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A FAITH FOR TODAY: SAVING THE PLANET

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We who were commissioned to be stewards of God's creation are failing miserably. We are destroying what God created and said was very good.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). With these words, the Creator summed up his sentiment about all that he had made and done. Today you and I are destroying what he made and declared good. We:

- Pollute the air to the point that millions of people must wear face masks.
- Make large portions of the world’s oceans uninhabitable for coral and fish.
- Stand by as rates of extinction of other living species skyrocket.
- Deplete soil fertility by applying large amounts of fertilizers and pesticides.
- Turn vast swaths of the jungle into range lands for producing hamburger beef.
- Cage millions of chickens, pigs, cows, and other animals to supply meat, eggs, milk, and skins for our mass consumer societies.
- Contaminate pristine waters and landscapes with the pollutants and wastes produced by our factory farms, fast fashion, insatiable addiction to fossil fuels, and quest for more material goods.

We who were commissioned to be stewards of God's creation are failing miserably. We are destroying what God created and said was very good. Our sheer number and way of life impact the Earth's finely tuned regulatory processes. While the media warns about climate change, scientists use a more ominous term to describe our impact on Creation: the Anthropocene, a period when human activity has become the dominant force impacting climate and the environment.

Many young people are calling for immediate and drastic action. I hear them, and they welcome someone in a position of some modest influence listening. As I teach at a Seventh-day Adventist institution, I

remind my students of their cultural DNA as Adventists and how this relates to the current crisis. Specifically, I remind them that:

- Our calling is to be stewards of God’s creation. This is our God-given mandate: to be mindful of our impact on the lives and habitats of other creatures; to take good care of the Earth.
- As the Psalmist says, one purpose of Sabbath-keeping is to acknowledge that the Earth and all in it are the Lord’s. The Sabbath also is a time to get off the treadmill of rampant, unbridled consumerism and instead enjoy fellowship with others and communion with God’s creation.
- We are champions of a healthy diet and lifestyle - nutrition, exercise, water, sunshine, temperance, fresh air, rest, and trust in God - NEW START for short. We can’t be champions of this way of living if we fail to care for our environment. The most important thing we can do is follow a plant-based whole foods diet. We are blessed to have this diet as part of Adventist cultural DNA.
- We see ourselves as part of God’s family above all else, regardless of national or racial, or ethnic boundaries. We celebrate this every five years when we gather for our General Conference. Such an outlook is crucial for addressing the challenge of the Anthropocene, as the forces unleashed by our modern way of life know no such boundaries.
- Our worldwide system of churches, K-12 schools, universities, and community services organizations are desirable vehicles for making a difference. I challenge students to organize their institutions into becoming transition communities—places where everyone works together to learn, share and apply best practices from our faith tradition that can make a huge difference for the environment where we live.

Lastly, I remind students that, despite the dire situation, we have the assurance that God is in charge of our lives and our planet and that our calling is to do the right thing by his Creation.



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