

## Lightening Our Carbon Footprints for Heaven's (and Earth's) Sake

Jenny Holmes, PRC Moderator

Since the last issue of the Update, there has been a groundswell of interest in taking responsibility for one's carbon footprint. The tools to take action have been here for years but now there seems to be the motivation to use them, on a large scale. In the last few weeks of November, I have spoken with several congregations who are interested in starting campaigns to help all members of their congregation calculate and reduce their carbon foot prints. It seems utility bills are beginning to be viewed as moral documents. How can our churches be places where people can (1) get encouragement (2) find support to help nurture heightened ethical awareness of global warming and (3) respond with action.

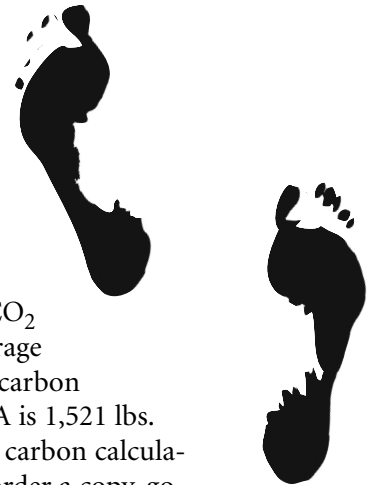
As mentioned before, the first step in becoming climate neutral is to determine one's carbon footprint. Using carbon calculators is a big help. Some are detailed, asking multiple questions about your lifestyle and energy use and others are highly simplified. In the later category is the estimate option on [www.carboncounter.org](http://www.carboncounter.org) provided by Climate Trust, while [www.safeclimate.net](http://www.safeclimate.net) lets you know where you stand compared with the rest of the US population.

Once you have explored these and other calculators, write an article for your church bulletin or newsletter describing what you learned, what you are doing as a result, and how it relates to your spiritual walk with Jesus Christ. Challenge people to compare their footprint with that of someone in Europe or Africa.

A valuable new resource for congregations is *Low Carb Diet, How to Loose 5,000 lbs in 30 days*. This workbook outlines actions that are easy to take and that have a CO<sub>2</sub> reduction value assigned to them. Ideally you gather a group of 5-8 people in your congregation who undertake the 30 day program together. This group reports on its success and helps other groups get started. The partici-

pants in the pilot of this program achieved a 22% (6,700 lb.) annual CO<sub>2</sub> reduction. The average per capita monthly carbon footprint in the USA is 1,521 lbs. To use their on-line carbon calculator materials or to order a copy, go to [www.empowermentinstitute.net](http://www.empowermentinstitute.net).

The next step, after knowing your carbon footprint and reducing your energy use, is offsetting your remaining carbon emissions. This may be less expensive than you think. The offset for my auto emissions was about \$50 for the entire year. *Update* Editor Holly Hallman, who does a lot of driving out of necessity as a hospice chaplain, notes "I'm astonished at how little it takes to offset my emissions from fossil fuels." Please let us know your stories of going "carbon neutral" for future issues of the *Update*.



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## PRC Board Calls Special Meeting to Change By-Laws

*Renee Rico, Pacific Region Representative*

The Steering Committee of PRC met in November and has decided to propose some changes to the By-Laws of our organization. We are calling for a Special Meeting of the PRC membership during the *Caring for God's Creation: Stewardship of Land and Water* conference, February 15-17, 2007, Epworth by the Sea, St. Simon's Island, GA. Our By-Laws specify that we need to call a special meeting with 15 days notice, and that any change to the By-Laws may occur with the approval of 2/3s of those attending the meeting.

In proposing these changes the Steering Committee's goals are to improve our efficiency and increase our flexibility as the organization moves forward over the next few years. We are proposing to make three changes at the February conference.

- First, we are proposing to add the ability to have up to three At-Large members of the Steering Committee. At this point, the By-Laws only allow for Regional Representatives and the Officers. We are recognizing that we may identify skills sets (i.e. fundraising, management, public relations) that are particularly needed for the life of the organization. We also believe that it is very helpful for PRC to have this flexibility without burdening existing Steering Committee positions with these requirements.
- Second, we are proposing that the Steering Committee (instead of the membership) will elect the new officers and regional representatives. This is being done for two reasons. First, in a national organization like PRC, it is very difficult for members to know the people for whom they are voting – it is much different than (for example) voting for Session members in a particular church. The reality is that our nominations by the Nominating Committee are tantamount to elections, and the elections themselves have turned into a costly exercise (mailing out ballots). The Nominating Committee process would remain the same as it is now, with requests to our membership for names for the Steering Committee. We think it is better stewardship to spend our money on other things.
- Third, to add flexibility we are proposing to allow officers to continue beyond a three-term (six-year) limit by a majority vote of the Steering Committee. Our current By Laws allow this only in the case of a current Steering Committee representative being elected as the Moderator, but this year we are faced with an issue of transition, with our current fabulous PRC Coordinator, Rebecca Barnes-Davies, moving on to new ventures, and at the same time, our able Treasurer, Bob Remsburg, is finishing up his sixth-year. For a smooth transition, Bob is willing to continue for another year to allow our new coordinator (who will start this spring/summer) to have the benefit of his financial understanding. We believe that similar transitional issues might (at times in the future) come before the organization, and our proposed by-law changes allow for this possibility.

**The Nominating Committee is being formed to nominate candidates for election and/or re-election to positions of Moderator, Treasurer, and Regional Representatives for the southeast, southwest, and pacific. Send names of candidates to the Nominating Committee via Bill Smith at ptoday@hotmail.com.**

All in all, we believe these proposed changes will provide for the kind of unexpected ways God works among us, without sacrificing the grassroots focus to which we are committed. If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call or email any of the Steering Committee, Officers, or Regional Representatives. To see the proposed changes go to [www.prcweb.org](http://www.prcweb.org).

**William E. Gibson: The Man and His Work (1921-2006)**

**EXCERPT FROM THE MEMORIAL SERVICE TALK**

*By Dieter T. Hessel, Ph.D., a Presbyterian minister who specializes in social ethics (for full text see newsletter page of [www.prcweb.org](http://www.prcweb.org))*

[A] gracious, determined, and articulate Presbyterian campus minister named Bill Gibson...was definitely one of the Presbyterian Church's natural treasures.

I experienced Bill Gibson as a steady, constructive friend who wrote eloquently and spoke directly with prophetic insight and theological clarity about the world situation, and how we should respond. He called participants in higher education, in environmental and social action groups, and in the churches to serve ecology and justice together.

In 1984... Bill Gibson defined eco-justice as "the well-being of all humankind on a thriving earth -- an earth productive of sufficient food, with water fit for all to drink, air healthy to breathe, forests kept replenished, renewable resources continuously renewed, and nonrenewable resources used as sparingly as possible...On a thriving earth, human well-being is nurtured not only by the provision of these material necessities but also by a way of living with the natural world that is fitting: respectful of the integrity of natural systems and of the worth of nonhuman creatures, appreciative of the beauty and the mystery of the world of nature...A thriving earth is not conquered but cared for."



Another of Bill's crucial contributions was to write and talk about the basic values and virtues that shape eco-justice ethics... [H]e unpacked an interrelated set of four ethical norms: solidarity with Earth and people, ecological sustainability, sufficiency for all, and fair participation. These four deep, practical values illumine where we should go and how to get there.

Bill Gibson did many things to further the thought and action of the Presbyterian Church. Perhaps his most significant contribution was as consultant and writer for the denomination's task force that produced the study book, *Keeping and Healing the Creation*, and then the 1990 General Assembly policy statement, *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*, where the whole denomination was introduced to the ethical norms I cited above.

[We] have to ask, can these ecclesial bones live? (Ezekiel 37 presents a vision of God breathing life into the dry bones by the power of faithful human prophecy and nature's four winds.) Bill Gibson would certainly affirm the possibility, because he trusted God's redeeming purpose. He firmly believed that faithful speech and action do expedite our petition in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done, on earth..."

I think we are at a tipping point in public and ecclesial response to the environmental challenge. We have no choice but to accept this urgent moral assignment of our time, and to live into it. The question is no longer whether people awaken to the environmental crisis, but how they, and we, respond.

**INTRODUCING the ECO-PALM PROJECT!!**

Anticipating re-enactments of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem with the jubilant waving of palm branches, PC(USA) is pleased to offer congregations the opportunity to include social and environmental justice in their Palm Sunday celebrations. Through the Eco-Palm Project, congregations spread jubilation also to communities in Mexico and Guatemala where workers are paid fairly, and harvest palm fronds sustainably. Your congregation's commitment to purchase eco-palms plays an important role in protecting forests, local jobs, and sustainable livelihoods in the harvesting communities.



For more information go to [www.pcusa.org/palms](http://www.pcusa.org/palms). You will want to pre-order (by January) for this spring. Contact Melanie Hardison ([mhardiso@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:mhardiso@ctr.pcusa.org)) for more information.

## The Three F's: Faith, Fuel and Food

By Tom Pakurar, Member of Conference Design Team

Headlines in Richmond *Times Dispatch*, Nov 29: "Grow for Fuel, too, Farmers are encouraged." The article urged farmers to grow more corn for renewable energy. Corn (and cattle feed) prices have increased 50% since September. Is there enough water? Will this drive food prices higher causing more to be hungry? Is this just?

This is one of the issues our twelve-member conference design team has used to focus on two critical issues of our time: Food and Fuel. These issues will guide our workshops and our plenary. I believe 80% of the work in solving our planet's crises is in defining the problem. By elevating the three F's for our thinking in this conference, we can better define both the problem and solutions common to all.

Let me illustrate: Let's define the fuel problem as causing too much carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in our atmospheres. The CO<sub>2</sub> concentration is 50% higher than at any time in the past 500,000 years and is causing the planet to warm and the oceans to turn acidic. Carbon-based fuel conservation and sustainable alternative fuels (wind, solar, etc) are proposed solutions. But did you know

that 40% of our fuel is used to support corporate agriculture? Half of the carbon-based fuel comes from chemical ripening agents, fertilizers and pesticides. The other half is used for transporting the food to our table.

I place high value on helping our faith community purchase local organic foods as an act of faith. Suppose we act in unison. Our combined faith voice will create a greater demand for healthier food grown with less fuel and chemicals. Our combined national voice may influence revisions to the farm bill and get financial incentives focused on more sustainable farming practices.

*Come to the Mo-Ranch Presbyterian Conference Center October 25-28, 2007 where we will examine the problems and find faith filled solutions.*

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***The annual ecumenical resources for Earth Day Sunday should soon be available through the National Council of Churches' @ [www.nccecojustice.org](http://www.nccecojustice.org). The theme for Earth Day Sunday 2007 is sustainable and just agriculture.***



## Fall Campaign Underway • Robert Remsburg, PRC Treasurer

The 2006 Stewardship for Creation fundraising drive is underway. Many have responded with gifts ranging from \$15 to \$1,000. Every gift you give will assist PRC in making a difference for God's creation in the church and in the world. At this writing (November 30, 2006), we are about 1/2 way to our fundraising goal for this campaign.

More responsibility is now upon PRC with the closing of the Environmental Justice Office in Louisville. Your support of PRC enables this key voice within the PCUSA denomination for environmental justice issues. For every gift you give of \$60 or more, you receive the opportunity to sign someone up for a free one-year membership. For a gift of \$100 or more, you can receive a copy of Carol Johnston's book, *And the Leaves of the Trees are for the Healing of the Nations*, and for gifts of \$250 or more, you can receive Robert Stivers' book, *Christian Environmental Ethics: A Case Study Approach*.

I also encourage you to approach your church or presbytery about a gift to PRC. Nearly 25 churches currently do this. If your church or presbytery has mission, benevolent or social justice funding available, tell them about the work of PRC. This support from the local church is becoming more important to us as funding from Louisville is diminishing. If you need any materials to help with an appeal to your church or presbytery, don't hesitate to contact Rebecca Barnes-Davies at [prc@sfts.edu](mailto:prc@sfts.edu). Thanks to all of you that continue to help PRC in any way. **Send your tax-deductible gifts to PRC, Attn: Bob Remsburg, 101 Lanes End, Locust, NC 28097.**

## Sierra Club Clean-up

*Katie Ricks, PRC Member*

Armed with clippers, loppers, shovels, gloves, and a “root ripper,” almost 20 youth and adults from the Church of Reconciliation (in Chapel Hill, NC) tackled invasive exotic plants on the local Greenway trail. We joined with leadership from the local Sierra Club Chapter on their special “Public Lands in Public Hands” workday. Our main task was to rid a section of the Greenway of privet – privet seedlings, privet vines, privet bushes, and privet trees.

The task was quite an awesome undertaking. Privet was everywhere, and the trick was removing it without leaving opportunities for it to grow back and choke off the native plants in this wooded area. As people rode and ran and walked by us on their weekend strolls, we pulled and cut and pulled and cut. We took the debris to a previously established pile, so that forest creatures could enjoy the clippings, without providing opportunities for the privet to be reintroduced into the area.

We were able to get a lot done, and the volunteers were excited about the significant progress that we had made in that particular stretch of trail. Yet, on our way out, our youth more readily noticed the privet and kudzu and other plants that had invaded our green space. They were certainly convinced that bringing in exotic plants causes serious problems for our local nature areas.

Some said that it was fun. Others felt overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. Each of these responses provided an opportunity for the Sierra Club leader to welcome us to their monthly clean-up sessions along the Greenway – to continue the work that we had begun. Overall, it was a good opportunity for this intergenerational crew to provide care for this world that God has so generously gifted to us.



### ***Do you have a story to share?***

We are always looking for stories and typically take articles of 400 words or less. **The next submission date is March 1. Send your ideas to [hhallman@yahoo.com](mailto:hhallman@yahoo.com).**

## CREATIVE APPROACHES

*a quarterly column*

### **Retirement and the Environment**

*Bob and LaRae Parry, PRC Members*

We moved to Monte Vista Grove, CA in July, 2004 after selling our home of 34 years. When we arrived there was an active Environmental Committee in existence. They saw their main job as increasing an awareness of environmental concerns and developing an easily understood plan to recycle everything recyclable. We joined them in that effort and continue to do so. The President of our Resident's Association, ourselves, and one other resident had a meeting with our congressman regarding national and local environmental issues.

Upon moving here we were offered the opportunity to remodel two single units into one larger one. We decided that we would do so keeping in mind the possibility of incorporating a number of environmentally sensitive changes. We were hopeful that we might make our home something of a model for others who might do the same—which has happened.

Our contractor was very willing to put into place all of the items we suggested—a big help. He had excellent insulation installed in the attic and saved (and had resurfaced) the hardwood floors in the dining room and master bedroom to help keep Bob's asthma under control. The insulation keeps us warmer in winter and cooler in the summer's heat, thus saving on gas and electricity. Two other rather simple things we did to lower the utility bill was to: (1) put in energy saving light bulbs; and (2) put in four “sky tubes” in darker areas of the house—which permit us to use sunlight in place of electric light. Our larger appliances are all rated “Energy Star”.

We had solar powered units in our previous house to heat our water. However, here we decided to go for a tankless water heater which is located on the outside wall of the house and works just fine. It saves on the gas bill because the heating unit only “comes on” when hot water is requested.

In addition to saving energy, we also felt we should save on water wherever we could. We installed two double-flush toilets and water saver heads in both showers. We also reduced the size of our garden substantially and planted native plants and bushes.

We have lived here with these energy and water saving devices for a year and a half. It would be somewhat difficult to determine how much money we have saved. Obviously our primary motivation was not just to save money on our utilities, but to live in a comfortable house while also preserving and protecting the environment.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Property for people, not for profit: Alternatives to the Global Tyranny of Capital

Authors Ulrich Duchrow & Franz J. Hinkelammert. Forward by Konrad Raiser, General Secretary, World Council of Churches. Zed Books, 2006.

Reviewed by Rev. Peter Boeve, Retired, PRC Member

Are you ready to re-think your commitment to market capitalism? How about a historical tour of how property and money have come out on top when deciding the fate of human community? Interested in a rather startling analysis of 9/11 ...as the events of that day illumine deep, suicidal dynamics in our economic systems?

Ulrich Duchrow and Franz Hinkelammert, an economist and a theologian, in their paperback book *Property for people, not for profit: Alternatives to the global tyranny of capital*, demonstrate how globalization of the unregulated market, driven by the accumulation of property, leads to the impoverishment of ever wider sectors of humanity and the devastation of the natural environment.

Dr. Peter Selby, Bishop of Worcester and Bishop of HM Prisons, puts it: "Here is a strong message, one that makes connections in politics, economics, philosophy and scripture. It is an encouragement for those who

have been told that 'there is no alternative,' and urges upon us the claims of economic and political discipleship. It will bring excitement, challenge and controversy to any group."

These two authors ask how can we overcome the vicious circle of imperial terror, the global economy and the fundamentalist resistance to them. This book tries to find answers to the dilemmas. Anyone wanting to follow the biblical God must accept God as the owner of the land. God can only give right to use or lease the land (the means

of production in an agricultural society) so that **all** [my emphasis] can share in it. All else follows from that. These authors explore how land and property have been increasingly apportioned to corporations, elites and the wealthy who, with the help of military power, have done an end-run around labor and ecological integrity ...to the point that the earth community hangs in the balance.

This is not an easy book: meaning that those of us, who enjoy following a telltale investigation by two sharp and insightful theological and economic minds, will find a wonderful and penetrating analysis, followed by equally informed suggestions to people of Faith. This reviewer imagines groups of clergy and laypeople (i.e., social justice, peace folks, biblically interested, and culturally inquisitive economists and environmentalists) eager to read and discuss what this book means in terms of their understanding of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit ...as we "reformed people" hold the Bible in one hand, and the newspaper in the other, and carry on many conversations that get at "Thy kingdom coming ...on earth, as it is in heaven."

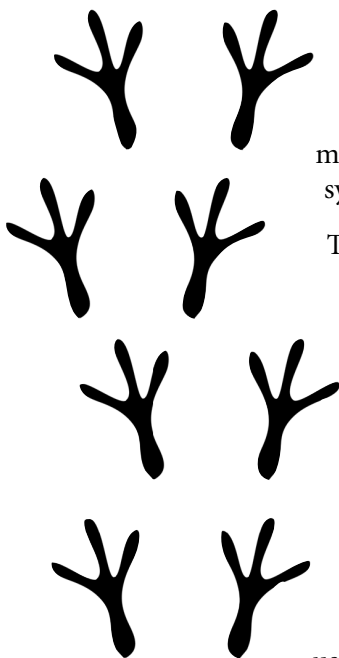
### The Wisdom of Wilderness: Experiencing the Healing Power of Nature

Author Gerald G. May

Reviewed by Nancy Corson Carter, PRC Immediate Past Moderator

I met Jerry May at Shalem Institute, an ecumenical organization and community devoted to the Christian contemplative tradition with insights from Eastern traditions. A psychiatrist who served as a medic in Vietnam, Jerry helped found this organization and pioneered in the field of contemplative psychology. He was a gifted teacher and author—he wrote eight widely read, highly regarded books, including *Will and Spirit* and *Addiction and Grace*. What I remember best about him is the authenticity of his speaking about the centrality of love and his infectious, generous wit.

The book begins as May, in a transition stage of life, follows a call to spend time alone in the primitive camping area of an Appalachian State Forest not too far from his home. There, in visits in different seasons, he finds himself mysteriously guided by something beyond his own will, a yearned for immediate and face-to-face living Presence. This Presence, which he calls the Power of the Slowing, teaches him even through unwanted emotions: fear (a growling bear rubs against his tent at night; he hears crunching noises in the snow), embar-



rassment (wearing cowboy boots that make him fall on ice), silly vulnerability (he ends up drumming with cicadas). And in all the encounters with nature he tells about, even those involving violence committed by humans and other creatures, this Presence provides her strength and solace.

*The Wisdom of Wilderness*, which May wrote when he knew he was dying, has particular relevance to earth keepers. "Before we can effectively heal the wounds we have inflicted upon the rest of Nature," he writes, "we must allow ourselves to be healed. And we must allow the rest of Nature to help us." He gives us an inspiring model for just this.



The final words of the book bear witness to May's exuberant sense of living expectantly into the grace-filled universe: "What the Power of the Slowing taught me is what the Source of All is constantly yearning for: that each of us will know without doubt that we are loved, and that we are intimately, irrevocably part of the endless creation of love, and that we will join, with full freedom and consciousness, the joyous creativity that is Nature, that is Wilderness, that is Everything."

***Caring for God's Creation: Stewardship of Land and Water***

Are you ready for inspiration and rejuvenation away from daily tasks? Are you curious how Christians can make a difference in the world around us? Would you like to meet other people of faith who work to restore God's Creation? Presbyterians for Restoring Creation (PRC) would like to invite you to our first Southeast Regional Conference being held at Epworth by the Sea, on beautiful St. Simon's Island, Georgia, February 15th-17th, 2007.

**Plenary Speakers:**

***Carol Johnston***

Johnston served on the PCUSA Eco-Justice Task Force and authored a primer on biblical and theological foundations for ecojustice. She is Associate Professor of Theology and Culture at Christian Theological Seminary in Indiana.

***Rand Wentworth***

President of the Land Trust Alliance, Wentworth previously served as Vice President of the Trust for Public Land. Wentworth won the Visionary Regional Leadership Award from the Atlanta Regional Commission for his work in creating a 160-mile greenway along the Chattahoochee River.

***Sally Bethea***

Executive Director of Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, Bethea was named among the "Best Eco-warriors" by Atlanta Magazine and is one of the top 100 Most Influential Georgians listed by Georgia Trend Magazine.

***Marcus G: Conference Musician***

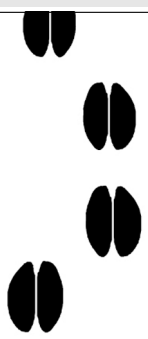
This Presbyterian minister weaves together music, message and master storytelling, which reflect a spiritual depth and playful humor that's hopeful and encouraging

***Upcoming Events***

• **Feb. 15-17, 2007**  
**PRC REGIONAL EVENT**  
**Caring for God's Creation:**  
**Stewardship of Land and Water**  
*Epworth by the Sea, St. Simon's Island, GA*

• **JULY 30 – AUG 5, 2007**  
**A Week for Peace, Global Justice, & Creation**  
*Ghost Ranch, New Mexico*

This event will feature a PRC sponsored track led by Larry Rasmussen and John Preston. The track, entitled "Earth-honoring Faith" will feature environmental issues, theology, and Earth-honoring worship in partnership with the Witherspoon Society, the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, and the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. In-common lectures will be featured in the evenings.



• **OCT. 25-28, 2007**  
**Earth Sabbath, Earth Justice: Protecting God's Gifts of Food and Fuel, PRC National Eco-Conference**  
*Mo-Ranch Presbyterian Conference Center, Hunt, Texas.*

PRC is continuing in partnership with Presbyterian camps by exploring a green camp recognition program and a youth conservation corps. Watch for more information in the Spring PRC Update.

# PRC Update

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Presbyterians for Restoring Creation (PRC)

Caring for God's Creation by connecting, equipping, and inspiring.

*\* If the date on your mailing label is Jan-07 or earlier, or there is no date, it is time to renew!*

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