



Creation Season

Proper 25, Year B, October 28, 2012

*Humans interacting/reconciling with 'this fragile Earth, our island home'
Together we seek to bring harmony and new ways of living
in sustainable interdependence with Creation.*

Information and Reflections for Homilists, Liturgists, and Clergy of the Episcopal Church Minnesota

Homilist's Notes

Theme:

Visions of life in Harmony with Creation

Revised Common Lectionary Readings: (Semi-Continuous Track)

Job 42: 1-6, 10-17 Psalm 34: 1-8 (19-22)
Hebrews 7:23-28 Mark 10:46-52

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:19-20, NRSV).

What is creation waiting for? What will it look like when it gets here? There is no one single definitive answer, and never will be, for nature is always fantastically varied and suited to the local environment. Furthermore, the kingdom of God remains a seed growing secretly in most places.

Never the less, we glimpse the kingdom here and there. We hear stories of it bursting forth, often in unexpected places. Sightings of life in harmony with creation come more often every year. Here are some places where we see signs or visions of harmonious life.

Visions in Scripture

Psalm 104, a hymn to Creator God, "is perhaps the fullest rendition of creation faith in the Old Testament." [Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (1997), p. 155] The creation of the heavens (vv. 2-4) and the earth (vv. 5-9) is followed by God's care for the earth and all its inhabitants, human and animal alike (vv. 10-18), all that while the months and days continue under God's direction (vv. 19-23) and all living beings continually depend from day to day on their Creator (vv. 24-30). "May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord" (v. 34). The psalm concludes with the prayerful hope that all creation will be returned to its primeval state before any evil came into it (v. 35). (Gibbs, John)

Isaiah 11: 6-9: "Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the

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cobra's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair. There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea."

Revelation 22:1-3: "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him."

There are of course, many, many more.

Visions in Literature

Voltaire: *Candide* Similar exploration of theodicy to Job with similar conclusion: "Cultivate your own garden." Thus, think small, turn to natural order, harmonize yourself with that.

Wordsworth: *Intimations of Immortality* Celebrates the visions of connection to nature in childhood and how the memories of that connection soothe a person crowded by the human-built environment (city).

Eternity of Nature

by John Clare

All nature has a feeling: woods, fields, brooks
Are life eternal; and in silence they
Speak happiness beyond the reach of books;
There's nothing mortal in them; their decay
Is the green life of change; to pass away
And come again in blooms revived.
Its birth was heaven, eternal is its stay,
And with the sun and moon shall still abide
Beneath their day and night and heaven wide.

Visions in Practice

Sustainable intentional Community: Koinonia

Koinonia-from the ancient Greek, meaning loving fellowship or community.

The Koinonia mission: We are Christians called to live together in intentional community sharing a

The Minnesota Episcopal Environmental Stewardship Commission (MEESC) has prepared Creation Season materials for Propers 22-25, Year B, with a focus on our interaction with our planet. If you find the information on this reflection to be of interest, you may wish to visit the MEESC website (www.env-steward.com) for more information. Members of MEESC are available to visit your congregation to assist you and them in an environmental stewardship walk.

To contact MEESC, visit their website (www.env-steward.com/info/members.htm), call the Rev Tom Harries, or send a note to:

MEESC
c/o C. Morello
4451 Lakeside Drive
Eveleth, MN 55734-4400

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life of prayer, work, study, service and fellowship. We seek to embody peacemaking, sustainability, and radical sharing. While honoring people of all backgrounds and faiths, we strive to demonstrate the way of Jesus as an alternative to materialism, militarism and racism.

Our vision is:

Love - through service to others

Peace - through reconciliation

Joy - through generous hospitality.

Koinonia is the Christian community founded in 1942 by Clarence Jordan, “prophet in blue jeans,” author of the *Cotton Patch Gospels*. Koinonia is the birthplace of Habitat for Humanity and many other peacemaking, social justice organizations.

Koinonia is active in ministries such as Heart to Heart Home Repair, youth and elder programs, peace & justice work, and a ministry of hospitality. Most of all, Koinonia is an intentional Christian community striving to be a “demonstration plot for the Kingdom of God.” Members “preach” Jesus’ gospel through the way we live. We choose to model our shared life after the early Christian communities as described in the Acts of the Apostles, not to withdraw from the world but rather to serve God and humankind more fully.

(<http://www.koinoniapartners.org/index.html>)

Sustainable and Healthy Food: Community Supported Agriculture and Organic Farms

One of the exciting movements of the last 20 years and more is the growth of Community Supported Agriculture and Organic farming here in Minnesota and across the country. Here is one representative realization of each vision:

Community Supported Agriculture: This description from the Land Stewardship Project Food and Farm Connection Pages

At their most fundamental level, CSA farms provide a weekly delivery of sustainably grown produce to consumers during the growing season (approximately June to October). Those consumers, in turn, pay a subscription fee. But CSA consumers don’t so much “buy” food from particular farms as become “members” of those farms. CSA operations provide more than just food; they offer ways for eaters to become involved in the ecological and human community that supports the farm. (<http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/csa.html>)

Organic Farms:

Rather than sell shares in the harvest, non CSA organic farmers sell their produce at farmers markets and through traditional outlets. Some small local farms operate according to organic principles but cannot afford the formal certification. Many people think buying local produce is more important than insisting on certification. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture maintains a list of Minnesota growers and outlets on its Minnesota Grown website. Printed versions are available. (<http://www3.mda.state.mn.us/mngrown/home.aspx>)

Gaviotas, Columbia

Gaviotas is a village of about 200 people in Colombia, South America. For three decades, Gaviotans - peasants, scientists, artists, and former street kids - have struggled to build an oasis of imagination and sustainability in the remote, barren savannas of eastern Colombia, an area ravaged by political terror. They have planted

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millions of trees, thus regenerating an indigenous rainforest. They farm organically and use wind and solar power. Every family enjoys free housing, community meals, and schooling. There are no weapons, no police, no jail. There is no mayor. The United Nations named the village a model of sustainable development. Gabriel Garcia Marquez has called founder Paolo Lugari the “inventor of the world.”

In the early 1980's Gaviotas began planting a Caribbean pine tree in the otherwise barren llanos of eastern Colombia. These trees were able to survive in the highly acidic soil with the help of mycorrhizal fungus applied to their roots. Over the years, this forest has expanded to approximately 8,000 hectares, or 20,000 acres. The presence of the forest has altered the local climate by generating an additional 10 percent rainfall, which also supports Gaviotas' water bottling initiative.

The processing of tree resin has become an important economic activity for the community. Gaviotans discovered that their pine forest can produce twice as much resin as any other resin-tapping forest in the world. Tree tappers normally use sulfuric acid when making incisions, but Gaviotans use an enzyme that appears to be beneficial for the trees. The use of mycorrhizal fungus may also contribute to their productivity. Gaviotans produce a very high-grade resin in their efficient, zero-waste facility. Even the packaging of the resin was designed to minimize excess material. Resin can be poured directly into cardboard boxes, cooled and shipped to market.

Palm trees are now being planted in the forest to support the production of biodiesel for the trucks that to transport their products to Bogota. Over the years the pine trees have provided a shady understory for other plants and animals to thrive. Some of these species may be dormant seeds of ancient rainforest that once covered the region. The pines are slowly being crowded out by the regeneration of indigenous species. The community is generating power with turbine engines fueled by the aging pines in their forest.

Curitiba, Brazil: A city for people, not for cars

Some statements about Curitiba:

- 1- Curitiba has the highest recycling rate in the World - 70%.
- 2- Curitiba has bus system that is so good that car traffic decreased by 30% while the population tripled in a twenty year period.
- 3- Curitiba has the largest downtown pedestrianised shopping area in the World.
- 4- Curitiba has built large numbers of beautiful parks to control floods rather than concrete canals. So many that they use sheep to cut the grass as it's cheaper than lawnmowers.
- 5- Curitiba is a city where 99% of inhabitants want to live. In comparison, 70% of Sao Paulo's residents want to live in Curitiba.
- 6- Curitiba's average income per person has gone from less than the Brazilian average in the 1970's to 66% greater than the Brazilian average.

Jaime Lerner first became mayor of Curitiba in the early 1970's (he has been mayor three times). His leadership was crucial to the changes. Curitiba did a number of things, best described here:

- 1- Built parks instead of canals to reduce flooding. Also used parks to make the city more liveable.
- 2- Pedestrianised the downtown area.
- 3- Invented and built the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) - a bus system that works like a light rail system but is 10 times cheaper.
- 4- Gave people bus tokens in return for waste.
- 5- Started a massive recycling scheme - all initiated by children.

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Also see: http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/jaime_lerner_sings_of_the_city.html

Mark Shepard 's family permaculture farm in Viola, Wisconsin

Mark has planted an estimated 250,000 trees over the last 15 years on his 106 acre farm. Forest Agriculture Enterprises is known for its hazelnut, chestnut, butternut, nut pine and apple produce, scion-wood and value added products. Mark has planted his trees and market garden patches on contour to retain water and to heal the land -the only exception is the hazelnut maze. Mark follows the keyline technique and has made a vast network of small pocket ponds and spreader swales to slow and spread rain water and to heal gully erosion. A Permaculture Farm ideally has a polyculture of plants, animals and activities occurring on it. In a polyculture system there's always something that can be grown, made or exchanged in order to acquire dollars and pay the bills. Once you start looking at Permaculture as a profitable venture, you start seeing all of the opportunity. Mark's farm is profitable according to typical economic standards, but according to nutrient production by cost, Mark's farm far exceeds traditional annual crop production farms. He also farms small-scale livestock in order to create zero-waste scenario and create more revenue streams.

prepared by the Rev Tom Harries and the Rev Buff Grace

Notes:

A Commentary on today's RCL Old Testament (Hebrew Scripture) and Gospel Readings is found online at:

<http://www.env-steward.com/lectionary/lectb/creation12/b-proper25/b-pr25-notes.htm>

with a more detailed discussion of Job 42: 1-6, 10-17 at

<http://www.env-steward.com/lectionary/lectb/b-p25-rcl-ot.htm>