

# GROWING *Together*

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## SUSTAINABILITY: HANDS AND FEET OF CHRIST IN OUR WORLD

*Christ has no body but yours  
No hands, no feet in the world but yours....  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good...*  
Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

If Christians are the hands and feet of Christ in the world, what kind of “ecological hand and footprint” are we leaving by the way we live? An “ecological footprint” is a measurement of the impact of one human being on the world’s resources.

On average one person is said to need 2.2 hectares of land to sustain life. 2.2 hectares of arable land merely provides the resources necessary for sustainable living, not the extravagance of North American ways. Because of the world’s rising population there is now an average of only 1.8 hectares of land per person available on earth. High income countries use 6.4 hectares per person, much more than their allotment of 1.8 hectares of the earth’s provision.

The Global Footprint Network warns us that right now we are using more resources than the planet can regenerate.

Even ordinary Canadians live lavishly compared to most of the earth’s population, leaving an ecological footprint much larger than is fair or just. Our world cannot sustain the excessive use of fossil fuels and the harmful emissions of greenhouse gases produced as a result of our consuming ways.

Christians have an urgent responsibility. We cannot continue to live like this. The church can choose to take an active role in reducing the negative impact of our lifestyle on the earth’s resources.



As many of our young people already know, their future depends on our actions now. Faithful Christians can take positive action:

- Study the theology of earth care. What does it mean that God created the world for humankind “to till and to keep it?” (Genesis 2:15)
- Debate the assumptions we have about unlimited supply.
- Find ways to scale back individual consumption.
- Learn to live more simply, more attentive to the needs of creation.
- Inform our elected representatives.

We need not be paralyzed by fear or overwhelmed by the size of the task. Christians have always been aware that small acts of love and compassion are the building blocks of wholesome community life. Our seemingly small initiatives: recycling, composting and conserving energy make a difference.

By means of its natural network of relationships and organizations the church is well placed to spread the word. Congregations can choose to teach everyone, young and old, that the ecological footprint we are leaving is ruinous. We can model energy-saving practices, host conferences and information sessions and challenge each other to reduce fossil fuel consumption.

Christ taught his followers to encourage and pray for one other, always giving thanks for “daily bread.” Living within our ecological means will require a concerted effort to live in “shalom” with each other around the world.

Scripture reminds us “the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.” (Romans 8:22-23) We have hope for the redemption of all things including our earth. God gives us the courage and the strength to work toward that end.

“The hands and feet of Christ” — that’s us — have been sent to bring hope to a devastated world. There is no better way to do this than through our communities of worship.



GROWING TOGETHER is a series of five Sunday bulletin inserts for the ecumenical education of Christ’s faithful.

Prairie Centre for Ecumenism  
600 - 45th Street West  
Saskatoon, SK S7L 5W9  
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phone: (306)-653-1633  
fax: (306) 653-1821  
email: pce@ecumenism.net  
www.ecumenism.net