

KENTUCKY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Policy Statement on the Environment

Adopted at the 42nd Annual Assembly, October, 1989

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein;
for the Lord has founded it upon the seas,
and established it upon the rivers.

Psalm 24:1-2

Who really owns the earth, the air, the oceans, and the streams? Who owns the soil as it moves from the Kentucky hills down the Ohio River and into the Mississippi Delta? The Psalmist announces in Psalm 24 that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. That theme is repeated throughout scripture from the creation accounts in Genesis through the book of Revelation. God is the creator/owner of the earth. This concept is key to God's covenant relationship with the people of Israel and is key today to our understanding of our identity as a people of God. We are called through our covenant relationship to participate in God's creative work as we are for the earth for our own and future generations and to use wisely the resources of the environment so that all of humankind may live in peace and abundance.

God is the owner but humankind covets that ownership. The earth, the air, the water, our biosphere, are too often regarded as commodities by the human community and as possessions to be bought, sold, and exploited rather than as resources belonging to our Creator God. It is given, in trust, to us to manage wisely for the benefit of all humankind.

The earth, the air, the water exist in an increasing state of crisis. Consumption of products that require the use of limited natural resources is increasing. More products are being produced that lock natural resources into non-biodegradable forms. Toxic and nuclear waste disposal becomes an increasingly critical issue for health and safety with each passing year. Urban areas are turning more and more to less populated rural areas and states such as Kentucky as the solution to their ever-expanding problem of waste disposal, thereby endangering the food and water supply as soil and water quality in rural and agricultural communities continues to deteriorate.

Sound biosphere practices compete in the marketplace with quick profits. We, however, are not unaware of and indeed have compassion for those people who suffer great financial hardship resulting from the increased and necessary protection of the biosphere. They must not be forgotten as they face the burden of unemployment and the resulting family struggles. Yet our current environmental practices threaten the viability of the earth and of generations yet to come.

Therefore, the Kentucky Council of Churches embraces the following Policy Statement:

Member churches and other faith groups, at every level of their organizations, are called upon to enable and to encourage their constituents to engage in serious and sustainable study, reflection and appropriate action based upon the theological issues relating to our human responsibility for the biosphere as stewards of God's creation, and further;

Local, state, and federal governments, in their function of providing for the general welfare, are called upon to make and enforce laws that protect the biosphere as a vital resource for life both today and in the future. The short-term advantages of legislation must be measured against the long-term costs to the biosphere and to future citizens. Of primary concern in enacting biosphere legislation are the immediate and future impact on health and quality of life and the renewability of natural resources. Government should encourage and promote sound biosphere practices such as:

- the conservation of natural resources;
- the development of processes and methods of reduction of the quantity of waste materials produced;
- the development of products, by-products and packaging which are biodegradable;
- the development and implementation (mandatory where feasible) of safe and effective methods of the recycling, transporting, storage, and disposal of existing waste products;
- the clean-up of existing nuclear and chemical toxic wastes; and
- the development of more realistic regulations to implement the full intent of air pollution laws throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky.