



"Many Faiths, One Heart, Common Action"

FAITH IN ACTION TOOL KIT

VOLUME 2

" Many Faiths, One Heart, Common Action"

Faith in Action Tool Kit

2010

In honor of

*Wendell Berry
Kentucky Farmer and Author*

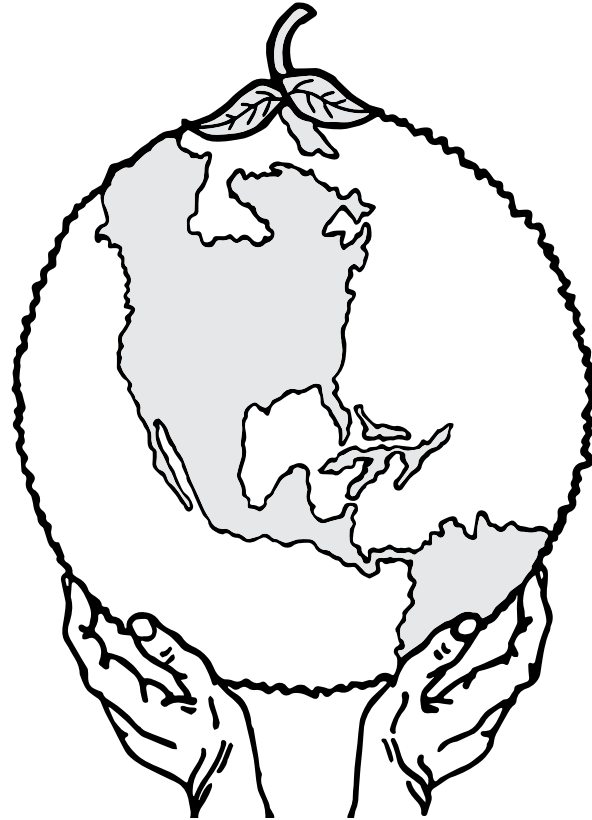


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Center for Interfaith Relations (CIR)

The Center for Interfaith Relations is a nonsectarian organization dedicated to promoting and supporting interfaith understanding, cooperation, and action on issues of significance to all people. Its mission is to bring together communities of faith in mutual respect for each other and to serve as a resource to them in their undertakings.

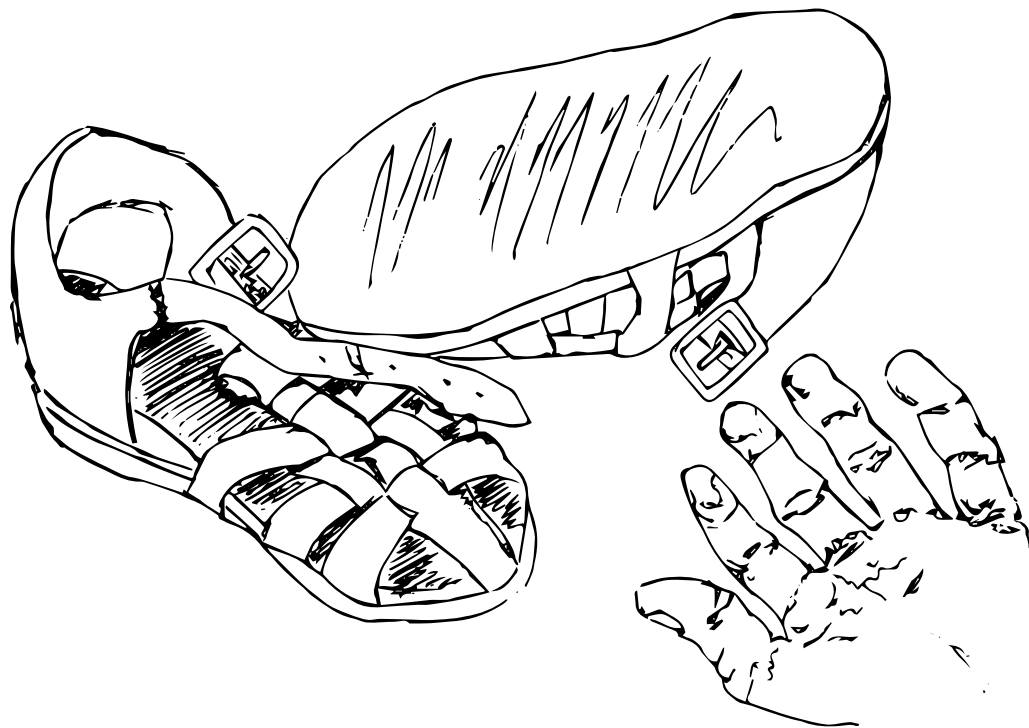
Festival of Faiths (FOF)

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Festival of Faiths (FOF), the culminating achievement of the Center for Interfaith Relations. The theme for the FOF for 2010, Sacred Soil: Foundation of Life, continues the series on the fundamental elements of life, begun last year with Sacred Water: Sustaining Life. Sacred Air and Sacred Fire will be the themes of subsequent Festivals. Through the exploration of sacred soil within the context of their own beliefs and values, each of the religions casts light on the meaning of the sacredness of the earth. In so doing, each of the religions demonstrates its own uniqueness in radiating holiness, making it abundantly apparent that holiness is ubiquitous and cannot be confined within the limits of any one person or religious tradition. Thomas Merton, in a celebrated epiphany experienced at a busy intersection in the heart of downtown Louisville, gave startling validation to this awareness when he perceived in the surrounding crowd of people a pageant of humanity, each aflame with the spirit of holiness, “shining like the sun.” Merton’s remarkable experience represents the ideal fulfillment of participation in the Festival of Faiths.

Tool Kit Introduction

This year, the Festival of Faiths has created a Tool Kit for use in facilitating on-going dialogue on *Sacred Soil: Foundation of Life*. To that end, a DVD of the documentary Dirt! The Movie has been provided, along with study questions to stimulate discussion. Other materials include statements from prominent secular and religious leaders on the necessity for respecting our earth's soil as a sacred and sustaining resource to which all human beings have a right. Selected facts are provided on the earth's soil and on its use and abuse worldwide, along with a limited bibliography that includes websites and curriculum resources as well as books and films. The goal is to offer a broad range of resources on the complex issues relating to soil in order to promote the awareness and commitment that lead to the cooperative action of peoples of diverse faiths who care for each other and for the Earth, shared by all.

The Festival welcomes your comments on the subject of sacred soil. Most of all, the Festival urges you to report on discussions that you have initiated to continue the dialogue on *Sacred Soil: Foundation of Life* in your homes, churches or other venues. Please submit your comments to vicki@interfaithrelations.org or to our website www.interfaithrelations.org.



Sacred Soil

By Kathleen Lyons

When we think of the sacred soil upon which we stand, we need to recall Moses, kicking off his sandals as he realized that he stood on holy ground. Gerard Manley Hopkins' sonnet, "God's Grandeur," catches something of this ecstatic fervor in proclaiming that "the world is charged with the grandeur of God," even though it is now "seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil." Yet, because the earth was eternally blessed by the Creator, "there lives the dearest freshness deep down things."

There is not today and perhaps has never been a greater spokesperson for the sacredness of the land than Wendell Berry. For Berry, the land is twice blessed: The earth manifests the blessing of the Creator in its mystery and fertility, but his native soil on the banks of the Kentucky River has been sanctified as the place of life and final rest for both sides of his family for generations. For the past 40 years, Berry has poured forth his reverence for the earth in words of love, awe, and gratitude, and, with the urgency of a prophet, he has insisted that we adopt a similar attitude before it is too late:

We must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never entirely understand it. We must abandon arrogance and stand in awe. We must recover the sense of majesty of creation, and the ability to be worshipful in its presence. For I do not doubt that it is only on the condition of humility and reverence before the world that our species will be able to remain in it.¹

For those who would learn "to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery," a good place to begin is the Book of Genesis. There we read that on the fifth day of creation, God blessed the creatures of the sea

and the air, charging them to increase and multiply. The next day, He blessed all living creatures of the earth, animal and human, using exactly the same words. Then He gave humankind dominion over all of His creation.

What does that word, “dominion,” mean? Dr. Matthew Sleeth describes the word as a command to tend and care for the earth and its creatures, and he notes that this is the very first commandment given to us by God.² Agreeing with Sleeth, Scripture scholar Ellen F. Davis describes dominion as “skilled mastery,” a commission that defines as the primary human vocation the work of maintaining the fertility of the land and feeding God’s creatures. She goes on to point out that after this passage in Genesis, subsequent Scriptural passages consistently refer to the land itself to demonstrate the relationship between God and humankind. Lush gardens are the dwelling places of good stewards, on favorable terms with their God, while exile or expulsion from the land is the fate of disobedient or negligent caretakers.³

In blessing humankind as a skilled master over the earth’s teeming fertility, the Creator delivered the message that His creatures are valuable but also vulnerable. His benevolent relationship to them is apparent in the provision of caretakers, which also reflects the great confidence placed in humankind. Looked at from a contemporary perspective, the divine commission to tend the earth and its creatures obliges the steward to develop a sense both of eco-justice and of eco-centrism.

Eco-justice recognizes the rights of the land and of all creatures that live and feed upon it. Chief Oren Lyons, of the Onondaga Nation and the Iroquois Confederacy, exhibited such a sense when he addressed a United Nations conference on human rights in Geneva and asked, “What of the rights of the natural world?... the buffalo or the eagle?” As a man of justice, Chief Oren was concerned about the extinction or threatened extinction of species such as the buffalo or eagle in today’s world.⁴ Underlying his question is an understanding that the creatures of earth are our sacred trusts.

A sense of eco-centrism is also demanded of the good steward. This term refers to the relationships of living organisms with their environment and with each other. It focuses on the integrity of creation, unified in a single whole, with the sacred soil as its ground of being. The teachings of Islam clearly emphasize the wholeness of creation in affirming the interdependence of all creatures, including humankind, in an intricately balanced web of life. Other religions likewise give voice to the notion of the wholeness of creation in their prayers and rituals. The American Indian invokes the earth that, as Mother to all, makes visible this wholeness. Chief Seattle has written that “every part of this earth is sacred to my people,” and his words are reinforced by Black Elk, a holy man of the Oglala Sioux, whose prayer was, “Grandfather, Great Spirit, give me the strength to walk the soft earth, a relative to all that is!”⁵

Many have made the commission to exercise dominion over the earth the foundation of an agrarian ethic which governs every aspect of their life on this earth, from the kinds of light bulbs they use, to the food that they choose to consume, to the amount of water and other resources that they allow themselves to control. To the contrary, however, others act as though dominion means unlimited privilege to exploit the earth for their immediate comfort and profit. Wes Jackson, scientist and advocate for sustainable agriculture, in speaking of the American experience, notes that “from our first arrival” in this country, “we have behaved as though nature must be either subdued or ignored.”⁶ This kind of behavior, practiced worldwide, has brought our planet to the state of crisis that Wendell Berry spoke of above. For the first time in human history, we are being advised that unless we undergo an ecological conversion, adopting, in Berry’s words, a disposition “of humility and reverence before the world,” we cannot survive on this planet. In stark terseness, Matthew Sleeth explains why when he asserts, “the world is dying.”⁷

Ecological damage has reached such a level that it has become virtually impossible to calculate the full scope of destruction. The rainforests, perhaps 60 million years in the making, are being wiped out at the rate

of 50 acres every minute.⁸ It is widely reported that an acre of forest is obliterated every second, along with ground cover that retains moisture and soil. The result is ubiquitous desertification and soil erosion. John Jeavons predicts that “we have 40 to 80 years of arable soil left,”⁹ and Robert Zimdahl notes that as much as one-third of all topsoil in the United States is perhaps already lost, a grim observation in light of the estimate that, under agricultural conditions, replacing one inch of topsoil could require 500 years.¹⁰ This is by no means a full inventory of eco-destruction brought about by humankind, but it is enough to illustrate the shameful fact that we have made through our conduct a laughing stock of the commission to exercise skilled mastery over the earth.

The immorality accompanying the ecological crisis is frightening to consider, and its depths become apparent, according to Pope John Paul II, in the extensive degradation of our earth. Commenting upon this degradation, the late Pope lamented, “humanity has disappointed the divine expectation” in its crimes against creation, “humiliating... the earth, that flower bed that is our dwelling.”¹¹ It is important to realize that most of us are complicit in the crimes against creation to some degree. We might find it shocking to realize that our eating habits seriously impact the fate of the planet. For example, the food we purchase at supermarkets has traveled, on average, 1,500 miles before it reaches our tables. As a result, feeding each one of us requires about 400 gallons of oil a year, or 17 percent of energy consumed nationally.¹² This behavior has enormously detrimental effects upon the soil, much of which is sacrificed to provide roads for transporting food long distances, from farm to processor to distributor to supermarket to our homes. The soil also bears the brunt of climate change brought on by pollution, and it suffers as well the depletion caused by the farming methods used in agri-business, which supplies most of the food consumed in this country.

If a moment of crisis for our sacred soil has arrived because of poor stewardship, a moment of truth is also at hand. The forward thinkers of our society are heeding the prophetic voices of the age and are abandoning

wasteful behavior, ushering in what Thomas Berry calls the Ecozoic Age. In the interest of sustainability, they are creating what is now a counter-culture, based on the virtues of simplicity, moderation, and compassion. A fundamental imperative of this culture is the modification of eating habits. Some are providing more locally grown foods, available in farmers' markets, community gardens, and even supermarkets. Others are planting gardens in their own backyards. Among the ranks of converts to better stewardship are farmers, scientists, teachers, clergy, business leaders, blue-collar workers, politicians, and school children. Every single modification in their behavior as better stewards is an affirmation that our sacred soil can be sustained only on its own terms, which Larry Rasmussen has described as "non-negotiable." Creation will not endure the terms we have tried to impose upon it by clearing forests, removing mountain tops, despoiling land, and polluting streams. The more this truth is taken to heart, the more likely it becomes that the human family will remain true to its calling as caretakers of creation. This is a vocation requiring humility and reverence before the world, which Wendell Berry has set down as a condition of our survival. As a society, we cannot claim to be even close to meeting this requirement; yet, in nature's endless capacity for renewal, there is hope for humankind's renewal as well.

We were late comers to this ancient earth, and we could, if we insist, make an early departure from it by rendering it incompatible with life. Regardless of what we do, our sacred soil will persist. The sobering words of Ecclesiastes remind us that we can do ourselves in by our own vanity, but the earth will survive us:

One generation passeth away,
And another generation cometh:
But the earth abideth forever.

Notes

1. "A Native Hill," in *Recollected Essays* (Berkeley, CA: North Point Press, 1981), 98.
2. "Hope for Creation." *Guidebook (Part I) for Blessed Earth* (Blessed Earth and Dor&Cross: 2010), 5.
3. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (Cambridge: UP, 2009), 8-9.
4. Quoted in *Sourcebook of the World's Religions*, ed. Joel Beversluis (Novato, CA: New American Library, 2000), 301.
5. *Ibid.*, 288.
6. *Becoming Native to This Place* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1994), 19.
7. "Hope for Creation," 9.
8. Thomas Berry, *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 45.
9. "I dig dirt," in *Ode*, 8/2 (March 2010), 40.
10. Quoted in *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture* by Ellen F. Davis, 23.
11. Quoted in *Ecology at the Heart of Faith* by Denis Edwards (Maryknoll, NY: 2008), 3.
12. Barbara Kingsolver, with Steven L. Hopp and Camille Kingsolver, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (New York: Harper, 2007), 5.

Discussion Questions for Dirt! The Movie
Award Winning Film Which is the Official Film
for the 2010 Festival of Faith

1. Dirt! The Movie repeatedly makes the point that we are related to the soil. The earth is called our Mother; creation accounts from the Amazonians, the Egyptians, and the Judeo-Christian-Muslim peoples record our origin in the earth; biologists affirm that we share entire paragraphs of DNA information with microorganisms found in the soil. How does it help us to know who we are by understanding our relationship with the soil? Does it enhance or diminish our identity?
2. The movie places great emphasis on farming and its potential for either sustaining or depleting the soil. How do we as consumers of food products influence agricultural practices for sustainability or for depletion? Are we complicit with agribusiness in depleting the soil if we buy the products of agribusiness?
3. In addition to farming, soil is also very much influenced by what Wes Jackson calls our extractive economy, illustrated graphically in the extraction of coal through mountain-top removal. The object of this extraction is to provide cheap electricity. What are the actual costs of this electricity? Do we have now an alternative to coal-fired generators?
4. Again and again, the soil is referred to as the living skin of planet Earth, the only planet in the universe to have such skin. How does the comparison of soil to living skin help you to understand the vital role that soil plays in the life of Earth as well as in our own lives?

5. Because the soil is living, there is remarkable activity going on among the parts that reside in it, such as fungi and microorganisms. All kinds of things happen: worms pass through the soil; water is absorbed, and oxygen and carbon dioxide are exchanged. What can city dwellers do to stimulate respect for the soil as a living entity that harbors billions of living creatures and even serves a role in the food chain, as the wine expert made clear?
6. In one part of the movie, the point is made that the earth is not only living; it is sacred as well. The pilgrimage observed in Chimayo, Mexico, exists as an expression of belief in the sacredness of the soil. Do you think that the soil is sacred? If so, what obligations derive from your belief? If not, why not?
7. Many sad scenes are recorded in the movie, but one that strikes closest to home recalls that the American Midwest was called the Breadbasket of the World until it became a dust bowl through poor farming practices. These practices centered upon monoculture, an absolutely non-sustainable method of farming. If a disease strikes one plant, it endangers the entire crop, creating a need for pesticides that kill the soil and endanger the consumer of its produce as well. Yet, industrial farming continues to employ this method of farming, in order to supply cheap food to the American consumer. What alternatives to the products of industrial farming does the American consumer have? Do you think that Americans have an obligation to avoid these products in the interest of saving the soil and the planet?
8. As industrial farming expands, more and more independent farmers, priced out of the market, are forced to sell their farms. One scene captured the tearful face of a farmer, witnessing the sale of his land at auction. Farmers who lose their farms cannot teach their methods to a younger generation of farmers.

Society loses the benefit of their knowledge as well as of their produce. How is this loss factored into the price that we pay for “cheap” food from agribusiness?

9. Deforestation is another cause of soil depletion, and particularly in developing countries, it has had devastating effects: drought, crop failure, desertification, and even food wars. The country of Mali in Africa was depicted as an example of the near total destruction that this practice can create. Yet, the movie offers hope, contending that what we have destroyed we can rebuild. Rebuilding, however, requires change. What changes have been effected by the Salgados in Brazil that offer hope for the planet? Are the resources and the will to replicate their efforts worldwide available?
10. The Salgados, who have photographed soil depletion worldwide, conclude that there is a correlation between the devastation of the soil and the devastation of human life. Conversely, planting trees has proven to be restorative for some prisoners at Ryker’s Island, and urban gardening on rooftops or raised beds has created the gift of community for people of all ages living in large cities. Do you think that some form of engagement with the soil is a necessary part of a good life? Does this kind of engagement seem more remote as migrations from rural areas to the cities continue, creating, especially in developing countries, slums wherein up to 80 percent of the residents live?
11. Many efforts to save the soil are being made all over the world. The movie provides illustrations from Africa, India, the United States, and South America. Remarkably, all of the efforts shown in the movie are being made by individuals who are highly educated and passionately concerned about the life of our planet. On the one hand, the point is made that individuals can make a difference. On the other, it is made clear that the leadership directing these individuals has to be equipped with knowledge and experience

in order to carry out their role. Do you think that we have sufficient leadership in our community to effect the necessary change of attitude and practice toward the soil? What would you have to do to become a part of a group or community dedicated to soil preservation?

12. Wes Jackson speaks of a 120-year window of opportunity to convert from an extraction economy to one that insists upon living within our means. He calls this the most important opportunity for homo sapiens since its emergence out of Africa thousands of years ago. Describe as precisely as you can the change required to make this conversion. Do you think that society will make this conversion in the time allotted – 120 years? How many people can you name who have made or have begun to make this conversion?

NOTES

NOTES

Sacred Soil and The World's Major Religions (in alphabetical order)

The common values that most of the world's religions hold in relation to the natural world might be summarized as reverence, respect, restraint, redistribution, responsibility and renewal... There are now signs that "religions can advocate reverence for the Earth and its profound cosmological processes, respect for the Earth's myriad species, an extension of ethics to include all life forms, restraint in the use of natural resources combined with support for effective alternative technologies and equitable redistribution of wealth. They can establish a broader acknowledgment of human responsibility for the continuity of life on our planet and help renew the energies of hope for the transformative work to be done.

- Mary Evelyn Tucker

The major religions of the world constitute the largest network of people in existence today. Christians alone number approximately 2.1 billion people, while Muslims, the second largest group, number around 1.34 billion. The number of Hindus is estimated at 950 million, Daoists at 50–70 million, Sikhs at 24 million, and Jews at 13 million. While it is daunting even to consider attempting to bring such vast numbers of diverse people together to engage in common action, it is inspiring to consider the results that could be achieved were this to be accomplished successfully. This is exactly the ambitious goal of The Alliance for Religions and Conservation (ARC), an organization founded in 1995 at Windsor Castle by His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. From its inception, ARC has grown so that it now embraces 11 different religions, which represent an estimated 85 % of the world's population, or 5 billion persons.

All of these religions are committed to good stewardship over the earth's sacred soil, in keeping with their code of beliefs. Contemplating the power for ecological health and sanity that the religions of the world could acquire by collectively exerting responsible and skilled dominion over the land and its creatures is an exercise in hope. There is hope that human beings will be restored to a reverence for the earth, creating a new

relationship to nature in the happy realization that we are not separate from its soil. And there is hope that our beloved planet will thrive in sustainable health under our management and yield lush, abundant crops to feed a teeming creation. Hope, indeed, is the common thread that runs through the accounts that follow, briefly describing the commitments made by faith leaders from the religions of the world. (Much of the information that follows is taken from ARC's website, www.arcworld.org. For more information, consult this site).

Baha'i

Fundamental to the Baha'i is a belief in the complex unity of creation, wherein all is interconnected, the whole reflecting the qualities and attributes of God. The sacredness of creation imposes a responsibility for stewardship upon human beings, who are also viewed as one. A sense of universal justice emerges from this notion, which upholds belief in the value of each person as a part of a diverse whole. For the Baha'i, a just world is a harmonious world wherein its citizens strive to preserve the earth's bio-diversity and natural order while they themselves pursue lives of material and spiritual well-being. The world picture envisioned by the Baha'i is summed up in the tenet, "The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens."

Buddhism

For the Buddhist, the notion of separateness is an illusion, because reality is the single whole. Notions of separateness lead to greed and self-centeredness, and these account for unhappiness. Happiness, on the other hand, is experienced in refraining from harming others, including both human beings and the things of nature. The ideal is to experience the interconnectedness of all that lives so that one can live harmoniously in nature, content in the belief that no one's existence is more important than any one else's. It is clear that caring for the environment is a value inherent to Buddhism. This value is expressed in the wise comment of a contemporary, Maha Ghosananda of Cambodia, "When our hearts are good, the sky will be good to us."

Christianity

Ecotheology is a latecomer to Christianity, since for centuries much of its spirituality encouraged a rejection of the material world and a concentration upon the spiritual. This attitude did not foster respect for the earth, and perhaps fostered a predisposition to tolerate the abuses to it that have led to the current environmental crisis. Yet, in the recent past, the Christian churches have re-examined their teachings and practices and have emphasized the urgency of a conversion to ecology. Speaking for the Catholic Church in 1990, Pope John Paul II said, “Christians realize their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith.” In that same year, the Protestant Churches, through the World Council of Churches, committed themselves in the name of justice to conserve resources and to work to safeguard the integrity of creation. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, speaking for the Orthodox Church, defined the Christian vocation as acting in accord with the reality of a sacramental universe which is an outward sign of God’s presence. He expanded on this notion in the following statement: “This may well mean that just as a shepherd will in times of greatest hazard lay down his life for his flock, so human beings may need to forego part of their wants and needs in order that the survival of the natural world can be assured. The challenge to all Christians is to discover anew the truth that God’s love and liberation is for all creation, not just humanity, and to seek new ways of living that restore balance and hope of life to the endangered planet.”

Daoism

Four main principles of Daoism guide the relationship between humanity and nature:

First, the Earth respects Heaven, Heaven abides by the Dao, and the Dao follows the natural course of everything. Humans should help everything grow according to its own way. The ideal is to cultivate the way of no-action and let nature be itself. Secondly, in Daoism, everything is composed of two opposite forces known as Yin and Yang. The two forces are in constant struggle within everything. When they reach harmony, the

energy of life is created. The person who understands this point will not exploit nature but will treat it well and learn from it. It is obvious that in the long run, the excessive use of nature will bring about disaster, even the extinction of humanity. Thirdly, if the pursuit of development runs counter to the harmony and balance of nature, even if it is of great immediate interest and profit, people should restrain themselves from it. Insatiable human desire will lead to the over-exploitation of natural resources. To be too successful is to be on the path to defeat. Finally, Daoism has a unique sense of value in that it judges affluence by the number of different species. If all things in the universe grow well, then a society is a community of affluence. If not, this kingdom is on the decline. This view encourages both government and people to take good care of nature. This thought is a special contribution by Daoism to the conservation of nature.

Hinduism

For the Hindu, all living beings are sacred, and this includes trees, rivers, and mountains as well as animals. In keeping with this belief, most Hindus are vegetarian. They prize the simple life because they are convinced that happiness comes from within rather than from material possessions. The rejection of the material should not, however, translate into a neglect of the natural world because it is thought to be sacred. While this belief is traditional, it has gone unheeded of late and abusive practices have been introduced to the extent that India is now experiencing water shortages and increasing desertification in many parts of the country. As traditional Hindu practices of caring for nature are being forgotten, environmental degradation presents an ever growing threat to human survival.

Islam

The prophet Muhammad taught that “the world is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you his guardian over it.” This guardianship imposes a responsibility for safeguarding the balance in nature among

all that exists – flora and fauna; wildlife and environment. On the day of judgment, each one will be held accountable for having preserved nature’s harmony both through caring for nature and using its fruits respectfully, avoiding waste.

“Allah does not love wasters.” All of these principles are embodied in the Shariah, the laws of Islam. Shariah inspires a sense of the sacredness of all life and of the human vocation to nurture it in the spirit of gratitude and humility.

Jainism

According to the Tattvartha Sutra, there are 8,400,000 species of living things – each of which is part of the cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth, and is therefore precious. Ahimsa, non-violence, the central teaching of Jainism, was made famous in recent times by Mahatma Gandhi, who was greatly influenced by Jain ideas. It was the guiding principle of his struggle for social freedom and equality and means more than just not hurting others. It means not intending to cause harm, physical, mental or spiritual, to any part of nature, for, in the words of Mahavira: “You are that which you wish to harm.” This is the positive aspect of non-violence: to practice an attitude of compassion towards all life. Interdependence is also an ancient Jain principle that teaches that all of nature is bound together, and says that if one does not care for nature one does not care for oneself. An important Jain principle, self-restraint, is not to waste the gifts of nature, and even to reduce one’s needs as far as possible. As Gandhi said, “There is enough in this world for human needs, but not for human wants.”

Judaism

Belief in a Creator defines the Jewish attitude toward nature. Love of God the Creator includes love of everything that He has created. God gave human beings dominion over creation, but this is not the dominion of a tyrant but rather of one who extends mercy to all, in conformity with the belief that “the earth is founded

upon mercy.” Consistent with the exercise of mercy is the principle of the Sabbatical year which follows six years of sowing fields and pruning vineyards. The seventh year is one of rest for the land and of a cessation of all agricultural activity. This ancient practice is the primary conservation principle in the Bible and was last observed in Israel in 1993-1994.

Shintoism

Shinto tradition acknowledges a deep debt to the blessing of nature and the spiritual power which brings about life, fertility, and prosperity. This life-giving power, Musubi (divine power of growth), is perceived in all the workings of nature. Since the Japanese people felt the divine within nature, they came to hold the ideal of a life that was in harmony with and united with nature. Mountains peaks, deep valleys, and the wide ocean were viewed as dwellings for the divine, and other natural objects such as evergreen trees and huge rocks were considered to be symbols of divine spirits. Rice is treated as a sacred and indispensable food. Over thousands of years, the rituals and festivals associated with rice agriculture gave form to the religion of Shinto. Shinto is therefore both the indigenous folk religion of Japan, and the history of the Japanese people’s way of life. Wherever the Japanese people make their lives, one will always find a luxuriant green of trees. The grove is a ritual space for the worship of the deities, and as such is a part of nature which has been preserved by the Japanese people since ancient times. And it is within such groves that one finds the kami deities are enshrined.

Sikhism (Based on the Sikh text of the Windsor Statements, 1995)

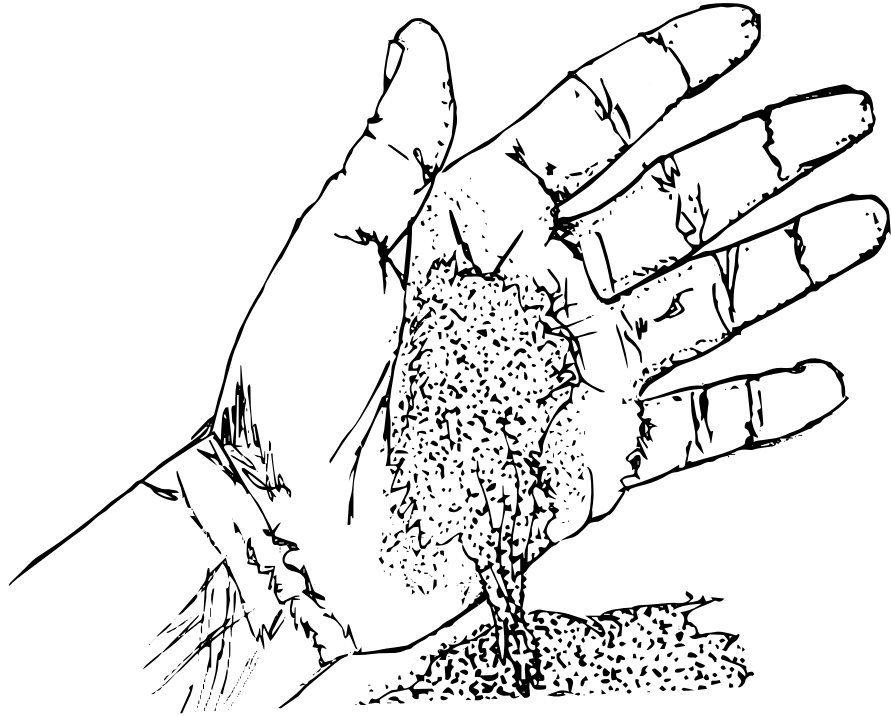
Sikhism follows three hundred year cycles, the most recent of which finished in 1999. In 1699 – a time of terrible persecution of the Sikhs – the coming cycle was named the “Cycle of the Sword.” The three centuries following this were indeed dominated by long periods of armed struggle. In 1999 the name of the next cycle, due to end in 2299, is the Cycle of Creation, and the giving of this title has already led to an increase in environmental practices within Sikh temples.

Sikhs teach that humans create their surroundings as a reflection of their inner state, and hence the increasing barrenness of the earth reflects a spiritual emptiness within humans. The solution, according to Sikhism, can be found in prayer and the spirit of humility before the divine will of God. A cultivation of awareness and respect for the dignity of all life, human or otherwise, is fostered where one first recognizes and nurtures the divine inner spark within oneself, then sees it and cherishes it in others. The history of the Gurus is full of stories of their love for animals, birds, trees, vegetation, rivers, mountains and sky. A simple life free from conspicuous waste is the Sikh ideal – a life that stresses mastery over the self rather than mastery over nature.

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism claims to be the world's oldest revealed religion and also the world's first proponent of ecology. Caring for the elements and the earth, the physical world, is not merely to seek spiritual salvation. Human beings, as the purposeful creation of God, are seen as the natural overseers and caretakers of the Seven Creations (sky, water, earth, plant, animal, human and fire). The sacredness of the creations demands great awareness, for at the end of time humanity must give to Ahura Mazda a world in its original perfect state. Purity of nature in this religious tradition is seen as the greatest good.

Zoroastrians in India remember their traditional story of how, once upon a time, Mother Earth was in trouble. She asked God – Ahura Mazda – if He could send her a prince, with warriors, to stop the people from hurting her. But Ahura Mazda said he could not; instead, he would send Her a holy man, to stop the people from hurting her, using words and inspirational ideas. And thus was born the prophet, Zoroaster.



Inspirational Pieces

While it is impossible to include all the fine soil-related writings that are now available, the following are offered in the hope that they will assist participants at the Festival and others who wish to continue the conversation on sacred soil in their homes, offices, classrooms, board rooms – wherever two or more are gathered. The Center for Interfaith Relations is happy to make other sources available to you upon request. Please contact it at <http://www.interfaithrelations.org>.

1. Food as Sacrament

Kyle Kramer

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I don't think it was an accident that my interest in farming and food tended to parallel my attraction toward the Anglican and Catholic strains of Christianity. In these traditions, the central symbolic act of worship is the Eucharist, which draws, transforms, and binds together believers of every stripe in a common act of breaking bread and sharing wine. Eating is an inescapable and fundamental way in which we relate to the world, which Jesus, in centering so much of his ministry around meals, must surely have recognized. Like a sacrament, food is an outward and visible sign of a deeper, complex, and generally hidden reality. It can be a symbol of destruction, as when poorly grown food represents the layers of personal, cultural, economic, political, and environmental ill health that are its causes or effects. It can be a symbol of health and healing, as when a simple, delicious, and nutritious meal embodies the love and care involved in its growing, sharing, and eating. Like the Eucharist, good food represents the partnership between human and divine effort: fruit of the Earth, whose seasons and cycles of growth are in God's control; and the work of human hands, which cooperate with nature and nature's God to coax crops from the soil.

As our family has become more intentional about our meals, I've come to see that eating good food also follows a pattern of communion and mission, which is the core of Christian discipleship. In my parish, as at countless others, we gather together every week to be fed: by the Word of God and at the Eucharistic table. These liturgical acts of remembrance, reconciliation, and renewal embody rich, complex layers of symbol and tradition. But beyond all of this, they are also the immediate, tangible reality of bread on the tongue and wine in the gullet: a common meal shared with my fellow parishioners amid the sound of screaming children and imperfectly sung hymns. At this "source and summit" of faith, we are gathered together and fed, and then sent out, in the strength of that food and fellowship, on a mission: "to love and serve the Lord," whether by spreading the light of the Gospel to those seeking faith or simply living as a faithful disciple in all things great and small.

When we eat well at home, we echo this pattern. Any healthy food comes from the communion of sunlight, water, soil nutrients, and the rich genetic history of the seed, wedded with the knowledge, skill, and patience of the grower. We gather the harvest from field or farmer or market, and the various ingredients come together in the kitchen, transformed into something new. When food is on the table, the promise of pleasure and nourishment draws my family (and often our friends) back into community. Even those who eat alone are not truly alone, for if modern particle physicists are correct, in eating we commune with the entire universe. The atoms in our meal are billions of years old; many came from distant stars; and a few once belonged to the body of Jesus himself. In digesting we incorporate into our body's fibers the mind-bending reaches of time and space. When we eat, we are in solidarity with all that brought our meal to our plates—which is, ultimately, the entire history of the universe.

I aspire to a home economy that would recognize meals as acts of deep communion. Instead of the rote meal prayers my family and I often say, I aspire to utter a truly mindful meal prayer, which would remember and celebrate these far-reaching connections. It would acknowledge that wherever love is, God is, and that food grown, prepared, and eaten with love has a special sacredness. I would like to pray and eat with knowledge and intention so that the meal draws us closer to all who made the meal possible, to the Creation from which it came,

to those with whom we break bread, and to the Creator from whose hands all good things come.

As with the Eucharistic liturgy, eating as an act of true communion will always lead to mission. A large part of this mission is and should be circular: we come to the table to be fed so that we may grow, purchase wisely, and prepare another meal for that same table, to be fed again. But just as St. Paul broke open the closed, circular logic of the Corinthians' slogan, "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," by placing eating within a larger context of discipleship, the faithful home economy is not an inward-focused, isolated life of simplicity and subsistence, but an outward-looking one of service. Certainly, the world will not heal until we learn to practice the arts of gentle and sustainable living, of putting our own houses in order. But even if everyone had "five acres and independence," as the classic homesteading book by that title recommends, and we all minded our own business, ours would be a sad and lonely world.

There will always be some who, because of unwise choices, the accident of birth and circumstance, or simply illness, old age, and infirmity (and who escapes these?), will lack the ability to provide for themselves. As Jesus said, we will always have the poor among us. And at some point, all of us will become poor in this sense: we will have to set down the axe, hoe, and kitchen knife to let others take care of us, just as we also required when we were infants and children.

Even if we are strong and able, most of us depend on the knowledge, labor, resources, and community of other people. Unless we have primitive needs, ingenious resourcefulness, and exceptional health, our home economies will always be linked with each other in mutual responsibility and service. This is, I believe, as it should be. In the interconnected and interdependent world God has created and sustains, we are made to need each other – and so we are made to serve each other. A healthy marriage is one in which one partner serves the other and vice-versa; the healthy congregation is one in which the pastor serves the parish and vice versa; the healthy home economy is one that serves and is served by the surrounding community and the world at large. Loving

service is the core of mission, and I think it is also the meaning of true belonging. We may and we must love and serve our neighbors, both those near-at-hand and those in distant places or distant generations who are affected by our choices. This service-oriented love is an invitation to lose ourselves – at least our selfish, false, ego-oriented selves – and find our true selves again in God, whose image is imprinted on those around us and on the tapestry of Creation itself. Through such love, human community and the entire Creation could not only heal, but blossom.

2. Sikh Statement on Care for the Earth

[In 2007, Religions for Peace-USA undertook a campaign to highlight one religious community's position a month on environmental issues, including care for the Earth. This piece has been revised to accommodate to space limitations in this Tool Kit. It would help to comment that the closest that Sikhs come to a "sermon" is a lecture by a lay leader just before the conclusion of a Sikh prayer service. It is done on special occasions. – Dr. Tarunjit Singh Butalia, Chair of Interfaith Committee, World Sikh Council - America Region ((WSC_AR), P. O. Box 3635, Columbus, Ohio 43210, USA]

*"Air is the vital force,
Water is like the father,
And earth like the great mother.
Day and night are like nurses,
In whose lap the whole world plays."
- Siri Guru Granth Sahib, page 8*

If air is our vital force, it is a sin, as well as self-destructive to pollute it. If we consider water to be our progenitor, dumping industrial wastes in it is unforgivable disrespect. As we destroy the ozone layer, the cycle that manufactures chlorophyll in green plants is damaged or interrupted; since plants are part of the air-producing cycle, we strangle ourselves. If we pollute the sacred soil, we bring dishonor to our great mother.

The Sikh Gurus showed the world the way to live in harmony with the environment and all their constructions adhered to this principle. The Sikh scripture, Siri Guru Granth Sahib, declares that the purpose of human beings is to achieve a blissful state of union with God, and to be in harmony with the earth and all of God's creation. The faith seeks to give humankind a progressive and responsible philosophy as a guide to all of the world's concerns. Recognizing that there is a part of the divine in all that God created, we must recognize the interdependence of all generations, species and resources. The importance of air, water and soil to life are emphasized over and over again in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The earth is referred to as the mother and as such requires respect and great care needs to be taken to ensure that no damage occurs to it while a Sikh is going about his or her daily life. The pollution of these 3 elements is against the principles laid down by the Sikh Gurus. The ten Sikh Gurus built many Gurdwaras (places of worship) surrounded by large pools which supported marine life, especially fish. This was a sign to live in harmony with nature rather than in conflict with it.

Siri Guru Nanak Sahib, the first of the Sikh Gurus, in his writings states that the reality that humans create around themselves is a reflection of their inner state. The current instability of the natural system of the earth – the external environment of human beings – is only a reflection of the instability and pain within humans. The increasing barrenness of the earth's terrain is a reflection of the emptiness within humans. The solution can be found in honest prayer, and the spirit of humility before the divine will of God. Having brought life into being, God will protect it. An awareness of the sacred relationship between humans and the environment is necessary for the health of our planet, and for our own survival.

To keep this planet a livable place, free from human injustices, for ourselves and for our coming generations, we have to divert our inner resourcefulness to peaceful gestures of good will. According to Sikh beliefs, true peace comes from within and not from without. Meditation of God coupled with selfless social service purifies one's inner self. We should look beyond ourselves with no intention for selfish ends. Contemporary society, with its profit interests and claims, has mastered and conquered nature, drifted away from this idea,

and is now faced with the problems of serious environmental degradation, a basic threat to all divine life.

3. A Sermon for the Birthday of the World (abridged)

Rosh Hashanah 2006

Rabbi Joe Rooks Rapport, The Temple, Louisville, KY

As a young man, living in the Northwoods, a place so beautiful that it is called “God’s country,” I learned to appreciate the beauty of the earth, in Jewish terms, as a reflection of God’s wonder. And now, I look back on this landscape as a universal song of a God who calls us all, God’s children, to guard and to serve all creation. All of us have a role in the protection of the planet we all share. And to be reminded once again of that connection, we need only turn to the very first pages of the Torah, to the story of how Adam came from Adamah (Genesis 2:7-10 & 15).

When taken more directly from the Hebrew, these passages might read like this: “Then the LORD God formed Adam, [the first human being] out of the dust of Adamah [out of the earth herself], and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life; and Adam became a living soul. And the LORD God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there God placed Adam, the work of God’s hands. And the LORD God planted, Adamah, the earth, with every tree that is pleasing to the sight, and good for food; the Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And a river flowed forth out of Eden to ever water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became four great streams... And the LORD God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden to guard and to serve her.”

Environmentalism runs deep within our Biblical tradition. We learn this from “the beginning,” from the story of our creation and our connection to the Earth. In the beginning, God planted two trees in Eden. The tree of Eternal Life, a symbol of the abundance of nature, an Eternal source of sustenance for all of us who live in this garden we call the earth. But, God planted there also the tree of Knowledge of Good and of Evil, and therein lies the challenge. From knowledge we have learned to love. From knowledge we have also learned to bend the

laws of nature to our will and to draw ever more valuable resources from our earth. Through knowledge we have created a world which can provide for us in an abundance which shames Eden for its fruitfulness. And yet it is a forgetful knowledge which we have learned - a knowledge unconnected to the source of these blessings which have been placed in our knowing hands; a forgetfulness of the God who creates and sustains this earth, day by day, despite our abundant calls upon its resources. And we have forgotten, too, our link to the land, our tie to this earth, and our common cause in the preservation of this source of all the blessings in our lives.

As it says in the Midrash, *The Ancient Legends of our People*, “God led Adam around all the trees of the Garden of Eden.” And God said to Adam: “See My works, how good and praiseworthy they are? And all that I have created, I made for you. [But] be mindful that you do not spoil and destroy My world – for if you spoil it, there will be no one left to repair it.” (Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:13)

The tree of knowledge bears fruits, both of good and of evil. Sustainable development means nothing more than eating of the fruits of goodness without tasting from the fruits of evil which spawn a forgetfulness of the source of all that is good. The lessons we can learn from the sacred text of our people and all peoples who look out upon the stars, who feel the sands slip through their fingers, who recognize the wonder of our world in many ways, teach us of our kinship with all human life and our connection to the Creator who has brought us forth unto life.

I want to show you a rock, which is a piece of Mount Sinai. I carried this rock myself from the mountain’s very peak, a souvenir from my first journey to the land of our beginnings, in the days when the Sinai was still a part of that Land. And while we are, none of us, so very sure that the Mountain we call Sinai today is, in fact, the place where our people received God’s word, still in all, I have cherished this stone as a piece of my spiritual journey. Within each stone drawn from the Mountain’s peak there resides the imprint of these tiny Trees of Life, a geological anomaly called “magnesium flowers,” repeated again and again within the facets of each stone. These serve as a reminder of the Torah, our “Tree of Life.” So, when I say that you are looking now at a piece of Mount Sinai, I mean more than this ancient rock which I hold in my hand. I mean that I am a piece of Mount Sinai,

and so are you; that all of us have a task in the protection of that Tree of Life we all share.

We all stood at Sinai. We have learned that lesson each and every year on Yom Kippur. We read from the Torah, our Tree of Life, and the portion from which we read comes from this very moment at Mount Sinai when we, all of us, received God's words. Atem nitzavim, it begins: "You stand here this day before the Lord your God: you, your leaders, your tribal chiefs, your elders, your magistrates, every man of Israel, your children, your women, and the converts in your camp - from your woodcutters to your drawers of water. All of you have entered into this covenant before the Lord your God, and have accepted upon yourselves this oath that God is making with you this day..."

And it is not with you alone that I am making this covenant (we are told). I am making it both with those who are standing here with us today before the Lord our God, and with those who are not [yet] here with us today. (Deuteronomy 29:9)

We, all of us, stood at Sinai that awesome day. We, all of us, and the generations yet to come, stood there – along with every generation of our people – as we set our feet upon the path of Torah which has carried us forward even unto this day. We relive this moment each Passover when we recall that "each of us went forth out of Egypt," and we renew that bond each Yom Kippur when again we stand together, as we did once long ago at Sinai, to begin again on the path of Torah, to begin again on the path to the building of a better world. Standing on the stones of Mount Sinai, we are all connected to that moment of revelation when God gave us the Torah and called upon us to walk in its ways. Our faith, our tradition, our civilization and our culture, they all come down to us from that day. And from that day, too, comes our commitment to be guardians of this planet we call our home. Not just from the story of Adam and Adamah, but from the celebration of this holiday of Rosh Hashanah, which we call Birthday of the World, and all the holidays we will celebrate throughout the year.

To follow the Jewish calendar is to listen to the earth. Passover comes in the first month of spring, when the first buds appear on the branches of the trees. Repentance comes when the leaves begin to turn, reminding

us that it is time to turn from our wanderings back to the path of faith. Hannukah, the feast of light, is celebrated during the Winter Solstice, when darkness envelops our world. The earth sets the time for all of the High Holidays. All we need to do is listen to the earth.

And every Sabbath we celebrate these two essential themes: our Exodus from Egypt. and the creation of the Earth; our first halting steps on the path to Mt. Sinai and our longing to return to the Garden from which we once came forth. The earth and Mt. Sinai, these are the foundation stones of our faith, and together they speak these words, “protect the planet which is your home”...

May this year be a year of Renewal. May this year be a year of Healing and Repair. May this year be a year when we, Adam, all of us children of the living God, renew our connection to Adamah, the earth from which Divine hands brought us forth.

4. Faith in Food

Alliance of Religions and Conservation

Martin Palmer, ARC director – Susie Weldon, Faith in Food project coordinator – July 2010

Faith in Food is a new initiative from the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, working in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, WWF and the Soil Association, aimed at assisting the world’s major religions to develop faith-consistent ethical and sustainable policies for the purchasing, production and consumption of food. The long-term goal is to harness the faiths’ moral leadership, their role as advocates, their purchasing power and investment portfolios and their land ownership to move one billion new customers into the ethical food market¹.

Faith in Food seeks to bring about a lasting change in attitudes to the way food is produced, purchased and consumed by encouraging faith communities to link what and how they eat more specifically to their beliefs and values, with substantial long-term benefits to the environment and human and animal health.

It aims to shift a significant proportion of faith-owned farmland into sustainable agriculture, and builds upon ARC's 15-year experience of working with the faiths on the environment, including the establishment of faith-based organic farms and agriculture training centres.

Background

ARC is a secular, UK-based organisation established by HRH The Prince Philip in 1995 that works with the world's major faiths to help them develop environmental programmes consistent with their teachings, beliefs and practices. In 2007 ARC was asked by UNDP to work with the faiths to develop long-term action plans around climate change. That initiative resulted in the Windsor Celebration, jointly hosted by HRH The Prince Philip and UN Secretary-General HE Ban Ki-moon, in November 2009, where more than 30 faith groups announced long-term plans 'to protect the living planet'.

The event received an enormous response, with excellent international coverage and the announcement of some very inspiring initiatives – 8.5 million trees to be planted in Tanzania; Daoist temples in China to be fitted with solar panels; moves to source sustainable fuel for Sikh gurdwaras (which feed 30 million people a day in India); the greening of religious buildings; a major increase in faith-based environmental educational programmes; and so on.

UN Assistant Secretary-General Olav Kjørven described it as 'the biggest mobilisation of people and communities that we have ever seen on this issue'. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said the world's faith communities occupied a unique position in discussions on climate change: "You can – and do – inspire people to change."

Included in many of the long-term action plans were initiatives around food, farming or gardening. Two key themes emerged: first, there was widespread agreement that decisions made around food (and farming) are a key element of environmental stewardship; and, second, the huge purchasing power around food offers

enormous potential for individuals and faith groups to put values such as compassion, care for the earth, justice and equity into practice.

Eating rightly:

Does the food we consume represent the values we profess?

Food is not just a matter of physical survival. It is also a source of spiritual nourishment and symbolism: food can be sacred or forbidden, it is used in ritual, worship and celebration and it plays a central role in the rhythm of religious life. 'Eating rightly' therefore has enormous significance for all faiths.

There is, however, another aspect to 'eating rightly'. Food – both its consumption and its production – goes to the core of our relationship with the rest of Creation, however we understand that to be. The choices we make of what, when and how we eat have an enormous impact upon the Earth, our fellow human beings and other living creatures.

At the same time, growing concerns about global justice, food security, climate change and sustainability make our choices around food, and its production, even more important than ever before. This is why ARC is launching Faith in Food in partnership with UNDP, The Soil Association (the UK's leading organic body) and other secular groups.

Faith in Food goals

Faith in Food aims to harness the faiths' moral leadership, role as advocates, purchasing power, investment portfolios and land ownership to move one billion new customers into the ethical food market¹. ARC is seeking core funders to join the Norwegian Government, which has supplied seed funding, in developing the programme. Stage one (2010-2014) of Faith in Food aims to:

- Assist religions in developing faith-consistent ethical and sustainable policies for the purchasing, production and consumption of food. These policies would apply to the 'business' of faith – places of worship, faith-run

schools, farms, restaurants, conference centres and retreats – but would also be promoted by faiths to their communities as being part of faith-consistent living.

- Develop a guidebook outlining key questions and issues to aid faith groups in moving towards more sustainable food and farming. This would be relevant on small and large-scale implementation and applicable globally.
 - The guidebook would offer a practical toolkit of ideas for action and recommendations of best practice with the aim of inspiring action on three levels:
 - In the home (individuals/families)
 - In the institution (church/mosque/temple)
 - In the wider community (schools and faith commercial enterprises such as conference centres, restaurants etc)
 - It would examine the theology of food as well as the spiritual, environmental and community/social reasons for adopting ethical food and farming practices.
 - It would offer inspiring examples of work already being done by faith groups, such as the community supported agriculture scheme run by New York-based Jewish environmental group Hazon, in which 2,500 Jewish households are linked to 28 organic farms. In 2009, the scheme generated more than US \$950,000 of income to farmers, increased access to sustainable food through subsidies in seven communities and donated more than 35,000 lbs of food to emergency food providers.
- Hold advisory group meetings – in Nairobi, Delhi, London and New York – over the next 6-8 months to consult the faiths on key issues/concerns around food and farming, followed by an international conference in London in 2011 for faiths to share information and best practice around ethical food purchasing and production.
- Develop specific projects, arising out of the advisory meetings and conference, to illustrate the effectiveness

of putting faith-consistent ethical and sustainable food policies into practice, as first steps towards a 2014 target launch of a major campaign to move one billion new customers into the ethical food market.

Other key ARC programmes

A number of major new programmes have arisen as a result of the Windsor Conference and of ARC's continuing collaboration with UNDP, including:

- Sacred cities network– the greening of sacred cities and sites
- Religious forestry standard – the development of a standard for the management of faith-run forests
- Environmental refugees programme
- Water, sanitation and health in faith-run schools
- A major programme working with Muslims and Christians on environmental issues, including agriculture, in sub-Saharan Africa (with the World Bank)
- A major conference in China on sacred land, organised with the Daoists, the Buddhists and the Chinese Government.

In a country where belief in the Communist Party has shriveled, the faiths are increasingly recognised as a key stabilising and civilising influence. The Chinese Government is working with Daoism and Buddhism to create 'a spiritual culture of harmony' to lay the foundations for a more environmentally sustainable, socially just and compassionate society.

ARC has been instrumentally involved in this process and, at the behest of both the Government and the Daoists and Buddhists, can act as a major broker in enabling the power and authority of the faiths to contribute towards the development of a more sensitive modern China.

The event, planned for September 2011, will be first religious conference ever hosted by the Daoists, the Buddhists and the Chinese Government.

Why the faiths?

The faiths reach out to approximately 85 per cent of the world's population; own 7-8 per cent of the habitable land surface of the planet; are involved in more than half of all schools worldwide; and are the third largest category of investors in the world. So what they do with their assets and their influence matters.

5. Soil – Dirt – Wondrous Earth

Vicki Warren [Vicki Warren is a retired JCPS high school teacher, who is currently serving as office administrator for the Center for Interfaith Relations. The 15th Annual Festival of Faiths is CIR's main program. This November's Festival theme is "Sacred Soil: Foundation of Life." Vicki encourages all of you to attend and "get your hands dirty."]

Squishing mud between your toes—remember? Getting sand inside your bathing suit—remember? Seeing a worm twisting on the sidewalk after a spring rain—remember? Digging a hole to China in your backyard—remember? Burying a dearly departed pet—remember?

Singly or with our friends, as children we experienced the earth up close and personal. The intimacy we felt with the soil was so very personal. It was under our fingernails, in our mouth, and often all over our clothes and in our shoes. Animals dug in it, had homes in it, and surprised us by appearing from it. We used the dirt of our youth to build forts, to create toy car tracks, to make mud pies, and to lead our minds to imaginary realms of adventure. We took it for granted in many ways because it was always there and literally so much nearer to ourselves than a lot of other worldly wonders. Our friend the soil was creative and inspiring to us in our youth, right under our feet for the taking and using.

With age we have grown further from the soil, literally by our height and figuratively by our occupations and preoccupations. Often times we are too busy to notice that worm of our youth, to build that sand castle of our childhood, and to let the imagination see that potential in the mud puddle of our elementary years.

So the soil waits, and waits, and waits... until a spark is forthcoming in our minds. Next door our neighbor

plants a lone tomato fledgling in a corner of her patio. Going to work, we are amazed to see the community garden growing next to a local house of worship. Walking the dog, we come upon a farmers' market in a parking lot. Locally, we slowly, yet with bursting insight, become awake to the soil's potential. Perhaps nothing tweaks our olfactory senses like the smell of a tomato plant in the heat of a summer day. Perhaps nothing inspires such awe as a corn plant with its tasseled ears towering over us. Perhaps nothing makes us appreciate the colors of our earth's bounty like a display of green peppers, red radishes, and yellow squash. Our earth is alive and we have just awakened to it.

Finally our minds return to the wonder of dirt and the creativity of the soil that had been in our memories all along. Those memories of dirt experiences, of soil potentials, of earth movement all bring our minds leaping forward to present day living. Plans for new landscaping begin. Seed packets become interesting with surprising information. Garden shops become adult field trips. And conversations with others about the pros and cons of varieties of tomato plants and watering techniques are suddenly vital to our future. We become youthful again in our imagination and in fact.

"Earth abides," we have heard. Dirt takes on new meanings of love, gratification, and boundless potential. The soil has waited for our return.

6. Reflections

Reverend Al Shands

As the clock ticks on relentlessly to an unknown future for humanity and the world, there have been periods in history when the forecast of the future was particularly bleak. 2000 years ago Jews under Roman domination in Israel forecast a bloody end of the world in Armageddon, a showdown between the forces of God and Caesar. This apocalyptic vision was picked up by the writers of the Gospels in the theme of the second coming of Christ, the terrifying moment of the last judgment portrayed famously by Michelangelo in the Sistine chapel in the Vatican.

In later years Gibbons wrote “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” looking back on Roman history, not a very cheery tale. In 19th century America the painter Thomas Cole created five scenes called “The Course of Empire” from Wilderness to Farming to Empire to Destruction to Desolation. No doubt his scenes were a warning to the new Republic of what the future might hold unless they were on their guard. And of course the beat goes on.

Arrianna Huffington was on NPR this weekend with a current version of future disaster. She suggests that the USA may be on the way to becoming a Third World country with the destruction of the middle class who will end up in poverty leaving only the very rich and the very poor. Fortunately she thinks that there is still time to change course.

America has always been a land in which the future would become better than the present. But I think that view is being challenged by the times in which we live. A war in Afghanistan which shows no signs of letting up, an economy which is very uncertain and disastrous for many, global warming, a Congress immobilized for action by partisan politics, demagoguery rampant, loss of faith in institutions. It is a very long list. You keep looking for some little signs of hope for tomorrow.

In a very odd way I found a sign- like the dove that Noah spied after the flood - at house church last Sunday. It was a very odd house church. We were talking not about faith but about vegetable gardens – the one our congregation has sponsored in the depths of the West End of Louisville a very rough neighborhood, and the one at St. Francis School in the country where all students and faculty are required to grow the vegetables. And I saw in that unlikely pairing a spiritual metaphor for the deepest need in all of us... to embrace the earth, the life giving entity from which we all emerged millions of years ago at the beginning of our journey... to reach our hands into the soil of our origins. Get the total picture or not, when we do reach into the soil something happens to the soul. We are connected with what lies behind and ahead. We are embraced by God whether or not we feel the touch. For a moment we get things right and for a moment we do not fear what might lie ahead. So hooray for metaphors!

Quotes on Soil

The Earth Charter:

Preamble: We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

The moment you care for the Earth and the community of life, your compassion is increased, is nourished; similarly for your attitude toward people. This led me to the Earth Charter, which has this holistic concept of respect for human life, human rights, democracy and peace. – Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp

God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. – Genesis 1:31

Forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair. – Kahlil Gibran

The goods of creation belong to humanity as a whole. Yet the current pace of environmental exploitation is seriously endangering the supply of certain natural resources not only for the present generation, but above all for generations yet to come. – Pope Benedict XVI, 2010

I conceive that the land belongs to a vast family of which many are dead, few are living, and countless numbers are still unborn. – A Chief from Nigeria

The earth laughs at him who calls a place his own. – Hindustani Saying

Why have we developed ethics for homicide and genocide, but not for geo-cide? – Larry Rasmussen

O Goddess Earth, O all-enduring wide expanses! Salutation to thee. Now I am going to begin cultivation. Be pleased, O virtuous One. – Ancient Sanskrit Prayer

Beliefs shape our reality. Today, people create a toxic and polluting environment as the direct result of a belief that earth is our possession, inferior (some would even say evil) and dead, only worth its resources, only as good as the immediate profit to be gained from it. – Cait Johnson, *Earth, Water, Fire, and Air: Essential Ways of Connecting to Spirit*, 10

God's purpose for us is to love and to live in harmony with all that He made. All of creation and all generations to come are our neighbors. – Sallie Bingham, as quoted in *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet's Future* by Roger S. Gottlieb, 11

Do not believe "that all the beings exist for the sake of the existence of humanity. On the contrary, all the other beings too have been intended for their own sakes, and not for the sake of something else. – Maimonides, as quoted in *A Greener Faith*, 8

The earth is the LORD'S and all it holds, the world and those who live there. – Psalms 24: 1

To preserve this sacred world of our origins from destruction, our great need is for renewal of the entire Western religious-spiritual tradition in relation to the integral functioning of the biosystems of planet Earth. We need to move from a spirituality of alienation from the natural world to a spirituality of intimacy with it, from a spirituality of the divine as revealed in verbal revelation to a spirituality of the divine as revealed in the visible world about us. – Thomas Berry, *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth*, 60

The greatest challenge facing our society... is to shift from a culture based on consumption to a culture based on caretaking. – Scott Russell Sanders

If a healthy soil is full of death, it is also full of life: worms, fungi, microorganisms of all kinds ... Given only the health of the soil, nothing that dies is dead for long. – Wendell Berry

... I thought it necessary to remind people that the Earth is a Mosque. Every place on this planet is sacred. Everything is a gift from Allah, not to be abused, but to be protected. We are stewards of the Earth. – Ibrahim Abdul-Malin

The word humility (also human) is derived from the Latin *humus*, meaning “the soil.” – Pierro Ferrucci

If we think of ourselves as coming out of the earth, rather than having been thrown in here from somewhere else, we see that we are the earth, we are the consciousness of the earth. These are the eyes of the earth. And this is the voice of the earth. – Josh Campbell

We know more about the movement of celestial bodies than about the soil underfoot. – Leonardo da Vinci

Eating is an agricultural act... Most eaters... do not think of themselves as participants in agriculture. They think of themselves as ‘consumers’... When food, in the minds of eaters, is no longer associated with farming and with the land, the eaters suffer a kind of cultural amnesia that is misleading and dangerous. – Wendell Berry

Our choice of diets can encourage sustainable, ethical farming, or we can support agriculture that is out of sync with long-term planetary and human health. – J. Matthew Sleeth, [Serve God Save the Planet](#), 128.

Our diet is indeed killing us, and it’s killing the planet too. – Time, 8/30/10, 32

Doing mischief on earth consists of: destroying the soil and establishing settlements on it, contributing to the erosion of the soil... and to desertification. Skills and competence have grown among human beings more quickly than wisdom and rationality have. – Ma’ida: 64

The farther we get away from the land, the greater our insecurity. – Henry Ford

For this generation and for future generations, the environment is very important. If we exploit the environment in extreme ways, we will suffer, as will our future generations. When the environment changes, the climatic condition also changes. Then the climate changes dramatically, the economy and many other things change. Our physical health will be greatly affected. Again, conservation is not merely a question of morality, but a question of our own survival. – Dali Lama

We could have saved the Earth but we were too damned cheap. – Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

When we defile God's land through factory farming, unnecessary pesticides, and overuse of fertilizers, we show disrespect for his creation. – J. Matthew Sleeth, [The Gospel According to the Earth](#), 143.

To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves. – Mahatma Gandhi

The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings. – Masanobu Fukuoka

I am led to reflect how much more delightful to an undebauched mind, is the task of making improvements on the earth, than all the vain glory which can be acquired from ravaging it, by the most uninterrupted career of conquests. – George Washington

U. S. Speaker Tip O'Neill used to say all politics is local, and the same must be said of gardening, where regional climate and soil patterns determine what will thrive and what will die. Besides, gardening is about developing a relationship with where you live, right down to the unique quality of the light, the acid in the rain, the rocks in the soil. – Carol Stocker

A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people. – Franklin D. Roosevelt

We're moving quickly from a world where we push nature around to a world where nature pushes back – with far more power. But we've still got to live on that world, so we better start figuring out how. – Bill McKibben, *Eaarth*

The world will die from lack of pure water and soil long before it will die from a lack of antibiotics or surgical skill and knowledge. – Paul Brand, "A Handful of Mud," *Christianity Today*, July 2003

Earth's regeneration and renewal on its own non-negotiable terms and timelines collides with global capitalism and its short-term dynamism... The global economy's whole economic orientation is short-haul wealth and profit, while Earth's economy depends upon, and demands, long-haul reciprocity. – Larry L. Rasmussen

When people, land, and community are as one, all three members prosper; when they relate not as members but as competing interests, all three are exploited. – Wes Jackson

We have nowhere else to go – this is all we have. – Margaret Mead

The earth is full of your loving kindness, Yahweh. – Psalm 119: 64

A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people. – Franklin D. Roosevelt

Since the ecological system of the planet, human social relations and the individual inner life are all mutually connected, the harmonizing powers of compassion and wisdom can effect a transformation that becomes a basis for solving global problems. – Daisaku Ikeda

Remain true to the earth. – Friedrich Nietzsche

One consequence of industrial farming, or intense agriculture, is “to dramatically reduce wildlife populations.” This creates “a deeply unhealthy schism between food producers and the nature conservation movement.” On an organic farm, “food production and nature conservation are working together in harmony.” – Patrick Holden

Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors, we borrow it from our Children. – Ancient Indian Proverb

Essentially, all life depends upon the soil... There can be no life without soil and no soil without life; they have evolved together. – Charles E. Kellogg, USDA Yearbook of Agriculture, 1938

All you under the heaven! Regard heaven as your father, earth as your mother, and all things as your brothers and sisters. – Shinto saying

It is only when we are aware of the earth and of the earth as poetry that we truly live. – Henry Beston, Herbs and the Earth

The body repeats the landscape. They are the source of each other and create each other. – Meridel Le Sueur

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons.

It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth. – Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass

In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt. – Margaret Atwood

I live in the woods out of necessity. I get out of bed in the middle of the night because it is imperative that I hear the silence of the night, alone, and with my face on the floor, say psalms alone, in the silence of the night ... the silence of the forest is my bride and the sweet dark warmth of the whole world is my love and out of the heart of that dark warmth comes the secret that is only heard in silence, but it is the root of all the secrets whispered by all the lovers in their beds all over the world. – Thomas Merton

Soil Factoids

Scripture scholars point out that the language of Genesis clearly establishes a kinship between humankind and the earth. The Hebrew word for human being is Adam and derives from the same root as the word for fertile soil, Adamah.

Human beings belong to a community consisting of soil, water, air, and animate creatures, ranging from the microbial to the mammal. All of these lives are intertwined in complex ways, most of which are still unknown.

For St. Francis of Assisi, creation was a democracy of all God's creatures. The ant was Brother Ant, and fire was Sister Fire, praising God in their own ways as Brother Man does in his. Some have adopted Francis as the patron saint of ecologists.

The word "ecology" first appeared in the English language in 1873. However, the environmental movement did not begin until much later. A convenient date for identifying the beginning of this movement is 1962, with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

Soil can be thought of as the earth's peel, similar to an orange peel. Earth is the only known planet to have a skin.

Soil is a living system. There are 5,000 to 7,000 different species of bacteria in one gram of soil, and more living organisms in a cubic foot of soil than there are people in the United States.

Chemically, the soil is composed of 49% Oxygen, 33% Silicone, 7% Aluminum, 4% Iron, and 2% Carbon. Soil originated in particles of broken rock, but it differs from its parent rock because of alterations effected by chemical and environmental processes that include weathering and erosion.

An average soil sample is 45% minerals, 25% water, 25% air, and 5% organic matter.

Soil is often at the bottom of the food chain. Plants and small invertebrates feed off of the soil, and animals feed off of the plants.

Although the soil surface appears solid, air moves freely in and out of it. The air in the upper eight inches of a well-drained soil is completely renewed about every hour.

The American Midwest has the largest area of prime farmland soils in the world.

Approximately one acre of land is used to supply the food for each person in the world. Feeding the world's population therefore requires about 6 billion acres of arable soil.

A team of land ecologists from Stanford University estimates that between one-third and one-half of the land surfaces of the planet have been transformed by human action, such as paving roads and parking lots.

Worldwide, an estimated 25% of the soils used for agriculture are being degraded at an unacceptable rate.

Soil stores as much as 10% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions.

According to measurements calculated in 2009 using a tool called the Global Footprint, each person on earth would receive 4.5 acres to support their lifestyles if resources were divided equally among all people living on the planet.

The average lifestyle in the U.S. requires 22.3 acres, while that in India requires only 1.9. The requirement in France is 11.4 acres; in Japan, 10.2 acres.

The religions of the world own around seven to eight percent of habitable land surface on the planet, and more than five percent of the forests.

The United States Department of Agriculture reports that for the first time in American history, more people are living in urban localities than in rural ones.

Less than 1% of the total U.S. population claim farming as a principal occupation with a similar number of farmers claiming some other principal occupation. The number of farms in the U.S is about two million. About 125,000 farms produce about 75% of the agricultural yield.

Over the last decade, the United States has lost an average of 300 farms a week.

The fastest –growing sector of agriculture in the United States is the diversified food-producing farm on the outskirts of cities.

According to the U. S. Census Bureau, 25% of households grow some part of their own food in home gardens.

Ten tons of topsoil spread evenly over a hectare is only as thick as one Euro coin.

Natural processes can take more than 500 years to form one inch of topsoil.

Perhaps one-third of all topsoil in the United States has already been lost.

The United States alone has at least 36,000 hazardous waste sites endangering its soil.

The United States has 5% of the world's population and 30% of the waste.

About 1% of U.S. landfill space is full of disposable diapers, which take an estimated 500 years to decompose.

Over 1.1 billion pounds of pesticides costing \$25 billion are used each year in the U.S., much of it ending up in the soil. That is over 4 pounds per person. Cleaning up toxic chemicals in the soil and water has cost \$20 billion over the past 15 years in the United States.

Over 100 pesticide ingredients that are used in the United States are suspected of causing birth defects, cancer, and gene mutations, demonstrating that pollutants invade our own bodies as well as the environment.

American girls as young as seven are entering puberty at double the rate they were in the late 1990s, perhaps as a result of the hormones in their environment, including their food.

A significant ill effect of pesticide pollution is contaminated breast milk.

The U.S. produces 80 billion pounds of meat per year, with poultry making up 35 billion pounds. Animals are jammed together on factory farms and fed high-calorie, corn-based feed. Cattle can move to slaughter in 14 months, as opposed to two and one-half years for grass-fed cows.

Only 3% of cattle in the U.S. are organically raised; .02% of hogs; 1.5% of poultry.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that there are more than 450,000 brown fields in the United States.

Rainforests are being cut down at the rate of 100 acres per minute.

Americans use 50 million tons of paper annually – consuming more than 850 million trees. On the other hand, every ton of recycled paper saves 380 gallons of oil.

Worldwide, deserts are gradually taking over land that had once been fertile. In Mali, desert has taken over 220 miles in 20 years. Yet, deserts can be repelled by planting trees and employing responsible agricultural and land management practices.

Seventy percent of the world's dry lands may now be threatened by desertification.

As the Sahara Desert expands, already scarce arable soil is being smothered in countries such as Darfur and Somalia, giving rise to the new cause for war on the planet – land use and food production.

Every day, 50 to 100 species of plants and animals become extinct, often as a result of human influences.

In the summer of 2009, German agronomists found that wheat grown under the levels of carbon dioxide expected by 2050 will contain markedly less protein and iron and 14% more lead.

Each item of food served in a typical American meal has traveled an average of 1,500 miles before reaching the table.

Supplying American homes with food requires about 400 gallons of oil a year per citizen.

If every American ate just one meal a week composed of locally and organically raised meats and produce, oil consumption would be reduced by over 1.1 million barrels each week.

Enough food is manufactured in the U.S. for every American to consume 3,800 calories per day. We need only 2,350 in a healthy diet.

The Soil Association, the leading conservation organization in the United Kingdom, recommends the 70-50-30 principle for responsible dining: 70% fresh or unprocessed food; 50% locally grown food; 30% organically grown food.

On average, Americans spend a smaller percentage of their income on food for their tables than do people in any other developed country of the world.

Locally, urban gardens are sprouting up all over the community. YouthBuild Louisville claims 27 raised garden beds, and special projects including composting, growing mushrooms, and keeping honey bees are also being carried out by students, Boy Scouts and senior citizens.

Eighty percent of the beef-packing industry is controlled by four companies; the soybean processing is equally consolidated.

Ten corporations sell 55% of the seeds that produce the world's food crops.

The United States Department of Agriculture reports that organic farming is growing rapidly, but scarcely fast enough to meet demand. Sales of organic foods for 2008 reached \$21.1 billion, up from \$3.6 billion in 1997.

Studies by researchers at the University of California-Davis report that consumers of organically grown foods spend 20% more on their groceries than they would if they bought the produce of industrialized farms.

Organic farming builds rather than depletes the soil through the use of natural fertilizers and cover crops.

Organic foods currently represent only about 3% of the total American market, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Pesticides and herbicides are not used in organic farming, but biological pest controls, along with old-fashioned hoeing, are used.

Per year, up to 10 million tons of chemical fertilizer are poured onto fields to cultivate corn alone, leading to toxic runoffs that are poisoning the Gulf of Mexico.

Throughout the world, industrial farming methods are taking their toll on the soil. These methods promote soil erosion, salinization, desertification, and loss of soil fertility. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that over 25% of arable land in the world has been affected by one or more of these problems.

(These factoids have been gathered from a number of internet sources, as well as from books such as *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, by Ellen F. Davis; *A Greener Faith*, by Roger S. Gottlieb; *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, by Barbara Kingsolver *et al.*; and *Eaarth*, by Bill McKibben).

Soil-Related Suggested Resources

Books by Kentucky Authors on Soil-Related Topics

- Abernathy, Deborah White; Lauder milk, Ellis L.; & Evans, Marc *Kentucky's Natural Heritage: An Illustrated Guild to Biodiversity*
- Angelucci, Karen *Secrets of a Kentucky Gardener*
- Barnes-Davies, Rebecca *50 Ways to Help Save the Earth How You and Your Church Can Make a Difference*
- Barnes, Thomas G. *Kentucky's Last Great Places*
- Barnes, Thomas G. *Rare Wildflowers of Kentucky*
- Barnes, Thomas G. *Wildflowers and Ferns of Kentucky*
- Berry, Wendell & Hall, James Baker *Tobacco: An Elegy*
- Berry, Wendell, & Pollen, Michael *Bringing it to the Table: On Farming and Food*
- Campbell, Sally *Saving Kentucky: Greening the Bluegrass*
- Carloftis, Jon *Beautiful Kentucky Gardens*
- Donahue, Arwen & Howell, Rebecca Gayle *This is home now: Kentucky Holocaust Survivors Speak*
- Gentry, Jane *A Garden in Kentucky: Poems*
- Gentry, Jane *A Year in Kentucky: A Garland of Poems*
- House, Silas *Clay's Quilt*
- House, Silas *The Coal Tattoo*
- House, Silas & Howard, Jason *Something's Rising*
- Howard, Jason *We All Live Downstream: Writings about Mountaintop Removal*
- Kingsolver, Barbara *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*
- McClanahan, Ed *The Natural Man*
- Norman, Gurney *Divine Right's Trip*
- Norman, Gurney *Kinfolks*
- Receveur, Sharon, & Cathcart, Tavia *Bernheim: Connecting People with Nature*

Reece, Erik *Lost Mountain: A Year in the Vanishing Wilderness: Radical Strip Mining and the Devastation of Appalachia*
Reece, Erik *Field Work: Modern Poems about Eastern Forests*
Reece, Erik *An American Gospel: On Family, History and the Kingdom of God*
Schmid, Albert W. A. *The Kentucky Bourbon Cookbook*
Taylor, Richard *Bluegrass* (poems)
Taylor, Richard *Earthbones* (poems)
Taylor, Richard *Stone-Eye: A Collection of Poems*

Books on Soil-Related Topics by 2010 Festival of Faith Participants

Abdul-Matin, Ibrhahim *GreenDeen, What Islam Teaches About Protecting the Planet*
Berry, Wendell *Andy Catlett*
Berry, Wendell *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*
Berry, Wendell *Farming: A Hand Book*
Berry, Wendell *Hannah Coulter*
Berry, Wendell *The Mad Farmer Poems*
Berry, Wendell *A Place On Earth*
Berry, Wendell *That Distant Land*
Berry, Wendell *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture*
Berry, Wendell *What Are People For?*
Davis, Ellen F. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: an Agrarian Reading of the Bible*
Gottlieb, Roger S. *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Grounds*
Gottlieb, Roger S. *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet's Future*
Gottlieb, Roger S. *This Sacred Earth: Nature, Religion, and the Environment*
Jackson, Wes *Altars of Unhewn Stone: Science and the Earth*
Jackson, Wes *Becoming Native to This Place*

Jackson, Wes *Consulting the Genius of the Place: An Ecological Approach to a New Agriculture*
Jackson, Wes *Farming in Nature's Image: An Ecological Approach to Agriculture*
Jackson, Wes *Meeting the Expectations of the Land*
Jackson, Wes *New Roots for Agriculture*
Jackson, Wes *Rooted in the Land: Essays on Community and Place*
Jackson, Wes *The Virtues of Ignorance: Complexity, Sustainability, and the Limits of Knowledge (Culture of the Land)*
Kramer, Kyle *A Time to Plant: Life Lessons in Work, Prayer, and Dirt*
Palmer, Martin *Faith in Conservation: New Approaches to Religions and the Environment*
Palmer, Martin *Living Christianity*
Palmer, Martin *Religions of the World: The Illustrated Guide to Origins, Beliefs, Traditions and Festivals*
Pollen, Michael *In Defense of Food*
Pollen, Michael *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*
Pollen, Michael *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*
Rasmussen, Larry *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet's Future*
Rasmussen, Larry *Earth Community, Earth Ethics, Earth Habitat*
Rasmussen, Larry *Eco-Injustice and the Church's Response*
Sleeth, Emma *It's Easy Being Green*
Sleeth, Matthew *The Gospel According to the Earth*
Sleeth, Matthew *Blessed Earth: Hope for Creation*
Sleeth, Matthew *Blessed Earth: Hope for Humanity*
Sleeth, Matthew *Serve God, Save the Planet*
Sleeth, Nancy *Go Green, Save Green*
Waters, Alice *Edible Schoolyard: A Universal Idea*

Other Books on Soil-Related Issues

- Austin, Rev. Richard Cartwright *Beauty of the Lord: Awakening the Senses*
- Bartholomew, Mel *All New Square Foot Gardening!*
- Bassett, Libby (editor) *Earth and Faith: A Book of Reflection for Action*
- Berry, Thomas *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth*
- Brueggemann, Walter *Using God's Resources Wisely: Isaiah and Urban Possibility*
- Brown, Karen McCarthy *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess In Brooklyn*
- Buck, Pearl *The Good Earth*
- Burtynsky, Edward *Oil*
- Burtynsky, Edward, & Adams, Ansel *Constructed Landscapes*
- Butler, Tom, and Wuerthner, George (editors) *Plundering Appalachia: The Tragedy of Mountaintop-Removal Coal Mining*
- Cain, Clifford Chalmers *An Ecological Theology: Reunderstanding Our Relation to Nature*
- Campolo, Tony *50 Ways You Can Help Save the Planet*
- Colwell, Mary; Finlay, Victoria; Hilliare, Alison; and Weldon, Susie (editors), with The Alliance of Religions and Conservation, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (available online) *Many Heavens, One Earth: Guidebook to Creating a Long-Term Faith Plan to Protect the Living Planet*
- Costa, Temra *Farmer Jane - Women Changing the Way We Eat*
- Davis, Ellen F. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*
- De Witt, Calvin *Earth-Wise, A Biblical Response to Environmental Issues*
- Delgado, Sharon *Hope for the Earth: A Handbook for Christian Environmental Groups*
- Edwards, Denis *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*
- Elgin, Duane *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life That Is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich*
- Fritsch, Albert, and Ladavaia-Cox, Angela *Eco-Church: An Action Manual*
- Gallagher, Winifred *The Power of Place: How Our Surroundings Shape our Thoughts, Emotions, and Actions*
- Garofalo, Michael P. (editor) *Readings to Lift a Gardener's Spirits*

Goldsworth, Andy *Time*

Goodell, Jeff *Big Coal: The Dirty Secret Behind America's Energy Future*

Gore, Al *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It*

Guenther, Dan *To Till It and Keep it: New Models for Congregational Involvement with the Land*

Hallman, David G. *A Place in Creation: Ecological Visions in Science, Religion, and Economics*

Hamilton, Virginia *In the Beginning: Creation Stories from Around the World*

Hanh, Thich Nhat, & Cheung, Dr. Lilian *Savor: Mindful Eating, Mindful Life*

Jeavons, John *How to Grow More Vegetables Than You Ever Thought Possible on Less Land Than You Ever Imagined*

Johannsen, Kristin; Mason, Bobbie Ann; and Taylor-Hall, Mary Ann (editors) *Missing Mountains: We Went to the Mountaintop But It Wasn't There*

Johnson, Cait *Earth, Water, Fire, & Air*

Jones, Van *Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems*

Kaza, Stephanie *Mindfully Green: A Personal and Spiritual Guide to Whole Earth Thinking*

Kaza, Stephanie, and Kraft, Kenneth *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*

Kehm, George H. *Whose World Is It? Responding to God's Covenant with the Earth*

Logan, William Bryant *Dirt: The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth*

McClellan, John *Rock Samadhi*

McDonald, Barry *Seeing God Everywhere: Essays on Nature and the Sacred (Perennial Philosophy)*

McFague, Sallie *Abundant Life: Rethinking Theology and Ecology from a Planet in Peril*

McKibben, Bill *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* [sic]

Miller, Jonathan *The Compassionate Community: Ten Values to Unite America*

Milne, Lorus and Margery *The Nature of Life: Earth, Plants, Animals, Man and Their Effect on Each Other*

Montgomery, David R. *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations*

Painter, Christine Valters *Water, Wind, Earth & Fire: The Christian Practice of Praying with the Elements*

Petrini, Carlo *Slow Food Nation: Why Our Food Should Be Good, Clean and Fair*

Petrini, Carlo, & Waters, Alice *Terra Madre: Slow Food*
Ray, Janisse *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*
Reader's Digest *Nature in America: Your A-to-Z Guide to Our Country's Animals, Plants, Landforms and Other Natural Features*
Roberts, Elizabeth, and Amidon, Elisa (editors) *Earth Prayers*
Robinson, Tri *Rooted In Good Soil: Cultivating and Sustaining Authentic Discipleship*
Robinson, Tri *Saving God's Green Earth*
Robinson, Tri *Small Footprint, Big Handprint: How to Live Simply and Love Extravagantly*
Rodale, Maria *Organic Manifesto - How Organic Farming Can Heal Our Planet, Feed the World and Keep Us Safe*
Ruether, Rosemary Radford (editor) *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*
Ruskin, John *The Ethics of Dust*
Sanders, Russell Scott *A Conservationist Manifesto*
Sanders, Russell Scott *A Private History of Awe*
Schut, Michael W. *Toward Sustainable Communities: A Curriculum to Teach Environmental Justice, Sustainability, and Theology within Christian Churches*
Shiva, Vandana *Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology*
Steingraber, Sandra *An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood*
Steingraber, Sandra *An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment and Having Faith*
Storey, Rev. Alan *A Sustainability Journey*
Tucker, Mary Evelyn *Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase*
Van Dyke, Fred; Mahan, David C.; Sheldon, Joseph K.; and Brand, Raymond H. *Redeeming Creation: The Biblical Basis for Environmental Stewardship*
Waters, Alice *Edible Schoolyard: A Universal Idea*
White, Vera K. *Healing and Defending God's Creation: Hands On! Practical Ideas for Congregations*
Wilkinson, Loren and Mary Ruth *Caring for Creation in Your Own Backyard: Over 100 Things Christian*
Wirzba, Norman, with photographs by Tom Barnes *The Gift of Scripture: Images from Scripture and Earth*

Books for Children on Soil-Related Topics

Asch, Frank *The Earth And I*
Banana Slug String Band *Dirt Made My Lunch (Songbook & CD)*
Berry, Wendell *Whitefoot*
Brown, Peter *The Curious Garden*
Christian, Peggy *If You Find A Rock*
Cronin, Doreen, & Bliss, Harry *Diary of Worm*
Cronin, Doreen *Diary of Spider*
Cole, Henry *Jack's Garden*
Glaser, Linda *Wonderful Worms*
Gibbons, Gail *Tell Me Tree: All About Trees for Kids*
Gibbons, Gail *The Vegetables We Eat*
Kalman, Bobby *The Life Cycle of an Earthworm*
Lindbo, Michael L., & others *Soil: Get the Inside Scoop!*
Mason, Bobby Ann *Shiloh and Other Stories*
Pfeffer, Wendy *Wiggling Worms at Work*
Silverstein, Alvin, and Silverstein, Virginia *Life in a Bucket of Soil*
Showers, Paul *Where Does the Garbage Go?*
Siddals, Mary McKenna *Compost Stew*
Tomecek, Steve "The Dirtmeister" *Dirt*

Films on Soil-Related Topics

Dirt! The Movie (an award-winning movie that is our official film for the 2010 Festival of Faith)
The American Farm
Antz

Bad Seed: The Truth About Our Food
Beautiful Truth
A Bug's Life
Burning the Future: Coal In America
Coal Country: Rising Up Against Mountaintop Removal Mining The Creation Care Series
Crude
A Crude Awakening: The Oil Crash
Deep Down
Diet for A New America
Dying to Have Known
Earth Voice Food Choice
The 11th Hour: Turning America's Darkest Hour to It's Finest Escape From Suburbia
Fast Food Nation
Food Inc.
Food Matters
FRESH
The Future of Food
The Garden
Gerson Miracle
Grown In Detroit
Heart & Soil
The Hemp Revolution
How to Cook Your Life
In the Garden
An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It

No Impact Man
King Corn
Manufactured Landscapes
The Meaning of Food
Our Daily Bread
The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil
The Real Dirt On Farmer John
Seeds, Dirt, Fruit
The Story of Stuff (short film)
Sweet Remedy
We Feed The World
YERT (Your Environmental Road Trip)

Magazines on Soil-Related Topics

Earth: The Science Behind the Headlines Christopher M. Keane, editor
GreenList: Louisville Carole and Andy Wolak, editors
Horticulture Magazine F+W Media
Mother Earth Soil Association
Mother Earth News Bryan Welch, publisher and editorial director
Natural Awakenings Camille Britt-McManus, editor
Ode: For Intelligent Optimists Jurriaan Kamp, editor
OnEarth Douglas S. Barasch, editor
SGI Quarterly: A Buddhist Forum for Peace, Culture and Education

Soil-Related Website Resources

www.sgiquarterly.org/feature2010Jly-1.html – July 2010 issue of the SGI Quarterly; Religion and Ecology, is right on target for this year’s Festival theme; very interesting articles that include Mary Evelyn Tucker, who was a presenter at the 2008 Festival of Faiths and is a member of the Earth Charter International Council, an effort where SGI has played a pivotal role; an article by our SGI President, Daisaku Ikeda, along with the others.

www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=346 – Martin Palmer explains why faiths can shape future generations

www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=365 – An Orthodox message for the planet

www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=184

www.arcworld.org/books.asp?sectionID=1

www.fore.research.yale.edu/information/index.html

www.id.loc.gov/authorities/sh2008002852

www.npr.org/.../2010/07/28/128819600/beyond-the-science-religion-debate-a-spiritual-ecology

www.greenbydesign.com/2009/04/19/spiritual-ecology-a-match-made-in-who-knows-where

www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=7,1501,0,0,1,0

www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,865664,00.html

www.equinoxjournals.com/JSRNC

www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/how-theology-can-help-sav.html

www.faithclimateconnect.com

www.whas11.com/home/Downtown-gets-a-little-greener-with-Brown-Forman-100281464.html – Brown Forman, the Festival of Faiths major corporate donor, won the 2009 Sustainability Award based on barrel gardens started by Mark Williams, the chef at B-F and our coordinator of the Saturday Festival events. WHAS11 noted, “He deserves a ton of credit for the leadership, vision and execution of this...it just keeps ‘growing.’”

www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/485-Religion-and-the-environment-in-China

Soil-Related Curriculum Resources

sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/lessons/science/grade_2_soil.html

Grade 2 Soil – Science John Muir Lesson Plan aligned to the California K-12 Academic Content Standards for Science. A part of the John Muir Exhibit

curriculalessons.suite101.com/article.cfm/introduction_to_soil_lesson

A simple investigation for elementary aged children into the properties of different types of soil

school.discoveryeducation.com/schooladventures/soil

Lesson Plans. K-5; 6-8; 9-12; Featured Content. Science of Everyday Life; Energy Balance: 101; Explore the many layers of soil. There's something alive under your feet.

mt.nrcs.usda.gov/about/lessons/Lessons_Soil/index.html

Soil Factors Lesson Plan Unit. Natural Resources. Lesson Title. Soil Factors. Grade. 8. Estimated Time. 3 hours. This lesson should follow a lesson about soil formation. Montana NRCS

sil.nrcs.usda.gov

If you ask Claude, EVERYTHING begins (and ends) with soil. He'll give you the 'scoop' on soil in this interactive and educational game and learning activities.

cribd.com/doc/8013883/Science-Lesson-Plan-Soil-Sam

Science Lesson Plan Soil Samples.

lessonplanet.com/search?keywords=soil&media=lesson&search_type=related

Search soil lesson plans to find teacher approved lesson plans by grade and rating.

lessonplanspage.com/SSScienceSoil-DiscussionQuestionsForClassIdea3.htm (and lessonplanspage.com/ScienceSoilTypes.html)

Social Studies—A Lesson Plans Page lesson plan, lesson idea, thematic unit, or activity.

teachers.net/lessons/posts/3381.html

What type of soil do worms like? An Investigation (Elementary, Science)

forestry-suppliers.com/s01_pages/lessonplan_pdf/2005%20Soil%20Moisture%20122805.pdf

Soil Analysis Mo-2 Grades K-4 – Background: All plant life requires three basic things: light, soil, and water.

urbanext.illinois.edu/soil/intro.html

game, lesson plan

baucomes.wcpss.net/rocks/rocksandsoil.html

1st Grade Lesson Plans – LEARN Lesson Plans: Rocks and Minerals, Learning About Rocks, Digging up Discoveries, Hard Rock, The learner will build an understanding of solid earth materials: 1. Distinguish the size and shape of rocks, boulders, grains of sand and smaller materials. 2. Classify rocks and other earth materials according to their properties: Size. Shape. Color. Texture. Magnetism. 3. Observe and note rock qualities, such as the ability to float or sink.

Music for Sacred Soil: Foundation of Life

Well you roll on roads over fresh green grass. For your lorry loads pumping petrol gas.
And you make them long, and you make them tough.
But they just go on and on, and it seems that you can't get off. – Cat Stevens, “Where Do the Children Play?”

What about sunrise, what about rain?
What about all the things that you said we were to gain?
What about killing fields? Is there a time?
What about all the things that you said was yours and mine?
Did you ever stop to notice? All the blood we've shed before?
Did you ever stop to notice? This crying Earth, these weeping shores? – Michael Jackson, “Earth Song”

I said, 'Hey Mister Tree, the world change but you remain the same,
And I wonder how you survive with the environment going down the drain.
Hey, Miss Butterfly, I see you look at me with your beautiful eyes,
You must be wondering what kind of creature am I.
You must be wondering what kind of creature am I.' – Ziggy Marley, “Dragon Fly”

The earth is the Lord's; sing Christian and Jew, Sacred the earth for Muslim, Sikh, Hindu.
Reverence for life is the Buddhist way, Violence none, in all we do and say. – Gerald H Gardiner, “The Earth is the Lord's”

For the beauty of the earth, We give to God our praise.
He has giv'n us his whole creation, Now and for always.
We have flowers and exotic food, From countries far away,
We have fuel and technology, To help us day by day. – Sheila Redmond, “As the Deer Pants”

They paved paradise, And put up a parking lot, With a pink hotel, a boutique, And a swinging hot spot.
Don't it always seem to go, That you don't know what you've got, Till it's gone—
They paved paradise. And put up a parking lot!
They took all the trees, Put 'em in a tree museum;
And they charged the people, A dollar and a half just to see 'em.
Don't it always seem to go, That you don't know what you've got. Till it's gone—
They paved paradise. And put up a parking lot! – Joni Mitchell, “Yellow Taxi Cab”

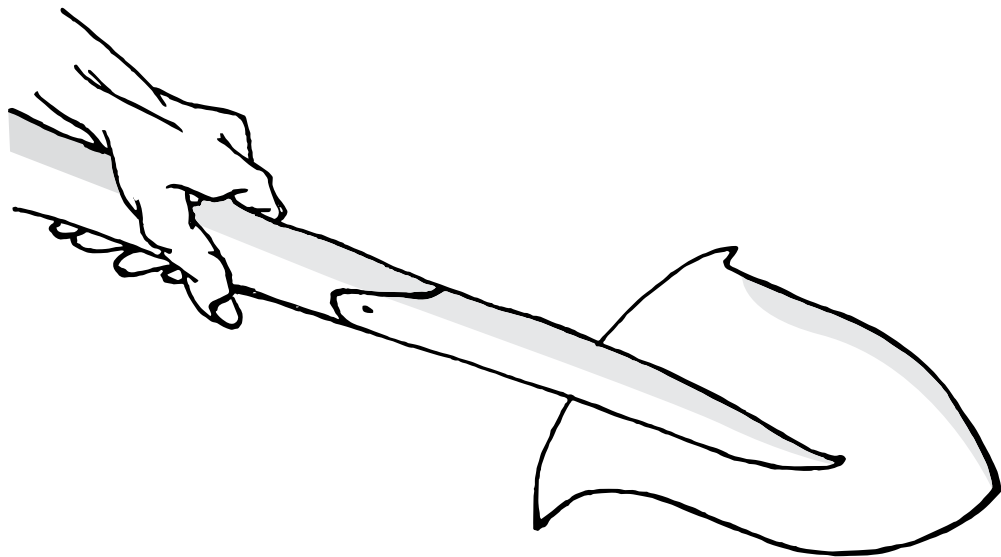
Radiation underground and in the sky. Animals and birds who live nearby are dying
Oh mercy, mercy me, Ah things ain't what they used to be.
What about this overcrowded land?
How much more abuse from man can she stand?
Oh, na na... My sweet Lord... No... My Lord... My sweet Lord.
Radiation underground and in the sky. Animals and birds who live nearby are crying.
Oh mercy, mercy me, Ah things ain't what they used to be.
What about this overcrowded land?
How much more abuse from man can she stand?
Oh, na na... My sweet Lord... No... My Lord... My sweet Lord. – Marvin Gaye, “Mercy Mercy Me” from The Ecology

Dirt made my lunch. Dirt made my lunch.

Thank you, Dirt, thanks a bunch,

For my salad, my sandwich,

My milk and my munch 'cause Dirt, you made my lunch. – Steve Van Zandt and the Banana Slug String Band



Contributors

15th Annual Festival of Faiths
Faith in Action Tool Kit

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CENTER FOR
INTERFAITH RELATIONS

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES ARE, WITHOUT QUESTION, THE LARGEST AND BEST-ORGANIZED CIVIL INSTITUTIONS IN THE WORLD TODAY, CLAIMING THE ALLEGIANCE OF BILLIONS OF BELIEVERS AND BRIDGING THE DIVIDES OF RACE, CLASS, AND NATIONALITY. THEY ARE UNIQUELY EQUIPPED TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME: RESOLVING CONFLICTS, CARING FOR THE EARTH, THE SICK AND NEEDY, AND PROMOTING PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AMONG ALL PEOPLE.

-RELIGIONS FOR PEACE

