

At the Presbyterians for Earth Care Conference, held in Little Rock, AR: from Oct. 16-19, 2013, the theme of "Ethical Earth Care: Keeping Creation Sacred" was led in Plenary sessions by Larry Rasmussen, ThD, who focused on "Earth-Honoring Faith." He reflected on how the sacred and creation intersect.

Sacred traditions were organized by the following dichotomies:

- asceticism vs. consumerism (the simple life offers an alternative to the consuming spirit of desire)
- sacred vs. commodified (sacramental ethics views life as a shared commons, contrasting against a commodity ethics)
- mysticism vs. alienation (classic mystical experience is that humankind belongs to the "all". Alienation is resolved by all things communing with God.
- prophetic/liberative practices vs. oppression (Justice is at center of Christian life with the prophet's vision of a redeemed creation. Contrast this with evil and injustice from a violated creation and mal-distributions of power)
- wisdom vs. folly (all wisdom traditions counter the negative forces in our lives and in creative order and deal with universal religious and cultural traditions.

What is sacred? David Gushee defines it as "something common lifted up and set apart, with elevated rank" Greta Van Wieren in Restored to Earth believes violating the sacred is a serious sin and often a crime. The ecological virtues for restoring us and the earth also include a list of 5-"R"s:

-Reverence, Respect, Restraint, Redistribution, Responsibility, and Renewal.

What kind of communities are needed for ethical earth-care? Dr. Erin Biviano's research on congregational environmentalism found the following elements necessary for environmental activism:

- adequate level of scientific literacy (when the knowledge gap is devoid of science, religious environmentalism has very little purchase)
- multiple interdependencies (everything belongs and should have a life- living up or down stream- creation is seamless and recycles everything)

- social and economic (20% of San Francisco air pollution is from China)
- ecological
- spiritual (moral and spiritual issues-kinship and family-the homeless at a church shelter who have names – everything belongs and should have a life)
- moral heat of social justice (-among the most identified and influential among religious environmentalists- focused on poor people and the love of the present, future, near, far, animate and inanimate neighbor- The human poor and the earth as the new poor, here social justice expands to become creation justice.
- the discovery of a bigger God (making green spirituality the broader platform for moral globalization. We must gather 13.8 billion years of religious environmentalism).

Final reflections, regarded having the "green blues" or environmental melancholia. How do Christians cope with irreversible climate change? We are charged with leading people through grief and loss, trying to keep nature sacred. We should work for the whole earth and not focus on single environmental campaigns.