

MAY 17: HERITAGE SUNDAY

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RENEWAL

Americans celebrated the first Earth Day 50 years ago this spring, on April 22, 1970. That same year the United Presbyterian Council on Church and Society undertook a study on threats facing human survival on an increasingly crowded and polluted planet.

The study culminated in the 1971 United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly adopting the council's report, "Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal," work that continues to inform PC(USA) responses to the environment a half-century later.

The report calls on Presbyterians to contribute "systematically to the renewal of the environment" through a four-part process: "Envisioning man and the world in God's design, Facing the realities of a world despoiled, Discerning a new order of personal and political values, and Participating in education and action for environmental renewal (in communities and institutions) where we are."

Linking the fate of small and large ecologies around the world, the report calls for responsible energy extraction and consumption and warns of technologies that "master" instead of "serve" humanity. It also connects environmental justice with broader church goals of economic and racial-ethnic justice, voicing concern for Native American communities amid plans for the Trans-Alaska pipeline and alluding to recent industrial accidents that tainted clean water in communities across the nation.

"Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal" abounds with new-age and biblical references, evoking "Spaceship Earth" and putting forth "shalom" (the Hebrew word for peace) as the ideal symbol of "living amiably in and with a community of creation." Placing the immediate inside the eternal, the report reminds Presbyterians in any century that "the eco-ethic requires a rediscovery of God's time, an awareness of the history of man in nature."

Read the 1971 report and learn how today's PC(USA) is caring for Spaceship Earth: <https://tinyurl.com/ulq7fo3>

PC(USA) Environmental Issues page: www.presbyterian-mission.org/ministries/environment



Celebration of the first Earth Day, New York City, 1970.
RNS Photograph by John C. Goodwin.

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