

Adventists and the Environment

Seventh-day Adventists around the world are concerned about the environment. Climate change, global warming, carbon emission are the daily staple diet of many a news editor as they prepare the newspapers for our daily consumption. The headlines grab our attention and arrest our thoughts and imaginations; will we have a viable planet to pass on to our children yet alone our children's children? New frontiers are being sought just in case the prophets of doom death and destruction are right as the moon and beyond become the next step for man and mankind. While back here on earth politician's, president's, pontiff's, and prime minister's, convene conferences, issue joint declarations and set targets to steer the world clear of disaster, requesting of us to think globally but act locally. But what organization is best placed to rise to this challenge than the Seventh day Adventist church!?

Enshrined in our 28 fundamental beliefs is the doctrine of Stewardship which outlines the churches green agenda when it states; **We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessing of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use...**

As a Church are we taking this responsibility seriously?

God has placed us on this His earth as His image bearers to look after and manage His environment faithfully and lovingly. Seventh-day Adventists believe the preservation and nurture of the environment relates intimately with the way we serve God.

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee in an approved and voted statement released in 1996 stated;

Unfortunately, men and women have been increasingly involved in an irresponsible destruction of the earth's resources, resulting in widespread suffering, environmental degradation, and the threat of climate change. While scientific research needs to continue, it is clear from the accumulated evidence that the increasing emission of destructive gasses, the massive destruction of the American rain forests, and the depletion of the protective mantle of ozone (the so-called greenhouse effect), are all threatening the earth's eco-system. There are dire predictions of global warming, rising sea levels, increasing frequency of storms and destructive floods, and devastating desertification and droughts.

These problems are largely due to human selfishness and greed which result in ever-increasing production, unlimited consumption, and depletion of non-renewable resources. Solidarity with future generations is discussed, but the pressure of immediate interests is given priority. The ecological crisis is rooted in humankind's greed and refusal to practice good and faithful stewardship.

Seventh-day Adventism advocates a simple, wholesome lifestyle, where people do not step on the treadmill of unbridled over-consumption, accumulation of goods, and production of waste. A reformation of lifestyle is called for, based on respect for nature, restraint in the use of the world's resources, re-evaluation of one's needs, and reaffirmation of the dignity of created life.

What can the local church, conference or union do to advocate this much needed reform?

To begin with there are internationally recognized Environmental Management Systems (EMS) such as ISO 14000, this is a set of management standards that enables organisations to identify and modify or control how their activity impacts on their environment. Further, EMS helps to improve the organizations environmental performance continually, and to implement a systematic approach to setting environmental objectives and achievable and demonstrable targets. It also provides assurance to management that it is in control of the organizational processes and activities having an impact on the environment and assures employees and or volunteers that they are working for an environmentally responsible organization.



Churches can be encouraged to:

Economise:

We live in a world where waste has become big business, as a church there is need for us cut down on what we use. How much time and fuel is consumed through needless travel to meetings when technologies exist whereby virtual and or video conferences can enable the church to do business greener and cheaper thus saving the plants vital resources. How much food is wasted after the pot luck lunch? How many sets of cutlery are disposed of every Sabbath? How many members travel miles to go to church when there is one right around the corner waiting for your God given gifts to arrive?

Nurture:

The future of our planet lies for the moment in our hands, as a church we have the opportunity of nurturing future generations to think environmentally by what we do now. How can we help our young people to change the way they view the world and move them from consumer to conservator?

Value:

We will ultimately never know what we have until it's gone; it is necessary therefore to value what we have now and pass on the earth legacy to our children and our children's children and beyond.

Initiate:

Set up green teams for the delivery of the churches environmental agenda, give regular reports at board and business meetings as to the churches progress or need for progress. Find out what other agencies and or organizations are doing in your area to help protect the environment and seek to partner with them to impact the wider community.

Recycle:

Our church must endeavour where possible to; recycle, remodel, reuse, reclaim, repair and practice restraint in the use of the world's resources through the re-evaluation of our corporate needs.

Organize:

Churches need to be intentional and decisive in the way they approach the issue of saving the environment. This must be outcome driven, knowing what needs to be achieved and organizing steps to get to the desired outcome. This is just not a corporate responsibility but personal one, as each of us must organize our own environmental agenda.

Nature:

Our planet must be treated with respected, we are to work as close to nature as possible allowing ourselves the opportunity to spend time observing life's lesson book. There is much to learn and benefits to be derived from spending time in nature and working with it and not against it. God made nature for our benefit; God made "the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Revelation 14:7, NIV). Let us enjoy it, work with it and use it for the glory of God not our own

Manage:

We are called by Christ to be custodians and caretakers of time, opportunities, abilities, possessions, and the blessing of the earth and its resources. These gifts must be managed well as we will all have to ultimately give an account to Him!

Energy –Efficiency:

How many churches have energy saving light bulbs, solar panels, water saving devices or wind turbines? Are we being as energy efficient as we could be?

Needs Assessment:

What are the wants of your church and how do they compare to the needs of your church? Upon closer inspections our needs are often unrealistic based upon our greed. In helping to save the environment we need to re-evaluate our needs in light of the world in which we are placed, its future sustainability depends on it. How many churches with much will help those with little?

Temperate:

To much of one thing is not good for anyone, some may go overboard in their approach to saving the planet but this is just one small aspect of our message on stewardship and we must be balanced and temperate in all that we do. Saving that environment is one thing but saving men and women's souls along with our own is the ultimate thing!



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