



# Stewardship of Creation Ministry Team

## June 2016 E-Newsletter

### Christian Work Camp “Goes Green”

By Rev. Rick Wilson\*

For forty years Cabell Lincoln Work Camp has been making homes *warm, safe and dry*, without charge to homeowners in Cabell and Lincoln counties. Currently, each June, 165 adults and High School volunteers travel to Asbury Woods Methodist Camp near Salt Rock, WV and work for a week on some 25 homes in Cabell and Lincoln counties.

Feeding 165 people for three meals each day is quite a challenge. Each year, during the work camp, some 1,000 cups, 500 Styrofoam coffee cups, 2,000 large plates, 1,500 small plates and 1,100 bowls were sent as garbage to landfills.

In 2009 Sylvia Wilson, an ardent environmentalist, challenged work camp leadership to decrease the carbon footprint of the mission. As a Presbyterian and spouse of the CLWC Director, Rev. Rick Wilson, Sylvia has had a longstanding commitment to the environment as a Christian, who takes seriously human responsibility for the stewardship of creation.

Once work camp leadership was made aware of the benefits of using recyclable products for the environment, everyone quickly got on board. “We just never thought about what could be done and its importance.” said Howard Aulick, board member.

The planning team made several changes:

1. Work Camp participants were educated about the need for environmental changes.
2. Everyone was required to bring water bottles for both their job site and meals at camp. No plastic cups. Result: 7,000 plastic cups have been kept from landfills in the past 7 years.
3. All cardboard and aluminum containers were recycled.
4. Biodegradable plates and bowls made from *potatoes and sugar cane* were ordered. Results: 21,000 cups, 14,000 large plates, 10,000 small plates, and 8,000 bowls were composted since the program began.
5. Reusable canvass bags replaced paper bags for work team lunch carriers. Result: 150 large paper bags were saved over 7 years.
6. Ceramic coffee mugs replaced Styrofoam cups. Result: 3,400 Styrofoam cups were saved from area landfills.

In addition to reducing our carbon footprint, the increase in cost to the work camp was well worth the education benefits gained by volunteers. Miraculously, no one complained about the changes. Everyone knew this was the right thing to do.

Can your organization or church or club promote in large or small ways, the need for environmental caregiving? Help everyone to get on board.

For more information check out ECO Products in Colorado. Readers will be surprised at the benefits for our environment from using products like these.

*\*Rev. Rick Wilson is Pastor of Highlawn Presbyterian Church in Huntington, WV and Director of the Cabell Lincoln Work Camp.*

### **Something New: SCMT SURVEY**

The Stewardship of Creation Ministry Team is currently seeking responses on a "Nurturing Nature" Survey, which we have designed to solicit information on what churches are already doing; and what views faith community members have on Creation Care issues and actions. We are planning to distribute this survey at Presbytery-wide events throughout the rest of this year; you may hear about it at the August Presbytery meeting. You can also contact us in order to complete a survey.

Surveys can be completed anonymously, or with contact information, in the hopes of getting more information or becoming involved. We first introduced this survey at Festival of Faith. At that time representatives from 10 different faith communities completed the survey.

Here are some interesting "**Nurturing Nature Activities Around the Presbytery,**" which were indicated on the surveys:

- cleaning with essential oils and vinegars
- community garden with an outdoor food pantry to share the produce
- we have our own greenhouse
- one church is already investigating solar panels
- composting
- highway litter pickup
- using borax & baking soda to clean
- walking dogs at a local shelter
- some communities recycle tin, as well as paper, plastic, etc.
- a community has members, who regularly encourage others to take action on Climate Change

We hope to have at least one survey completed from each church in our Presbytery, and hope to use the information gained on the survey to plan our future programming, resource purchases, etc. We are also hopeful that the surveying process will lead to greater communication about Creation Care issues among our faith communities throughout the Presbytery.

## Vacation Bible School and Summer Study

by Nellie Howard, Resource Center Director



SUMMER! What a great time to learn something new about God's Creation. The Resource Center for the Presbytery of West Virginia has some good choices for Summer Bible School for both children and adults. Most of the programs offered below may be adapted for Sunday School, after-school programs or church retreats.

Let's start with a free Bible School program from **The Society of St. Andrew** – <http://endhunger.org> This web site offers two choices which are both completely free and downloadable. The two choices are an Old Testament-based program or a New Testament-based program. Each offers enough material for five 2-3 hour sessions for older preschoolers through grade six. If you are into *Pinterest* you will be glad to know that they even have a large

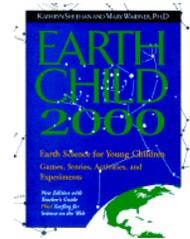


*Pinterest* Board full of ideas for games, crafts and recipes.



Another VBS choice might be the offering from **Solar Under the Sun, an Ecumenical Ministry of the Synod of the Sun PC(USA)**. This one is designed for five days and includes lots of different light-oriented games, crafts and activities. You may download a preview of the curriculum at <http://www.solarunderthesun.org/> or preview it in the Resource Center.

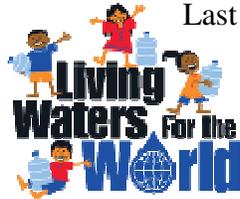
If what you are need for your VBS program are some Earth-loving activities then take a look at the book, ***Earth Child 2000: Earth Science for young Children, Games Stories, Activities, and Experiments***. The activities included in this giant book by Kathryn Sheehan and Mary Waidner are not necessarily just for small children. Really, who doesn't love making Sun Tea or planning a picnic? Other activities include learning empathy for nocturnal animals. Learn for yourself what it might be like to be a bat, a lightning bug or a mole. In these 475 pages we may help our children learn about the food chain, extinction, recycling, and treading lightly on planet Earth.



If you would like your kids to do more to help you save the Earth then it may help to refer back to a favorite resource from 1990 which was updated in 2008. ***Fifty Simple things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth*** by the EarthWorks Group is a small book with some large ideas like teaching children to pay attention to things they want to buy from stores to learn to judge if an item is well made or is something that will break easily. Kids learn ways to save water, how littering hurts wildlife, and how chemicals you can't pronounce are probably dangerous and much more. They also learn what to do about these problems. We have both the original 1990 version and the 2008 update.

For older children we have a unique study by Mike Poteet, ***God's Creation, Our Health: Taking Action Together***. Here is a 4-session study focusing on La Oroya, Peru, one of the most polluted cities on the planet as well as CAMBIALO, an organization dedicated to building a better environment in La Oroya. It connects the problems of Peru with problems in our own communities and leads participants to fix those problems. The first session begins with Genesis and God's call to God's people to be stewards of Creation. Other sessions encourage participants to meet with local environmental groups and even to arrange video meetings with some of the youth in La Oroya.

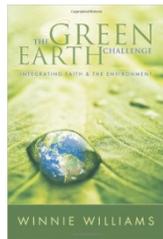




Last but not least of the children's VBS suggestions is *Clean Water for All God's Children* by Living Waters for the World. This one is a personal favorite of mine. You can follow the program exactly as they give the five-day plan or pick and choose what fits your class best. It includes opening skits for each day as well as Bible stories, a mission focus, craft, recreation & snacks, music and time for reflection. We have the full plan in the Resource along with a DVD, *Clean Water for All of God's Children* and some extra curriculum aids. You may learn more by going to [www.livingwatersfortheworld.org](http://www.livingwatersfortheworld.org).

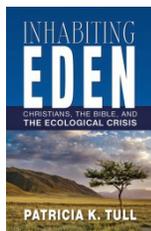
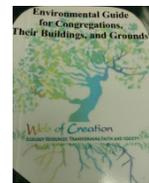
Let's turn, now, to some resources that might prove more interesting to adults.

*Earthwise: A Guide to Hopeful Creation Care* by Calvin B. DeWitt is a book that should work well for an adult Bible School program or other study program. It includes seven chapters with discussion questions which range from *Provisions for Creation, Degradations of Creation, Biblical Perspective, Theological Perspective* Putting Creation Care into Practice, and others. It even includes a short course on Environmental Science.



*The Green Earth Challenge: Integrating Faith & the Environment* by Winnie Williams the cover's description says it well: "Part travelogue, part hymn of praise, and part environmental primer, *The Green Earth Challenge* will change the way you view the planet, your faith, and your role of as steward of God's creation." It includes seven chapters with discussion questions so if you are planning this for a typical Bible School week you will need to either cut out or condense a couple of the chapters.

If you are looking for a "Green" week for your adults then you might choose, *Environmental Guide for Congregations, Their Buildings, and Grounds* by Web of Creation. There are eleven environmental focuses for your adults to make your congregation "greener." This workbook examines the theological reasons to make your congregation more environmentally friendly.



You may have read *Inhabiting Eden: Christians, The Bible, and the Ecological Crisis* by Patricia K. Tull This wonderful resource has now become a thought-provoking adult study with the addition of a Leaders Guide and a participant Workbook. In the Workbook, Tull challenges participants to think deeper on the subject and to reflect on his or her own life and community. Using Biblical Scripture as a key for environmental understanding the author leads us into understanding what God has created and how we might best care for God's Creation.



For whole-church involvement, the Resource Center has a six-week study for kids and adults by Rebekah Simon-Peter called Green Church. Session headings are: Repent, Reclaim, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rejoice No matter what you are teaching a good resource to keep on hand to add to discussion or activity time is 50 Ways to Help Save the Earth: How You and Your Church Can Make a Difference by Rebecca Barnes-Davies. Just like the version for kids here is a book chock-full of ideas fun things you can do while supporting good stewardship.



If you are thinking about good stewardship of God's Creation, the Presbytery of West Virginia's Resource Center is a good place to start studying. We have more resources than what is covered here. Come in, I'll help you find what you are looking for or give me a call at 304-744-7634 or email me at [resourcecenter@wvpresbytery.org](mailto:resourcecenter@wvpresbytery.org).

## SAVE ELECTRICITY/SAVE MONEY

American Electric Power offers residents savings on their central air conditioning costs. Here's how it works:

The resident contacts AEP and asks for the Residential Peak Reduction Program. After the resident completes a survey, an AEP employee installs a device on the AC unit outside. During the hottest summer week days, between noon and 8 pm, the device allows Appalachian Power to slow the cycling of the air conditioner. The fan continues to run and the cycling events are brief so that most residents are not aware that the AC is not working full blast.

How does this program help us? It makes the grid more reliable. It conserves energy. It lessens the demand for new power plants.

AEP extends \$8 in monthly bill credits to the householder, May through September, up to \$40 total. Contact AEP at 1-855-522-8216 or visit [www.takechargewv.com/summersavings](http://www.takechargewv.com/summersavings).

## INVASIVE PLANTS

We define invasive plants as plants that are not native and have negative effects on our economy, environment, and even human health. Not all plants introduced from other places are harmful. We are concerned with the ones that are aggressive and reproduce rapidly, causing major changes to our habitats. Invasive plants have not evolved along with our insects, birds, animals, and other natural organisms; so when they expand into a natural area, they take the place of the native plants and thus the native habitats. Invasive plants, insects, and animals are second only to development in the destruction of native habitats.

Church groups might wish to contact a watershed organization or a park to ask how they can help rid the areas of invasive species. Or church groups could take on their own sites.

Here are some ideas for getting rid of and preventing the expansion of invasive species, taken from [https://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource000988\\_Rep1135.pdf](https://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource000988_Rep1135.pdf)

**Get ahead of the invasion.** It is a lot easier to pull up a few small seedlings than to remove a forest. Many invasive plants are spread by bird droppings, so keep an eye out for unidentified plants underneath bird-roosting places, such as shade trees and fence posts. Mulching helps to keep the weeds down.

**Manage from the edge.** The first step is to stop the spread by pushing back the newer and weaker growth at the border of the patch, inch by inch, if need be.

**Stop the seeds.** Even if you can't do anything else, if you can stop the plant from going to seed, you can limit the amount of damage that the plant does.

**Use mechanical controls, not chemical warfare.** "Mechanical" means pull the plant up, cut it down, or shade it out. However, if you're not careful, you can end up doing more harm than good even with mechanical means. Three need-to-know things are: seed bank, root-fragment regeneration, and proper disposal methods.

**Seed bank:** Many plants, including lots of invasives, have seeds that can live for years in the ground, waiting for the right conditions for germination. Some seeds need to only be

exposed to light for seconds to start the biological process. Any time that the earth is disturbed by digging, cultivating, weeding, construction, etc., the seed bank is opened. This is why "disturbed earth" and "weeds" tend to be synonymous.

The seed bank is also why mulch is often a better weed-preventer than weeding; the mulch smoothers many of the weed seedlings without opening up the seed bank. If dig you must, it's important to come back weekly for a month or two to pull up any new seedlings. It's good if you can mulch the newly disturbed area (but don't ever pile on more than 3 inches of mulch or you'll kill the roots of the neighboring trees.) Cover-planting with beneficial plants can also crowd out the unwanted seedlings.

**Root regeneration:** The way invasives get the label is by being very aggressive, hard-to-kill plants. So not only do many of them strew long-lived seeds all over the place, many of them can sprout from root fragments. So if you take your shovel and dig out a bunch of big guys but lots of little pieces of root remain the ground, not only have you opened up the seed bank, each of the little root pieces may regenerate.

**Disposal:** Once you have separated the unwanted plant from the land, what do you do with it? If the plant has mature seeds on it, anywhere the dead plant goes (e.g. your compost pile), so do the seeds. The best method is to bag at least the seeds and roots in black plastic and leave the bag in direct sun for several months to sterilize. If you get the plant early enough in the year so it doesn't have seeds, bushes in particular, can be turned upside down in place so that the roots cannot touch the soil again, even with the help of a strong wind. In a wild area, the up-ended bushes make good brush-pile habitat.

**Hand pulling:** Hand pulling can almost always be used for isolated clumps, small plants, seedlings, and plants on the border of a large colony. Be aware that there can be continuing issues with the seed bank and root regeneration but with continued diligence, the balance is in your favor. Try to disturb the earth as little as possible, re-cover what you've disturbed, and try to get all the root fragments. Repeat at least monthly.

For large plants and bushes, there's a neat tool called a "weed wrench." This very cool device was invented by some even cooler self-described "tree people" who call themselves the "The New Tribe." It gives a small person the leverage to take out a big shrub. You can get one at [www.weedwrench.com](http://www.weedwrench.com).

Do not try to dig up or hand pull a major infestation without careful study and a plan to handle the long term aftermath. Otherwise, you may end up being the problem, rather than solving it. Major infestations are usually better treated by repeated cutting to the ground.

**Mowing and cutting:** Repeatedly cutting a plant to the ground, at least in theory, weakens the plant so that, eventually, it won't have the energy to re-sprout. This method works better with some species than others. With some species (e.g. well established Japanese knotweed), this process can take several years of diligence. Mowing does have the advantage of minimally disturbing the seed bank. It does, however, let sun reach the soil surface, so some seedlings will be encouraged, but it is much less intrusive than digging. It's generally your best approach for the center of the patch and larger plants. **The important part of mowing is frequency.** The plant must not be allowed to put out enough leaves to re-gain its energy or to go to seed. Otherwise, you're wasting your time (and possibly causing harm by the disturbance being done). For most invasives, at least monthly cutting is recommended. Start as early in the spring as possible.

**Shade it out:** Sun-lovers such as porcelain vine can be at least weakened by shade from larger plants. Here's where a fast growing but non-invasive cover-crop can be helpful once you've cut the bad guys down.

**The magic ingredients:** As you've probably figured by now the magic ingredients are persistence and patience. It is easier to prevent a major problem than to cure one. There's no "magic bullets"; use a combination of approaches over time.

## **AIR QUALITY AND YOU**

(From the WV Department of Environmental Protection)

As the weather warms and we begin spending more time outside, some people may start thinking about the air we breathe and how to protect it. You might be surprised to learn that using the correct light bulbs, properly inflating your vehicle tires, and reducing vehicle idling time are all ways to reduce air pollution. Small efforts add up when everyone works together. Efficient lighting and appliances not only reduce air pollution, it can save you money.

Also consider buying electric or battery-powered lawn care equipment. If you do use gasoline-fueled devices, try to prevent spills and overfills. Even small gasoline spills evaporate and pollute the air and groundwater.

Transportation choices can play a significant role in air quality improvement. Choose alternatives to driving, such as taking the bus, carpooling, biking or walking to your destination. Combine trips. Refuel in the evening hours when fumes from refueling won't combine with the sun's heat to increase ozone levels.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) for nine areas in West Virginia can be obtained by visiting DEP's Division of Air Quality page. The AQI is reported for Charleston, Huntington, Morgantown, Moundsville, Parkersburg, Weirton and Wheeling year round. The reported index is the calculated value for the past 24 hours and is updated Monday through Friday.

During ozone season, April 1 through Oct. 31, Greenbrier County and Martinsburg information is also reported. DAQ is involved in outreach throughout the year, and is aimed at helping members of the public learn more about how personal decisions affect air quality.

A video of some of the agency's outreach displays can be seen on YouTube. For more information on Air Quality Awareness Week, visit [www.epagov/airnow/airaware/](http://www.epagov/airnow/airaware/).

### **Faith-based Websites**

**PC(USA) Earth Care Congregation, and the Presbyterian "Environmental Ministries Action Network,"** are staffed by Rebecca Barnes, Associate for Environmental Ministries (PCUSA). <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/>

**Presbyterians for Earth Care,** <http://presbyearthcare.org>

Presbyterians for Earth Care (PEC), formerly Presbyterians for Restoring Creation, invites individuals and congregations to participate in the growing earth care movement within the PC(USA). PEC is a national eco-justice network that cares for God's creation by connecting, equipping, and inspiring Presbyterians to make creation care a central concern of the church.

**Creation Justice Ministries** "Capsules" e-news: <http://www.creationjustice.org/capsules.html>

Read the Spring 2016 Edition, which includes ideas for advocating for the Green Climate Fund, protecting the Arctic Refuge, teaching the connection between religion and science, resources for the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and more.

## Upcoming Events

**Sacred Earth, Sacred Trust, on June 12<sup>th</sup>**, is a worldwide, multi-faith day of prayer & action for the planet and a call for world leaders to commit to a 1.5 degree limit on global temperature rise. Six months after world leaders reached the Paris Agreement, communities around the world will come together in a day of beautiful commitment and blessing for the earth.

<http://www.sacredearth2016.org/>

The following events are included in the Creation Justice Ministries “Capsules” e-news:

<http://www.creationjustice.org/capsules.html>

- \* Protecting God's Creatures: Teleconference, June 5th at 4:00pm ET
- \* Creating a Climate for Change Conference at the Florence Civic Center in South Carolina on June 9, 2016
- \* The Powerful Faith-Based Organizing for Climate Justice Conference at Pendle Hill, Pennsylvania on June 16th-19th
- \* Faith Network Gathering for an Inclusive Economy, July 8th in Buffalo, NY
- \* Endangered Species round table in: Denver, CO (July 17th) and St. Louis, MO (July 31st)

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