

GREEN MOMENT

April 20, 2008

INTRODUCING PRACTICAL HOPE

(to be shared as Minute for Mission)



In the Minute for Mission this Sunday, we are being invited to participate in a new program called **Practical Hope**. This program is about how our congregation can take practical, hope-filled steps towards living more sustainably on the earth. It is also about challenging our thinking about our relationship with the earth. How we view the world and see our place in it is fundamental to how we live our lives. We now know that how we live our lives has a direct impact on the earth's climate and its ability to sustain life.

Reflect for a moment on this emerging view of Creation:

*The whole earth is sacred space.
Every moment of life is sacred time.
All life is sacred.
Our interconnection in the web of life is a Sacred Trust.*

This humble view of ourselves as part of Creation challenges the earlier interpretation of the verse, "God gave man dominion over all the Earth." Too often, the idea of dominion had been understood as the right for "man" to use the earth as he pleased. We now know we are not above or separate from the rest of Creation.

In the United Church of Canada, this humbler view of the place of humans in Creation was first expressed in 1977

when the Task Force on the Environment warned that "[the drive for] ever greater growth in our industrial consumer-oriented society is a disease of which environmental problems are the symptom."

The Task Force recommended that:

"a world view in which we take responsibility as partners in Creation is more appropriate than seeing ourselves as the dominant species."

This worldview reveals a different set of responsibilities. We have no right of dominion over nature or over other people. Our position is even more humble than stewardship. We are only one precious part in a sacred web of life.

In 1992, the United Church issued the policy statement "The One Earth Community", which says, in a nutshell, that life is a gift from God and elicits our respect, awe and reverence. It calls us to recognize Earth community as a sacred trust and that we are called "to live in harmony with this total community, to draw on the Earth's sustenance responsibly, and to care for it that all may benefit equitably now and in the future."

Today, on this Earth Sunday 2008, every United Church congregation within Maritime Conference is being invited to sign on to a new program called Practical Hope which is designed to help Maritime congregations live out the United Church vision of a One Earth Community. Developed and led by the Environmental Working Group of Maritime Conference's Church in Action Committee, Practical Hope invites every congregation to live more responsibly within the web of life.

Today our congregation is being asked to do three things:

1. We are being asked to name someone to be our **Green Enthusiast** - before we leave today if possible. This person will receive information and resources on the program on behalf of our congregation, and will help us, as individuals and a congregation, to lighten our burden on God's Creation.

2. Our Green Enthusiast is asked to ensure that some appropriate people or committee completes a short, one-page questionnaire. The questions cover our environmental practices in various aspects of our church life – in our worship, in our education and study, in our daily lives, in our buildings and property, and in our community. The completed questionnaire will be sent to Maritime Conference office where the results will be compiled to create an overall picture of the current environmental practices among congregations. These results will guide the preparation of workshops and support materials so that the Environmental Working Group can best serve the needs of congregations.

3. Every congregation in Maritime Conference was invited today to celebrate our participation in this new program with an activity that promotes environmental sustainability. Our congregation has decided to:

(please fill in)

Through this Practical Hope program, we are being invited, as Christians - as individuals and as a congregation, not to

live as if we have dominion over the earth or over other people, but to take actions that will be visible evidence of hope for our times.

Over the next weeks and months, our Green Enthusiast will be learning about resources available through the Practical Hope program to support our congregation as we discuss and engage in activities to live more justly and responsibly in the web of life -- to live with respect in Creation.

*- the Environmental Working Group,
Church in Action Committee,
Maritime Conference*

