

# Religion and Ethics Focused on Sustainability

by Dieter T. Hessel

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## *Editor's Summary*

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The concept of sustainability resonates with many world religious traditions. Religious environmental activists emphasize a responsibility to conserve resources, protect biodiversity, and respect all beings, both human and nonhuman. To further these values, faith communities in the United States should teach eco-justice ethics informed by insights from natural sciences and rooted in sacred religious texts, continue to emphasize energy saving initiatives that are expected of all who claim to care for creation, advocate for environmentally responsible public policies, and nurture members through the difficulties of the eco-justice journey.

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Patterns of maldevelopment—unsustainable human production, consumption, and reproduction—threaten to undermine human development and the prospects for sustainable living. In fact, the problems resulting from maldevelopment portend massive species extinction, affecting the course of evolution itself. This perilous situation exposes a profound spiritual crisis and raises ethical questions that require urgent response from people of faith, especially those in the United States, during the next decade.

After presenting some examples of local and national faith-based engagement in “Earthkeeping,” or eco-justice action, this Article describes how religious responses to environmental dangers such as climate change have been more focused on lifestyle change than on policy reform. The ethics of a just and sustainable global community—featuring the four basic eco-justice norms of solidarity, sustainability, sufficiency, and participation that United Nations conferences anticipated and the Earth Charter articulated—have yet to be widely appreciated and applied.

The next steps for religious communities include teaching eco-justice ethics, emphasizing sustainable sufficiency in daily living, becoming energetic advocates for public policies and economic practices that build a just and sustainable community, acting in partnership with others who would also be responsible citizens of Earth, and nurturing members spiritually to journey with reverential gratitude and disciplined care for diverse creation.

## **I. Ethical and Religious Foundations of Sustainability**

The overarching moral assignment of our time is to act personally, institutionally, and politically in ways that are both ecologically fitting and socially just. The Earth community’s health now depends on humans relating to the natural world so as to maintain its ecological health and aesthetic quality, or as Aldo Leopold wrote in *A Sand County Almanac*, to attend to the “integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community.” We need a supportive ethos that melds respect for diverse life with justice for everykind and responsibility to future generations. Because sustainability links environmental health with socioeconomic well-being, sustainability ethics encompass concerns for both ecology and justice. Sustainability is served by doing several interrelated things:

- acting to protect the commons against pollution or enclosure;
- careful stewarding of scarce resources and fair distribution of their benefits;
- restraining production and trade;
- utilizing ecologically and socially appropriate technology;

- internalizing costs to the environment when pricing goods;
- fostering greater local/regional self-sufficiency;
- consuming frugally;
- preserving biodiversity; and
- delivering environmental justice to the vulnerable.

When will the norms of sustainability ethics, established through decades of international and ecumenical discourse, become operational among citizens and their governments? In 1972, the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (also known as the Stockholm Conference) emphasized that environmental improvement “for present and future generations” must be accompanied by inter- and intra-generational equity among humans. The Stockholm Conference’s two shifts in ethical sensibility—affirming transgenerational responsibility and understanding that there are holistic connections among humanity’s social, ecological, and economic obligations—were restated in the Brundtland Commission’s 1987 assertion that “sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>1</sup>

All people are equally “entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.” The Earth Summit’s action plan, Agenda 21, pushed for (1) distributive justice (fair sharing) of environmental resources, or “natural capital,” and (2) moral constraint on human activities that, if not curtailed or redirected, will severely degrade ecosystem functioning and biodiversity. Excessive use of resources by affluent people and powerful corporations often makes these resources unavailable to those who most depend on them for sustainable living.

In authentic sustainable development, “neither the value of economic justice nor the value of ecological integrity is treated instrumentally.”<sup>2</sup> It expresses a genuine sense of mutual relationship between humans and nature, and discards a mere use-value approach to the environment. It challenges the popular but false assumption that societies can wait until they develop economically to adopt measures for environmental protection. Neo-liberals and Marxists alike still assume that economic development comes first, to be followed eventually by ecological sustainability. But that is an impossible scenario for today’s increasingly crowded and technologically toxic world, which faces severe biophysical limits and growing socioeconomic inequity. Ecology and justice are non-sequential, simultaneous requirements; otherwise, the world will have neither.

The vision of a just and sustainable Earth community resonates with major religious traditions of the West, East, South, and Indigenous Peoples, which, at their best, inculcate awareness of the sacred and visions of an interdependent Earth community pivoting around relief in a just, loving

God or a benign cosmic order. Ecumenical Christianity, in particular, has played a reinforcing role in this regard by fostering a vision and principles of a “Just, Participatory, and Sustainable Society.”

In 1975, theologians and ethicists at the Nairobi Assembly of the World Council of Churches discerned that there will be little environmental health without social justice, and vice versa. Having come to this realization, ecumenical gatherings and leaders began to express an inclusive vision of eco-justice—ecological health and social equity together. In subsequent deliberations and programs over the three decades, ecumenical thought and action highlighted a global ethic of just and sustainable Earth community emphasizing four inter-related norms:

- *solidarity* with other people and creatures;
- ecological *sustainability* in development, technology, and production;
- *sufficiency* as a standard of equitable consumption and organized resource-sharing with genuine floors and ceilings; and
- socially just *participation* in decisions about how to obtain sustenance and to manage community for the good of all.<sup>3</sup>

Solidarity comprehends the full dimensions of Earth community and of inter-human obligation. Sustainability highlights ecological integrity and wise behavior through the entire cycle of resource use. The norms of sufficiency and participation express the distributive and participatory requirements of social justice. As James B. Martin-Schramm and Robert L. Stivers have written, “Only an ethic and practice that stress sufficiency, frugality, and generosity will ensure a sustainable future”; in turn, “participation is concerned with empowerment and [removing] obstacles to participating in decisions that affect lives.”<sup>4</sup>

Observance of each of these four ethical norms reinforces the others. All four are core values to guide personal practice, social analysis, economic life, and public policy. They express a moral posture of respect and fairness toward all creation, and underscore the proactive link between caring for other-kind’s flourishing and humanity’s well-being—for today and in the long term. These norms allow for plural expression and contextual application that are respectful of both biotic and cultural diversity.

The breadth and depth of these ethical norms are articulated in the sustainability ethics of the Earth Charter,<sup>5</sup> which

1. WORLD COMM’N ON ENV’T & DEV. (BRUNDTLAND COMM’N), OUR COMMON FUTURE 43 (1987).  
 2. J. Ronald Engel, *The Ethics of Sustainable Development*, in ETHICS OF ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT: GLOBAL CHALLENGE, INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE 11 (J. Ronald Engel and Joan Gibb Engel eds., 1990).

3. These norms are discussed in Dieter T. Hessel, *Ecumenical Ethics for Earth Community*, VIII THEOLOGY & PUB. POL’Y, NOS. 1 & 2 (1996); WILLIAM E. GIBSON, ECO-JUSTICE—THE UNFINISHED JOURNEY 26-29 (2004); AND JAMES B. MARTIN-SCHRAMM & ROBERT L. STIVERS, CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: A CASE METHOD APPROACH (2003), ch. 2.

4. MARTIN-SCHRAMM & STIVERS, *supra* note 3, at 41-42.

5. Earth Charter International, based in Sweden and Costa Rica, is an up-to-date Internet source of information about the Earth Charter text, related programs, and resources. My earlier essay, Chapter 25, in STUMBLING TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY (John C. Dernbach ed., 2002), unpacks the 16 ethical principles of the Earth Charter, which was issued in 2000 by the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

has been endorsed by thousands of civil society groups on six continents and by government representatives at the World Conservation Union. Completed early in 2000, the Earth Charter is based on “the largest global consultation process ever associated with an international declaration,” and is increasingly seen as representing a consensus position on the religious and ethical basis for sustainability.<sup>6</sup> The Charter is a holistic, layered document that articulates the inspirational vision, basic values, and essential principles needed in a global ethic for Earth community.

The first of the Earth Charter’s four general principles—“Respect Earth and life in all its diversity”—affirms the interdependence and intrinsic worth of every kind. From that follow three more general principles that specify shared ethical responsibility: (2) human responsibility for otherkind, i.e., “care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love”; (3) responsibility within and among human societies, i.e., “build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful”; and (4) responsibility for future as well as present generations, i.e., “secure Earth’s bounty and beauty for present and future generations.” Humans are to care for and to conserve the community of life in all three spheres, sharing benefits and burdens, while recognizing that quality of life and relationships—among people and with nature—are the crucial criteria. In other words, the human goal is to have and share life abundantly. (See the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John 10:10.)

Sustainability ethics, when put into practice, embody a positive alternative to destructive economic maldevelopment and consumption. The eco-justice vision and the values characteristic of such ethics challenge us all—our energy, economic, and political leaders, as well as the public, religious communities, and each of us personally—to discern what should (and should not) be done to achieve sustainability with justice in a hotter, more crowded world.

Tragically, despite the solemn commitments to advance this agenda made by governments and NGOs at the world summits in Rio de Janeiro (1992) and Johannesburg (2002), there are still more than two billion poor people trying to live on less than \$2 per day. The global money economy continues to treat natural resources and traditional communities ruthlessly, and ignores future costs.

Religious communities in the United States can play a key role by illuminating a more sustainable path and teaching their members about the impact of human actions or inaction on future generations as well as the present generation struggling to live with dignity. Americans, the great majority of whom are people of faith, constitute a significant part of the richest 20 percent of the world’s population that has been consuming over 85 percent of what the world economy produces, much of it in the form of fossil fuels. (At the same time, the poorest 20 percent of the world’s population has been consuming less than two percent.)<sup>7</sup>

6. EARTH CHARTER INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL, THE EARTH CHARTER INITIATIVE, available at [http://earthcharterinaction.org/about\\_charter.shtml](http://earthcharterinaction.org/about_charter.shtml) (last visited Sept. 8, 2007).

7. U.N. DEV. PROGRAMME, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2 (1998).

What people, enterprises, and government at all levels in the United States do to consume and waste less while acting to share limited world resources equitably will make a big difference. If American society and the U.S. government continue to ignore sustainability requirements, and fail to set the pace toward a just and sustainable future, other nations that have been developing rapidly and polluting excessively will have little incentive to go green voluntarily and to accede to binding international agreements. The national and global situation of unsustainable human enterprise exposes a deep spiritual and ethical crisis requiring priority attention from people of faith in the United States.

## II. Responsive Faith Communities in the United States

In the United States, many religious leaders and adherents have been as slow as the general populace at comprehending the urgency of the environmental crisis or grasping the linkages among ecology, justice, and faith. Some religious bodies<sup>8</sup> still deny that humans should act to reduce global warming. And although a growing number of Americans of every religious faith affirm the need to conserve energy resources and protect the environment, it is unclear how much they will do in their daily lives, occupations, and politics for ecological health and socioeconomic justice.

On the other hand, there is quite a story to tell about the rise of engaged religious environmentalism.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps as many as one in 10 congregations now have committees or action groups, as well as special moments of ritual life, that affirm the spiritual and ethical importance of “caring for creation.” They participate in preservation struggles, ecological restoration projects, community-supported agriculture, and practices of sustainable living such as energy efficiency. Furthermore, networks have organized within major Christian denominations—Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics—to support Earthkeeping members and congregations.<sup>10</sup> Synagogues participate in a network called the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life. Finally, cadres of members in Earthkeeping congregations are networking effectively with each other and with environmental organizations to make a denominational, ecumenical, and public difference. Examples of interfaith alliances include Faith in Place (a Chicago cluster), Earth Ministry (a Seattle-based regional program), and Religious Witness for the Earth (active on the East Coast).

Religious environmental activists underscore contemporary humanity’s ethical responsibility to respect and conserve Earth’s ecological integrity and biodiversity while acting to

8. For example, on June 13, 2007, the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, refused to ask the federal government to do something about climate change, claiming that “scientific evidence does not support computer models of catastrophic human-induced global warming,” and then asserting that major efforts to reduce greenhouse gases would unfairly impact the world’s poorest people. Reported in *The Christian Century*, July 10, 2007, at 16.

9. ROGER S. GOTTLIEB, A GREENER FAITH: RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENTALISM AND OUR PLANET’S FUTURE (2006).

10. See, e.g., PRESBYTERIANS FOR RESTORING CREATION, PRC UPDATE (quarterly newsletter), available at [www.prcweb.org](http://www.prcweb.org). The newsletter is in its 13th year.

achieve social and economic justice. The sustainability and justice being sought has both intra- and inter-generational dimensions. The objective is to journey toward a durable, healthy future for humans and otherkind by showing respect for all beings; consuming less; preserving more; and seeking distributive, participatory, and restorative justice for the Earth's most vulnerable occupants, both human and nonhuman.

Recognizing how environmentally and socially crucial the next few decades of the 21st century will be, more faith communities in the United States intend to reduce their ecological footprint and to protect the commons by eating locally grown organic food (including humanely treated food animals), purchasing imported products that are "fair-traded," using appropriate technology, and conserving energy while reducing waste.<sup>11</sup> Those communities recognize the significance of what Bill McKibben calls "deep economy,"<sup>12</sup> and they are now much more aware of the urgent need to address the human causes of ominous ecological deterioration. They resonate with Al Gore's assertion in his documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*—shown in thousands of congregations and community groups as well as movie theaters—that global warming is a moral issue as well as a scientific/technical issue. In short, a growing segment of the faith community grasps how pervasive the problem is and wants to meet it with commensurate action. There are current, timely examples of people of faith taking action on behalf of sustainability.

### A. Step It Up

Segments of the religious community joined the environmental studies and action community in the Step It Up grassroots organizing campaign initiated at Middlebury College. This campaign culminated in demonstrations across the country on April 14, 2007, to demand that Congress commit to cutting carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. Students in 60 evangelical colleges and seminaries participated, thanks to a call to action written and circulated by University of Wisconsin professor Cal DeWitt, who has organized a network of environmental studies professors in Christian colleges.

*The Christian Century* published a cover story by Bill McKibben on the campaign. Interfaith Power and Light, an interfaith ministry with state chapters and noted for fostering green power production and using energy-efficient light bulbs, put the Step It Up organizers in touch with numerous congregations. The National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Working Group alerted its network. Unitarian environmental activists and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life also lent their energy to this effort. As the result of these efforts, at the April 14 demonstration the banners of environmentally engaged congregations were evident in many localities—a public expression of commitment to Earthkeeping that would have been unlikely five years earlier.

### B. Live Earth Pledge

Another striking example of eco-justice activism by segments of organized religion was the inclusion in the 7/7/07 Live Earth Pledge promoted by Al Gore of places of worship (the United States has several hundred thousand) among the settings in which to work for a dramatic increase in energy efficiency. The pledge lists several settings, including "place of worship" (including churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques) that need to become energy efficient. This movement was due, in part, to the influence of organizations such as the National Religious Partnership for the Environment and Interfaith Power and Light. Such examples of engagement by organized religion suggest that "the day has passed when Americans of faith view environmentalism as either a luxury to be addressed once we've conquered war or poverty, or a sign of incipient paganism; people who disagree about how creation happened have agreed to make sure it is not destroyed."<sup>13</sup>

### C. Advocating and Supporting Effective Policies

With awareness and opinion having moved beyond the tipping point, the question is not whether religious communities and citizens will express concern, but how seriously religious communities, ethicists, publics, and politicians in affluent countries will act to grapple with climate change and other eco-social threats. Will the response go beyond becoming more efficient and conserving energy users? Will the response include shifting toward renewable ways of producing and more local patterns of consuming? Finally, will it express vigorous advocacy of collective action through public policies that set mandatory caps on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or institute a significant carbon tax, while also taking steps to meet the plight of vulnerable human communities and ecosystems?

The shape of the problem is still perceived quite narrowly among economists and the mass media as an issue of energy efficiency and conservation that can be "solved" by moving to a low-carbon economy powered by green technology that large corporations want to provide for handsome profits. But global warming results from accumulating greenhouse gases, driven by a pervasive, destructive, market-driven pattern of overproduction and consumption, which must be displaced by systemically changing the way we do almost everything.

Voluntarily reducing energy consumption is a prominent aspect of what needs to be done to keep global warming from becoming catastrophic, but a response that is commensurate with the problem requires deeper and wider changes. As Barry Commoner observed when interviewed at age 90, "The only rational answer (to the climate crisis) is to change the way in which we do transportation, energy production, agriculture and a good deal of manufacturing. The problem originates . . . in the form of the production of goods. Action has to be taken on what's produced and how it's produced."<sup>14</sup> If the response

11. Earth Ministry in Seattle, Wash., and Green Faith in New Brunswick, N.J., are two outstanding regional organizations offering newsletters and interfaith educational resources on sustainable living.

12. BILL MCKIBBEN, *DEEP ECONOMY: THE WEALTH OF COMMUNITIES AND THE DURABLE FUTURE* (2007).

13. Bill McKibben, *Stepping It Up to Save the Earth*, 36 SOJOURNERS MAGAZINE No. 7 (July 2007), at 16.

14. Thomas Vinciguerra, *A Conversation With Barry Commoner*, N.Y. TIMES, June 19, 2007, at D2.

is not systemic, we are likely to see an increasing green style among affluent consumers that actually does little to reduce overall CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Most of the public discourse and religious community response has stayed in the realm of fostering less wasteful lifestyles marked by better recycling, purchasing fair trade goods, eating locally grown food, reducing personal and household energy use, driving cars that get higher gas mileage, and planting trees. Responses of this kind are important and can become cumulatively significant, especially if religious communities assert their spiritual and moral priority. But individual lifestyle changes are not a sufficient response to entrenched patterns of maldevelopment; collective actions are also necessary to grapple effectively with the vast scale and looming planetary effects of the climate change scenarios so authoritatively projected by scientists of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

At a minimum, the global community of nations must agree upon and implement binding reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> gas emissions, fairly allocated per capita, while rich countries also act to transfer appropriate technologies that enable poor and developing countries to adapt to or to mitigate the destructive impact of global warming that so disproportionately affects them. That latter ethical consideration of what the rich owe the poor and vulnerable deserves much more religious and political attention, now that we have better knowledge of the who, what, and where of climate change.

The special responsibility of the United States, where less than 5 percent of the world's population has been releasing 25 percent of all greenhouse gases, cannot be deflected by pointing at rapidly growing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from China and India. The Earth community urgently needs accountable, collaborative action. People of faith in the United States will show that they are morally serious not only by reducing their driving, purchasing, energy use and waste, but also by advocating public policies that mandate major reductions in carbon emissions, and that deliver compensatory justice for the poor countries that are owed a large ecological and social debt by wealthy countries. The reality of recent history is that wealthy countries and corporations based in them have not only extracted or enclosed poor country resources; rich country production and consumption was the source of at least two-thirds of the CO<sub>2</sub> gas emissions that accumulated in the atmosphere through 2006. With China and India also becoming major CO<sub>2</sub> emitters, the rich countries must set an example by reducing emissions rapidly—particularly from coal-burning power plants and carbon fuel transportation systems. (U.S. action to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions must not be postponed during the looming global recession.)

So far the federal government has responded weakly, and media campaigns for personal lifestyle change have not become robustly green. Purchasing expensive hybrid SUVs and carbon offsets for air travel while screwing in energy-efficient light bulbs offers false promises of sustainability—what the political philosopher Michael Sandel has called “a painless mechanism to buy our way out of the more fundamental

changes in habits, attitudes and way of life that are actually required to address the climate problem.”<sup>15</sup>

### III. Next Steps

Faith communities, particularly those in the United States, should take the following five steps to move toward ecological and social justice.

#### *A. Teach the Vision and Values of Eco-justice Ethics Informed by Insights From Green Sciences and Rooted in the Sacred Texts of Religion*

To offer just one example of invoking sacred texts, the scriptural portrayal of the fifth and sixth days of creation (Genesis 1:20-31), which Jews and Christians traditionally viewed as a mandate from God for human domination of nature, actually underscores human interdependence with, and stewardship of, the vast community of diverse life. Rereading the Genesis saga now with awareness of Earth's evolution and current human devolution, we see that other creatures had prior place and were mandated to “be fruitful and multiply” before humans even came on the scene.

#### *B. Continue to Emphasize the Simpler Living, Energy Saving, Earth-Community-Building Initiatives That Are Expected of All Who Claim to Care for Creation*

Sustainable energy use is already the focus of networks such as Interfaith Power and Light, which was preceded by a 1990s project, initiated in California, called Episcopal Power and Light. A promising example of organized religious response to global warming, now active in a majority of the states, Interfaith Power and Light supports green energy producers and fosters energy-efficient lighting, heating, and cooling of households and congregations.

#### *C. Communities of Faith Must Advocate Energetically for Environmentally Responsible Public Policies*

Members of faith-based communities can connect with the Interfaith Climate and Energy Campaign, supported by the Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches and the National Religious Partnership for the Environment.<sup>16</sup> The campaign's goal is to move beyond changing lifestyles and light bulbs to advocating public policies that put mandatory caps on carbon emissions and internalize environmental costs of greenhouse gas emissions occurring throughout the economy. It remains to be seen whether faith

15. Comment by political philosopher Michael Sandel, quoted in an op-ed column by Thomas Friedman, *Live Bad, Go Green*, N.Y. TIMES, July 8, 2007.

16. In addition to the website of the Interfaith Climate and Energy Campaign, see EARTH MINISTRY, *THE CRY OF CREATION: A CALL FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE* (2006).

communities will also push for concrete steps of compensatory justice designed to help the most vulnerable, to whom we owe a large ecological debt. A small percentage of revenues from a carbon tax could be earmarked for international assistance to help poor countries and communities adapt effectively to the severe effects of climate change.

#### *D. Because Sustainability With Justice Involves Changing Our Daily Lives, Our Institutions, Our Economics, and Our Politics, Religious Communities Should Not Try To Go It Alone*

People of faith need to act in partnership with others who also want to be responsible Earth citizens.<sup>17</sup> In the last few years, environmental organizations have become less diffident about reaching out to religious bodies that care for creation and want to build Earth community. Congregations should reciprocate by collaborating with others to protect or restore special places, reduce individual and institutional consumption, build community, support local food systems, foster renewable energy and corporate responsibility, and influence public officials.

#### *E. Religious Bodies Awakening to the Sustainability Challenge Must Nurture Their Members Spiritually to Continue a Difficult (If It's Easy It Won't be Fulfilling) Eco-justice Journey*

Because the deepening environmental crisis is cultural as well as ecological, one of the religious communities' most significant contributions is to inspire reverence, gratitude, repentance, and self-discipline—to the benefit of Earth community. As one religiously resonant sentence in the Earth Charter Preamble puts it, “The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.”

## **IV. Conclusion**

In 2004, I joined 10 other theologians and activists gathered by the National Council of Churches to craft *God's Earth Is Sacred*,<sup>18</sup> an open letter to church and society in the United States. We admitted to becoming “un-Creators” and underscored the urgency of addressing environmental degradation:

To continue to walk the current path of ecological destruction is not only folly; it is sin. . . . The imperative first step is to repent of our sins, in the presence of God and one another. This repentance of our social and ecological sins will acknowledge the special responsibility that falls to those of us who are citizens of the United States. Though not even five percent of the planet's human population, we produce one-quarter of the world's carbon emissions, consume a quarter of its natural riches, and perpetuate scandalous inequities at home and abroad. . . .

The second step is to pursue a new journey together, with courage and joy. We can share in renewal by clinging to God's trustworthy promise to restore and fulfill all that God creates and by walking, with God's help, a path different from our present course. To that end, we affirm our faith, propose a set of guiding (eco-justice) norms, and call on our churches to rededicate themselves to this mission.

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17. Dieter Hessel, *Becoming a Church for Ecology and Justice*, in THE PROPHETIC CALL: CELEBRATING COMMUNITY, EARTH, JUSTICE, AND PEACE (Hugh Sanborn ed., 2004), reviews what mainline churches in the United States have been doing and how congregations can become more engaged.

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18. The full text of the theologians' letter, *God's Earth Is Sacred*, is reprinted in the appendix to EARTH AND WORD (David Rhoads ed., 2007) at 291-300. An optional study guide is available from the Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., at [www.ncccojustice.org](http://www.ncccojustice.org).