). These commands show that God is interested in the proper care and treatment of our world and its creatures.

The First Rule

Notice that the commands to care for the environment were given before any command regarding the payment of tithes and offerings, observing the Sabbath, or caring for our health. Perhaps this is because we will not be able to do any of the other things if we do not care for our environment. After all, our ability to earn income, rest, worship, and care for our health all require a healthy environment.

Humans have pretty much filled the earth. With a population of some seven billion people, it is increasingly difficult to find attractive, healthful living spaces for additional people. Part of this is because we have not wisely pursued the other responsibilities given us at creation: to subdue, have dominion over, as well as to tend and keep the garden.

The commands to “subdue” and “have dominion” have the connotation of kingship. Humans are appointed to rule the world. The tools that enable us to do that are incorporated into the image of God, given to us at the creation. The image of God has many facets, which include such abilities as a sense of right and wrong, the ability to think creatively, to plan ahead, and to work in cooperation to accomplish complex objectives. These features enable us to rule the other creatures and manage the environment wisely.

Rulership and Responsibility

Wise management of the environment often requires a balancing of competing interests and a responsible prioritization of goals. As good rulers, we must consider the needs of all parties that use the environment, including the other living organisms. The terms “subdue” and “dominion” signify rulership and responsibility. They do not provide a license for brutality and abuse. Humans are to rule the other creatures with authority and compassion, both of which are divine attributes. We who are created in God’s image are charged with managing the world as rulers appointed by the Creator. If we act as good rulers, we shall receive the reward granted to good managers. If we act as bad rulers, ruling with greed, intimidation and violence, we shall receive the condemnation that bad rulers deserve.

Our care for the environment is motivated by the knowledge that the God we love and serve intentionally created this marvelous world, with all its beauty and diversity, and that He values it. We regard the creation as a blessing, but not sacred. We see it as blemished, but not evil. We recognize that the presence of sin in the world means that we have to deal with situations that would not exist in a perfect world, and we must sometimes use our judgment to choose among alternatives of which none are ideal. Nevertheless, we strive to reduce suffering, among all creatures. We preserve diversity, even when doing so may cause us inconvenience. We value a simple lifestyle that reduces consumption and waste, even though we may do without some of the luxuries available to us. We do this, not out of fear or greed of reward, but from a sense of gratitude to the Creator who made us in His image and commissioned us to manage the world as He would.

Teach the Children!

Children are our future, and what an awesome responsibility it will be for them to steer the earth into the next century. It is, therefore, vital to teach children early in life that God is our Creator, Redeemer, Owner and Provider, and that He has entrusted His world to our care. We are His stewards!

Teaching children to care for the world begins with caring for their environment—that means being good stewards of the home, the school, the community, the country, and the universe at large. These educational ideas may require some real changes in lifestyle and habits, but teaching our children how to be better stewards of God's earth will benefit both them and the world. We need to empower our children to care for the environment!

1. Lead by Example

Dwight Moody once said, "Where one reads the Bible, one hundred read you and me." Children will emulate you when you turn off the water while brushing your teeth, take shorter showers, and turn off the lights when you leave a room, or recycle your newspapers. Modeling is a powerful teaching tool!

Get children involved in hands-on projects. Organize cleanup days for children to clean their classrooms, their desks and the school building. Teach good habits such as respecting school property, not littering and not vandalizing the walls of any school building with graffiti. Children in each classroom can help plant beautiful flowers and trees as well as vegetables. Moreover, provide opportunities for them to adopt projects in the local community to care for and improve the environment.

3. The Three "R"s

Talk about ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Teach children that the plastic that is thrown away will be sitting around, littering the earth, for hundreds of years to come. So the less we produce and throw away plastic, the cleaner the earth will be! Once children become excited about this, they might enjoy preparing recycling boxes for depositing newspapers, tin cans and glass bottles in. To get this started, children could reach out through fun skits at school or church that highlight the value of recycling.

4. Care for God's Creatures

Explain how God gave Adam and Eve responsibility for the birds and animals as well as the plants in the Garden of Eden and how every one of us has inherited this responsibility. It's important that children do what they can to protect and enjoy God's creation. Get involved in projects to protect endangered species. Children could simply be taken out into the neighborhoods and shown the need to care for birds and animals. Discussions could be encouraged in which the importance of not hurting animals is stressed and not shooting them with slingshots just for fun. Make a simple bird feeder and hang it up in the garden and let the children watch the birds enjoy the treats they fill them with.

Introduce children to the benefits of organic foods. Head to the closest organic fruit farm with your children and pick strawberries, mangoes, blueberries or any delicious fruit available. Discuss the benefits of organically grown food.

5. Go Organic

Visit the local library. Expose children to environmentally friendly organizations, books, websites and groups. These can help to get children interested in caring for their environment.

6. Make it Fun!



Linda Koh

Dr. Linda Mei Lin Koh is the Children's Ministries Director of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. She holds an Ed.D degree in Educational Psychology and Counseling from Andrews University. She has served the church as an elementary school teacher, a college professor in Singapore and in departmental work at the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. She has been actively involved in community work with children as well as writing for church and local magazines.



True Story...

Michael's fifth-grade class adopted a road near their school. They wear gloves to protect their hands, and pick up trash and broken glass along the road. They also plant beautiful flowers in the median and along the sidewalks. Keeping this adopted road looking clean and neat is their way of being good stewards of their community.

commitment

Defining Dominion



Reinder Bruinsma

Dr. Bruinsma lives with his wife Aaffe in Zeewolde (Flevopolder, the Netherlands). During more than forty years he has taken up various assignments—in several different countries—for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Over the years he has authored more than twenty books and hundreds of articles, in Dutch as well as in English (visit <http://www.reinderbruinsma.com/>). Even now (while officially retired) writing keeps him occupied for the most part of his time.

From September 2011 until March 2013, he served as the interim president of the Adventist Church in Belgium and Luxembourg. He says now that he has retired for the second time, he trusts that once again he will have more time for writing, teaching, travel and other pleasant things!



Genesis 1:28 tells us: "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'"

Some words just do not sound nice. To me the words 'dominion' and 'subdue' are such words. When I hear how God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, I feel no negative reverberations. But the command to 'subdue' the earth sounds rather harsh. Why did God not speak about 'cultivating' the earth? And why is the first couple told to have 'dominion' over all the other creatures? 'Exercising care' would have sounded so much friendlier to me.

There is a reason why words today no longer mean what they once meant. When this earth was perfect, words like 'dominion' and 'subdue' had no negative connotation. There was not the slightest hint of power or force. But once sin entered this world, everything changed. Even the perfect intimacy between the first man and the first woman was affected, and their innocent nakedness turned into total embarrassment. From now onwards, subduing and exercising dominion no longer describe a loving and caring disposition, but they create a mental picture of hatred and hostility. Significantly, the Hebrew word that is translated as 'subdue', may also mean 'to enslave', and in some instances even 'to molest' and 'to rape'. And the word that is translated as 'dominion' often refers to the kind of rule that is severe rather than benevolent, oppressive rather than supportive.

From Bad to Worse

The first human beings were appointed as stewards of God's creation. One of their first jobs was to give names to all God's creatures. I do not know how I must interpret this. Did these names come to their minds through divine flashes of inspiration? Did they use some kind of early Hebrew? It does not seem that the information about the naming of the creatures around them is intended to fully satisfy our curiosity on such points. For the Bible writers 'names' were more than useful labels to keep things, animals and people apart. In fact, God himself had a peculiar way of dealing with names. Names have to do with the essence of the things or beings they refer to. Names presuppose relationships. That is why names may change when the nature of a relationship alters (you remember how Jacob became Israel?). Adam and Eve's job of 'naming' the animals suggest that their 'dominion' was to be built on a relationship with their environment.

Sin did away with this positive relationship with nature. Adam and Eve had 'named' everything around them, but now they were no longer 'on speaking terms' with the natural world. Genesis 3 tells us of the radical change. From now onwards the 'multiplying' would be a painful business. The joyful equality between male and female would now be marred by inequality and subordination. The beautiful produce of the earth would grow among thorns and thistles, and tilling the soil would now require hard and exhausting labor.

As man was estranged from his original calling of perfect stewardship, the 'dominion' of the earth became a ruthless exploitation and 'subduing' came to be increasingly characterized by brute force and relentless egoism. The grateful, responsible use of the resources of this globe deteriorated into a rape of the earth's natural resources, a destruction of much of its natural habitat and even a dramatic change in the world's climate.

commitment

Must we just accept the status quo?

What are we to do as Christians who live in 2013? Should we simply accept that sin is an awful reality? Why should we try to change things, knowing that we live at the end of time and things must get worse before they can get better—when Christ comes to make all things new? Or do we still have a holy calling to be stewards? Do we believe that Christ's kingdom can already be realized among us, albeit in a very limited and preliminary manner? Might Christ's command that we become the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13), and that we do all we can to give a better taste to our society, also mean that we must give optimal care to our physical world? Does not the New Testament suggest that followers of Christ are to be stewards who operate on the basis of kingdom values and try to push back the virus of sin where we can?

Stewards

What has happened to the Christian steward? Is Patrick McLaughlin, an Anglican priest and Christian thinker, right when he states that our churches are filled with 'owners' rather than stewards? To be a steward is to have a lord. A Christian steward is someone who recognizes the lordship of Jesus Christ over every domain of his life. Traditionally, Seventh-day Adventists have emphasized two areas of life in which they wanted to clearly uphold the lordship of Christ. Adventist Christians know that God is the owner of all material wealth. He owns 'the cattle on a thousand hills' (Psalm 50:10). They maintain that God allows them to use ninety percent of those material resources that are entrusted to them and claims just ten percent thereof as His. The principle of 'tithing' stands as tall as ever before. Unfortunately, a sizable percentage of Adventists seem to have forgotten this. Billy Graham's words are worth quoting: "Your checkbook is a theological document. It tells you whom and what you worship!"

A second domain of stewardship on which Adventists have traditionally insisted is care for the body, which they have regarded as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Being God's temple, the body must not be defiled by bad food and harmful substances.

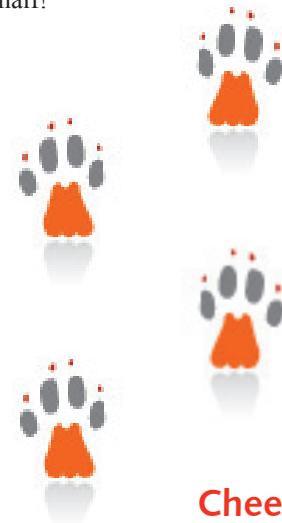
Reclaiming Our Original Mandate

But stewardship has a much wider application than money and meat. It is about reclaiming the original meaning and exercise of 'dominion'; that dates from before the entrance of sin. When man was created in the image of God, the way in which he exercised dominion over his environment reflected God's rule of love. God's 'dominion' over his creation continued to be one of loving care, while man's dominion over what God had entrusted to him became marred by self-love, cruelty and exploitation. Christians are called upon to return to what God originally intended. It is as Dr. R.C. Sproul, a popular American Christian author, wrote in his book *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*: "We are called to reflect the character of God's righteous rule over the universe. He never ravages or exploits what He rules, but rather reigns in justice and kindness" (p. 132). Christian stewardship today demands a new understanding of man's original mandate. When we recognize Christ's Lordship over everything, we will understand that we must be utterly serious about restoring his kingdom values, even in the midst of the ravages of sin. It means that we will be totally committed to restoring relationships of full equality and mutual support between the genders. It means that it becomes

part of the mission of the Christian church to work for justice, for the protection of our environment and the safeguarding of our climate. It implies that we no longer abuse the natural resources that God has given us but show responsibility and respect.

Representing the King

The term 'steward' has ancient roots. Its use in English is already attested as early as the thirteenth century. It has royal connotations, as is reflected in the name of the English royal house of the Stewards (with "Stuart" as the French spelling). When we use the word today its royal connections are as strong as ever. Christian stewards are representatives of the King of the universe and they exercise 'dominion' over the world on His behalf!



Cheetah

Fast Facts:

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/cheetah/?source=A-to-Z>

Type: Mammal

Diet: Carnivore

Average life span in the wild:

10 to 12 years

Size: 3.5 to 4.5 ft (1.1 to 1.4 m);

Tail, 25.5 to 31.5 in (65 to 80 cm);

Weight: 77 to 143 lbs (35 to 65 kg)

Protection status: **Vulnerable**

young adult

Macaroni Masterpiece



Kyle Dever

Kyle Dever is an intern pastor at 'One Place' on the campus of Andrews University where he is also enrolled in the seminary. Upon completing his studies he looks forward to returning to Southeastern California to continue pastoring.

Random thought...

...When it comes to our environmental footprint, what's my shoe size?



Pasta—the medium of a true artist! I fondly remember creating macaroni masterpieces in art class as a child. Even more fondly, I remember how delighted my mom and dad always were to receive them and display them proudly on the refrigerator. Join me, however, in imagining a very different scenario. Imagine that my parents would put the art on the refrigerator only to take it down a day later and walk all over it. Then, they would trample on it for the whole week, showing a complete lack of care for my masterpiece, and for the love I put into making it. Every Sabbath, however, they would say, “Let’s put this artwork back up on the fridge and admire it,” only to take it down again on Sunday and trample on it all over again. Imagine that they would do this over and over, week by week, until my macaroni masterpiece was almost completely unrecognizable, destroyed—all the while ignoring the pain they were putting me through. Throughout my life, as a Seventh-day Adventist, I’ve heard about the beautiful masterpiece that is God’s creation. I’ve embarked on countless Sabbath nature walks and learned in Bible class about how creation is one of the ways in which God is revealed. But when I first became aware of the politics and differing ideologies that surround the environment I was surprised to learn that it was the “liberals,” the group least often associated with Christians, who were fighting to care of the environment while most church folk found themselves on the “other” side. At first it made little sense to me. I thought, “If Jesus is coming back and will make a new earth then why does the condition of this one matter?” I learned why it mattered when reading in Genesis that, “God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth’” (Gen. 1:26).



God’s decision to give us dominion over the earth carries with it a great responsibility. God has asked us to be stewards of the greatest masterpiece in the universe, His own creation. As Adventists we like to enjoy the beauty of nature on a Sabbath afternoon, but often our lives are devoid of any real effort to care for that nature. We like to speak of God’s revelation through nature but we are complicit in its destruction. We put God’s masterpiece “up on our refrigerators” for a day or two, maybe even every week, but then we take it down and destroy it with the way we treat the earth on a daily basis. How it must pain God to see the people who know the truth about God’s creation treat it with disrespect.

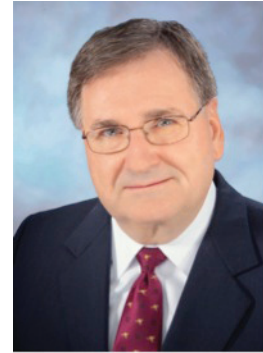
When we think of the word ‘stewardship’ in any other context it connotes a responsibility for the proper care and use of something. Therefore, if God has given us dominion over creation, if God has called us to be stewards of the environment, then we should be actively taking every step possible to preserve God’s earth and conserve her resources. Let God’s people be the most vocal and active in seeking ways to care for God’s gift, God’s masterpiece, God’s creation!

The Mission Offerings

When we were very small we learned how to give our mission offerings in Sabbath School. I remember singing the “Hear the Pennies Dropping” song as a child. And we would enthusiastically drop our pennies or whatever we might have had into the “missionary train.”

As we grew older we found the basket, envelope, or plate being passed around in our Sabbath School classes and then as we got even older some have started giving online as well. The idea is, of course, to continue to give mission offerings.

The mission offerings are collected under two main categories in the world divisions. These are the World Budget Offering and the One (or Combined) Offering Plan. The funds are sent to the General Conference (GC). The mission offerings consist of the regular weekly Sabbath School Offering; the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering; the Sabbath School Investment Offering and the Birthday-Thank Offering. Three more offerings are added to make up the total General Conference World Mission Fund. Let’s explore the above mentioned offerings more thoroughly:



*G. Thomas (Tom) Evans
Treasurer/CFO - North American
Division; Associate Treasurer,
General Conference*

Regular Weekly Mission Offering

Mission offerings given in Sabbath School constitute the regular weekly mission offering. These funds are recognized as GC funds and are donations given for the purposes to which mission appropriations are made and are included in the annual world mission budget distribution.

Thirteenth Sabbath Offering

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering is taken each quarter on a designated day or on the thirteenth Sabbath. A portion is devoted to designated projects in the world divisions according to a schedule voted by the Annual Council of the GC. Twenty-five percent of the actual amount of funds received by the GC for this offering will be appropriated to the designated projects and the remaining seventy-five percent to the world mission funds.

Sabbath School Investment

This offering came about to further giving to the mission program and to raise mission funds through various individual or family projects. This fund is not tied to a weekly or monthly program but the giving is based on the returns of special fundraising member projects. The funds can be returned at various times during the year. Sabbath School Investment funds are GC funds and designated as a portion of the world mission funds. However, twenty-two and one-half percent of these funds are appropriated to divisions for frontier outreach and/or large city evangelism based on regular annual base appropriations.

Birthday and Thank Offerings

This offering comes about from an appeal to the Sabbath School periodically. It would suggest that a special mission gift would be appropriate to recognize God’s blessing on the occasion of a birthday or other commemorative event for



Since 2006, the world Church has received over \$50 million each year in mission offerings. The last two years have shown significant increases. This does not reflect giving to many projects that do not go through the regular mission offerings system.

which the member wishes to express thankfulness. These funds are included with the other Sabbath School Offerings to expand the cause of missions around the world.

Trends

The allocation of mission funds is voted during the GC Annual Council budget process. The divisions of the world church show a positive trend while it is flat in the North American Division. It appears that this NAD trend is due to members giving offerings directly to a number of overseas projects such as the One-Day-Church projects, ShareHim, various mission trips, and other mission endeavors.

Seventh-day Adventist Statement on Environment Care

The world in which we live is a gift of love from the Creator God, from "Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water" (Revelation 14:7; 11:17, 18). Within this creation He placed humans, set intentionally in relationship with Himself, other persons, and the surrounding world. Therefore, as Seventh-day Adventists, we hold its preservation and nurture to be intimately related to our service to Him.

God set aside the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial and perpetual reminder of His creative act and establishment of the world. In resting on that day, Seventh-day Adventists reinforce the special sense of relationship with the Creator and His creation. Sabbath observance underscores the importance of our integration with the total environment.

The human decision to disobey God broke the original order of creation, resulting in a disharmony alien to His purposes. Thus our air and waters are polluted, forests and wildlife plundered, and natural resources exploited. Because we recognize humans as part of God's creation, our concern for the environment extends to personal health and lifestyle. We advocate a wholesome manner of living and reject the use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs that harm the body and consume earth's resources; and we promote a simple vegetarian diet.

Seventh-day Adventists are committed to respectful, cooperative relationships among all persons, recognizing our common origin and realizing our human dignity as a gift from the Creator. Since human poverty and environmental degradation are interrelated, we pledge ourselves to improve the quality of life for all people. Our goal is a sustainable development of resources while meeting human needs.

Genuine progress toward caring for our natural environment rests upon both personal and cooperative effort. We accept the challenge to work toward restoring God's overall design. Moved by faith in God, we commit ourselves to promote the healing that rises at both personal and environmental levels from integrated lives dedicated to serve God and humanity.

In this commitment we confirm our stewardship of God's creation and believe that total restoration will be complete only when God makes all things new.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 12, 1992.

