

NORTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY GUIDELINES
July 9, 1990

INTRODUCTION

North Presbyterian Church is a landowner, consumer, and taxpayer, as are its individual members and families. How the congregation manages its land, organizes its consuming of goods and services, and participates in community life can be a powerful model for its members, and can be a noticeable signpost for its community, nation, and world. This policy statement is intended to provide guidelines for decisions that boards or committees of the church need to make as they manage the church properties, or design or implement church programs. This statement is directed to both the church as an institution, and the individual members and families of North Presbyterian Church.

PREMISE

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,
the world and they that dwell therein."

These are the opening words of Psalm 24. They state the consistent and powerful premise of Scripture that humans are stewards not sovereigns, managers not owners, guests not possessors, of the earth. We have a responsibility to nurture rather than to exploit creation, and to co-exist among rather than to exert authority over other creatures. We have been given the gift of understanding many if not all of the implications of our actions and choices, and our impact upon creation and living creatures. Humanity is coming to understand that as there is only one God, so there is only one creation, that every action an individual or organization takes impacts the entire creation, that every action is a response to creation's Creator.

GOALS

Our goal is to suggest guidelines for individuals and families, and for those who manage church property or design or implement church program, that will reflect God's sovereignty over creation and humanity's invitation to be nurturing stewards of the earth and all its creatures.

GUIDELINES

1. It shall be the environmental worship policy of NPC
 - a. to incorporate regularly into worship sermons, prayers, hymns, anthems, and liturgical resources that express praise of God's grace and glory in creation, and commitment to participation with God in protecting and restoring creation, both human and nonhuman;
 - b. to draw upon the resources of the Biblical story, Reformed faith, and contemporary knowledge in order to understand what God as Creator and Redeemer does and commands in the social and environmental crisis of our time.
2. It shall be the environmental education policy of NPC
 - a. to increase among us a theologically informed awareness of environmental issues, allow for open discussion without intimidation, and inform the members of the congregation about steps they can take to become environmentally responsible,
examples: The Session could encourage the Church School, Youth, Adult Education, and Church and Society committees, and Presbyterian Women to select curricula and offer programs annually in this area. A bulletin board and/or pamphlet rack could be set aside for materials dealing with this issue; encourage children, youth and adults to participate in outdoor events and conferences that nurture respect and appreciation for nature, including wildlife and wildlands.
 - b. to cooperate with the presbytery, synod, and General Assembly in publicizing the issues of caring for creation and educating the community,
examples: share our concern as Presbyterians by publishing information in the Nor'easter, the North Star, the Amherst Bee, and other religious and secular media.
 - c. to affirm the validity of the involvement of individuals and the congregation in community organization and political action that address such issues as clean air and water, land management, waste reduction and disposal, and energy conservation; encourage expression of opinion on national and state environmental issues through participation in IMPACT and its Environmental Stewardship Network; encourage the Session to designate individuals to represent NPC in local organizations addressing environmental issues and report periodically to the Session and congregation; encourage the Town of Amherst to develop and implement a comprehensive recycling plan and an environmentally sound land management policy.

- d. to advocate more equitable consumption of the world's resources among developed countries,
examples: encourage reduced water usage: "launder less, flush less, shower less;" encourage buying fuel-efficient cars; encourage walking, biking, public transportation and carpooling; encourage increasing house insulation to national standards; and in general encourage a reduction in our own unnecessary demand for limited resources.
- e. to address the issue of population control by supporting and encouraging governmental and private efforts to make sex education and birth control information readily available, both domestically and globally, and by providing programs of sex education and birth control information to young people in the church.

3. It shall be the environmental administration policy of NPC

- a. to reduce our consumption of petroleum/non-renewable products.
examples: continue using china cups at coffee hour; create a 'tool library' from NPC members' excess tools; continue collecting glass at church; purchase products in glass or paper rather than plastic; use recycled paper whenever possible, eliminate the use of petroleum-based fertilizers on lawns; use reusable containers for food storage; eliminate the use of one-use products such as styrofoam cups, disposable diapers, plastic garbage bags.
- b. to promote the conservation of energy throughout the building, and strive to be an environmentally sound model landowner, regularly engaged in demonstrating a steady transition toward the use of renewable resources,
examples: The Trustees might be encouraged to ask:
Is the building energy efficient ?
Are we keeping waste to a minimum ?
Are we recycling everything that can be recycled, and using products manufactured from recycled materials ?
Are we eliminating the use of plastic whenever possible ?
Are we eliminating the use of toxic products in the church and on the grounds ?
Are we doing business with ecology-minded companies?

4. It shall be the organizational environmental policy of NPC
 - a. to engage in periodic self-evaluation and inventory-taking regarding actions we have taken in this matter,
example: The committee recommends that Session appoint a committee to be composed of one member from each of the boards, plus a number from the congregation to be at least one more than those from the boards. Members shall serve on the committee for three year terms. This committee shall report back to the Session in not more than six months from its appointment. It shall be charged with evaluating the policies and suggestions within this document, and measuring the Session's and the church's compliance with it. This committee will also suggest new steps and new directions that might be taken as we constantly strive to live in harmony with God's world.

CONCLUSION

In the North Church Vision Statement, adopted in 1982, the Session directed that "we will change how we live with each other." That is a call for reformed lifestyle. The environmental crisis of the planet calls for us to change the way we live on the planet. We are becoming increasingly aware that how we eat, move about, procreate, dispose of waste products (and ourselves after we die) are moral and theological issues. North Presbyterian Church and its individual members have an opportunity to model responsible, just, sustainable, renewable lifestyles within the human community. Modifying the national park slogan, perhaps an environmental motto for the planet might be "Take nothing irreplaceable; leave only memories."