

## **"Information you can use in preparing your sermon on earth stewardship on special Rogation Day"**

**On April 27, Rogation Sunday which is the Sunday after earth day, Mississippi Episcopal clergy have been asked to present an earth stewardship sermon. Some suggestions for thinking about this topic come from Joyce Wilding, a lay leader in environmental ministry in the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee. She serves as the "EEN" provincial coordinator for "Province 4" of the church (a geographical region covering the Southeast U.S.). Her article, "Practical Ways to Care for God's Creation," is an example of how churchgoers in local congregations and dioceses can act in simple, effective ways to address environmental stewardship and justice in their homes and communities. While some of the organizations and programs listed below are specific to the Tennessee area, the author's home region, similar groups and projects will be found in most parts of North America.**

**The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and all that dwells therein. (Psalm 24:1).**

Protect the environment, promote sustainable communities and preserve the sanctity of creation with a ministry of:

- \* Reflection            Open our hearts through scripture, prayer, theology and liturgy.
- \* Education            Open our minds to learn and teach the issues before us.
- \* Action                Open our hands to implement projects.

Source of Light & Breath - promote green renewable energy, energy conservation, energy efficiency and clean air. Buy compact fluorescent light bulbs and energy efficient or Star Energy Appliances. Sign up for the Tennessee Valley Authority Green Power Switch or call your local power utility company.

House of the Lord - See the sustainable building practices of Southface Energy Institute and to learn how the U.S. Green Building Council promotes "Building A Sustainable Future." Buy "green" products like INTERFACE FLOORING at Loews. Work with AIA Concerned Architects of America.

Gift of Water - protect and enhance our watersheds, restore water quality. Support the "Cumberland River Compact ." When and where possible, install water saving devices such as low-flow commodes and aspirators on sink faucets to conserve water. Replant parish campuses and home gardens with native plants and trees that are drought-tolerant and have low requirements for water. Devise drainage systems that allow rainwater to flow from gutters and drainpipes to spread onto lawn and landscaped areas of parish campus and in home gardens, thereby reducing water lost to sewer systems. Learn how

some churches and their members are using rain barrels. Pave new or repave existing parking lots with materials that are pervious so that water penetrates and is sequestered in soil beneath parking area – reducing automotive oil and other automotive fluids in our local streams.

God's Covenant with Noah - preserve biodiversity, native habitats and wilderness areas. Learn how to make a Backyard Wildlife Habitat in your yard and at your parish. Participate in an intergenerational Fall Honeysuckle-Pull, where members from the Episcopal Youth Fellowship and an adult ecology group work together to eliminate invasive plants that destroy native plants. The non-native, Japanese honeysuckle vines are turned into circle wreaths, used for the base of Advent wreaths. This eliminates styrofoam Advent wreath bases and minimizes man-made decorations on the wreaths that cannot break down in landfills. We use and reuse pine cones, dried berries. A variety of greens from church members' yards are used to decorate the wreaths. After Christmas the greens can be composted. This whole project promotes the “reduce, reuse, recycle” slogan.

Buy and serve Bishops Blend Coffee – a Fair Trade, shade-grown organic gourmet coffee that benefits Episcopal Relief & Development . When you purchase Bishops Blend for you personal or parish use, you do the following:

- Provide funds to ERD for its domestic and overseas programs
- Support the Fair Trade agreement that ensures that coffee farmers are being paid a fair living wage and gain access to affordable credit
- Promote sustainable farming practices
- Support the manufacturer, Pura Vida Coffee , a Seattle-based company, which donates 100% of its net profits to benefit at-risk children in coffee-growing countries

Trees of Life – encourage sustainable forest management and endorse road-less forests in our state. Use less paper, buy 100% recycled or tree free paper when possible. Recycle your home and parish paper. Many office supply stores have recycled paper and all cotton paper. Call 800.641.1117 or contact GreenLine Paper for information on good green products.

Support the Religious Campaign for Forest Conservation (RCFC), a coalition of churches, synagogues and para-religious organizations that are joined by a common concern for forest conservation and wilderness as religious issues.

The RCFC website includes information about “Opening the Book of Nature” (OBN), and reflects the views of religious organizations which are active on issues of forests and wilderness. [From May 21- 23, 2004, an OBN retreat will be held at St. Mary's Retreat Center in Sewanee, Tennessee. Robin Gottfried, a member of the Eco-Economics Faculty at the University of the South, will lead this retreat.]

>From the earliest days of Christianity to the present, saints and teachers, such as Irenaeus, Basil, Bonaventure, Luther, and Calvin, urge us to read "the book of nature" that we might experience God and gain insights into the spiritual life. Explore what reading the book of nature means through spending our time outside in periods of quiet and reflection, followed by discussion. St. Basil wrote that the works of creation begin one's story.

Garden of God – implement healthy gardening practices. Choose foods less dependent on use of pesticides in farming. Choose alternatives to chemical pesticides for lawn care and mow your lawns less. Use earth-friendly lawn mowers. Support Community Based Gardens (CBGs), local gleaning projects, and annual CROP walks.

Celebration of the Word – integrate creation into our liturgy, celebrate God as Creator. To find worship resources and special liturgies visit the Episcopal Ecological Network (EEN) website or contact Joyce Wilding, contact information below.

" Conserving and Recycling in Mississippi "

In Mississippi, 3 million tons of solid waste per year are buried in 18 landfills around the state. This amount of garbage would cover 550 football fields 6 feet deep in compacted garbage. This is 3,409 acre/feet of garbage - this amount that would cover 3409 acres to a depth of one foot. A proportion of this total can be recycled which can mean that the total area used in landfills can be reduced.

Churches around the state are part of this total although there is no information about the volume churches contribute. If churches implement recycling for their own office and kitchen wastes, they keep that amount out of landfills and they set good examples for their congregations and for other institutions.

Recycling centers will necessarily be concentrated around urban centers, so figuring out how to serve churches that are far from a center will be a challenge. The practice of recycling is a societal good that institutions such as churches should promote when possible. It is in this spirit that we make this inquiry into the recycling participation and possibilities for individual churches in the Mississippi Episcopal Diocese.

When she is not coaching executives in leadership communication, Joyce Wilding is a lay leader in environmental ministry in the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee and serves as the "EEN" provincial coordinator for "Province 4" of the church (a geographical region covering the Southeast U.S.). Joyce may be reached by phone at 615.952.5812 or email at wilding1@bellsouth.net .