

Earth Sunday 2016

Genesis 2:15, Job 12:7-10

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In God's hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.

Care for God's Creation

Each year on April 22nd, 193 countries around the world celebrate Earth Day. A day we recognize various ways to honor, protect and care for all living things. Earth Day has been an annual celebration since 1970. People of different cultures and understandings all agree on one thing, that humankind is making an impact on our world. That impact can be negative or it can be positive. Those celebrating the earth in various ways; by planting trees, buying efficient appliances and vehicles, conserving water, those who reduce, reuse and recycle. Those are the people who strive to make a conscious effort to make a positive impact on the earth.

My youth minister growing up had one saying he said anytime we went anywhere. Our youth have heard me say that same saying to them. "Make sure you leave it better than it was when you arrived."

I think that's what we're trying to do. I think the point of Earth Day is to remind us to leave it better than how we found it. To remind us that we are

not the only ones on the earth, and we will not be the last ones on the earth either. All these gifts we get from the earth we want available for generations to come. We want all aspects of life, social as well as environmental, to be better when we leave this world than it was when we arrived. Sometimes that means going back to basics, like hanging clothes up to dry, planting a garden, picking up litter, downsizing our closets. Other times that means taking advantage of creative resources like solar and wind technologies, energy efficient appliances, fuel efficient vehicles, or even reusable grocery bags.

We celebrate Earth Day for a reason. Because it's important. So important with our mission as church and God's children in fact that churches across our country, select the Sunday before Earth Day each year to celebrate Earth Sunday. It seems only right. We sing of creation, of water, of birds, and gardens. We read of moving mountains, flowing rivers, of thorns, weeds, and olive trees. Even the tiny mustard seeds made it to scripture. The earth and everything in it was a gift in which we receive a lot from. It was entrusted to us to take care of it. Just as the scriptures Andy read stated, the life of every creature and the breath of all humankind God has entrusted us to take care of it.

Every Sunday we recite the Lord's Prayer where we say, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth...." On Earth. Here, now. We do God's will by caring for this planet, now, the best we can. This Earth is essential for us. It's something we all need to survive because it gives us everything we need;

light and darkness, air and sun, land and water, plants, animals, even other humanbeings.

Recognizing this importance, our denomination, along with others, set earth-friendly standards to encourage our churches to do their part in making this world a better place. For Disciples, we call this standard, being a Green Chalice church. You'll be glad to know that our church is a Green Chalice church. Not that many years ago Norwalk Christian Church made several changes in order to be more environmentally conscious. From replacing old windows with new energy efficient ones and installing a new energy efficient boiler to replacing light bulbs, adding recycling bins, delivering most of the newsletters electronically, even planting native plants outside. Our church made a list of other changes too. One of which you'll get to use immediately following the service, the reusable dishes, cups, and silverware.

Yes, making these choices is an intentional decision. And yes, sometimes those decisions require a little more elbow grease. But this is our only planet. And if we do God's will and care for creation, it's going to require us to get up and do something. Today we have that opportunity. After worship everyone is welcome to join us for a light potluck lunch. And after we're finished, those who are able to participate in our Earth Sunday activities will break into groups and make the world better than when they started. So we can all walk through our day thinking, what a wonderful world.