

Meditation: “Creation Matters”

Today is the first day of Earth Week, which culminates with Earth Day on Saturday, April 22. This year, the main theme of the United Church is ‘Pray, Learn, and Act for Creation.’ We have done some praying already, so how about some learning?

Did you know that the United Church of Canada is a founding member of a national, faith-based coalition for climate justice called, “For The Love Of Creation”? In the New Creed we recited earlier, we said that we believe we are called, as a church, to live with respect in Creation, and to seek justice.

Did you know that climate change affects the Global South and those in the Far North disproportionately? Did you know that it also disproportionately affects racialized groups, women, and Indigenous peoples around the world? Because of that, climate justice is interconnected with racial justice, Indigenous justice, gender justice, and economic justice.

Did you know that Canada is the 10th richest country in the world, and that it is the 9th largest emitter of greenhouse gases? Greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane, nitrous oxide (NO_x), and water vapour. Yes, you heard right, water vapour is a greenhouse gas. All of those gases are called greenhouse gases because they absorb infrared radiation that is given off by the earth’s surface, resulting in something scientists call radiative forcing, which is a fancy way of saying that the greenhouse gases result in more energy from the sun being absorbed by the earth than it gives off into space, which results in, you guessed it, global warming. And global warming results in more moisture (water vapour) in the atmosphere.

Did you know that greenhouse gases were first identified by Fourier in 1827 and Tyndall in 1860, and that the first attempt to describe global warming was by Arrhenius in 1895? Global warming results in the retreat of glaciers, decline of polar sea ice, rising sea levels, increased droughts, increased heavy rainfalls (remember the atmospheric rivers that flooded parts of BC late in 2021, or parts of California this year?), flooding, extreme heat, storm surges, and extreme weather events such as cyclones, hurricanes, tornadoes, and the like. Global warming also results in increasingly rapid species extinction and threatens entire ecosystems.

So where do all those greenhouse gases come from? Well, we all know by now that burning fossil fuels results in CO₂ emissions, and that deforestation reduces the planet's ability to capture carbon. But did you know that CO₂ stays in the atmosphere for about 100 years? Methane comes from oil and gas fields, fracking, and livestock (and us if we eat too many beans). The primary source of nitrous oxide is heavily fertilized fields. Who knew?

The Climate Action Network indicates that to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, we need to reduce domestic GHG emissions by at least 60% of 2005 levels by 2030. That's only seven years away. The Climate Action Network indicates that we also have to help international efforts to reduce GHG emissions by 80% of 2005 levels. They list a number of ways to help reach those targets.

Okay. So what does any of this have to do with the scripture lesson for today? Jesus invited Thomas to touch his wounds. This week we are invited to touch the wounds of Creation. This past week there was a news piece about the alarming rate of melting of glaciers around the world in general, and the glaciers of Iceland in particular. And we have probably all heard of the water problems that the Oneida of the Thames have been experiencing, and have been invited to hear about at First-St. Andrew's United Church by their UCW.

When Jesus appeared to the disciples in that locked room he must have had a body, for how else would Thomas have been able to reach out and touch the wounds? These bodies of flesh and bone and blood matter to God. Do you remember the words of the first chapter of the book of Genesis? And God saw all that God had made and indeed it was, not just good, but *very good*. As much as our corporeal bodies matter, creation matters to God. In the book of Genesis the first thing that God did with Adam was to put him in the garden and put him to work, caring for the garden. Adam was the steward of the garden. We are the stewards of this earth. We've prayed, we've learned a little, and now comes the acting. What are you going to do for God's creation, our home, this week?