

REFLECTIONS

RESPONDING IN FAITH TO OUR MODERATOR

by Rev. Allan Baker

It is widely recognized that we are currently living in a time of ecological crisis. How is the church of Jesus Christ, and Newtonbrook United Church, responding to this critical time?

When we say our statement of faith, we say that “*we are called ... to live with respect in creation*”. Here are some of the comments on this topic from the letter that our Moderator, Mardi Tindal, made available to all Canadians on January 17, 2010:

Biologically, we live within an inescapable network of mutuality. Science tells us that. Without the web of life, there is no life. We need each other. We are emphatically, biologically not alone. As the carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere rise, the planet will fail to provide for us. Life as we know it will die. Millions of human lives are on the line, rich and poor, old emitters and new, vulnerable and strong. There is no inoculation against this except all of us changing our behaviour all at once.

We are tied in a single garment of destiny.

This is why the issue of too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has moved far beyond a political process. It has also moved far beyond being just a scientific issue. It is an ethical issue.

That is why I believe we must look at issues through the lens of morality and faith. Science describes what is. Faith describes how things can and should be. On this issue science is not enough. We need more. And that is why ecological issues are also fundamentally moral, ethical, and theological concerns. And, therefore, why faith leaders must grapple with them. Why we all must grapple with them.

Because when our actions threaten the lives of millions of people and other creatures, that is wrong.

When our lack of action endangers communities in every region of the world, that is wrong.

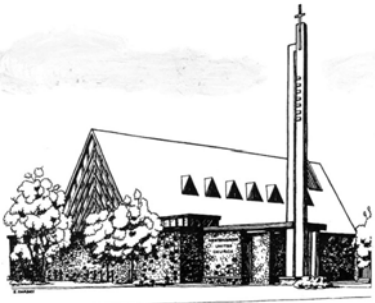
When our economic systems jeopardize the well-being of future generations, that is wrong.

When the lifestyles of the wealthy undermine the survival of the poor, that is wrong.

If we fail to act, we are helping to doom millions of our species to abject suffering and death. That is wrong.

The Moderator then challenges all of us to take whatever actions we can; as individuals, and as communities of faith.

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REFLECTING THE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE AT NEWTONBROOK UNITED CHURCH

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Corey Helm is a member of Beach United Church, and a member of the Green Awakening Network Steering Team. This year her family resolved to switch their household bills from paper to electronic billing. The goal was to save energy, reduce paper waste, and clutter. Corey has shared her experience, as follows;

“I was able to switch almost every bill/statement that we receive at our house to electronic billing. Some I completed through Canada Post's e-post system (check it out at: www.epost.ca) and some I changed over directly through the company website. It took me about 2 hours total to make this switch, which isn't very much - I just needed to set the time aside to do this.

Based on Canada Post's calculations, by switching 11 of our bills/statements to e-billing, our household has saved 10 pounds of paper each year; if every Canadian household switched 11 bills from paper to e-billing, the cumulative impact would be a savings of over 121 MILLION pounds of paper and 1 MILLION trees (not to mention the countless greenhouse gas emissions!). I know this is just one small step, but these small changes add up to big change!”

This edition of Newtonbrook's newsletter will have approximately 200 copies, of six sheets of paper each. It is also available via e-mail for anyone who wishes to receive it without incurring the costs of paper and the environment, as Corey describes in her story. That is an option that I think our Moderator is challenging us to take for the betterment of God's creation, and God's children who live on this planet.

Here at Newtonbrook we will also be making a decision this year about a new roof for this building. With Mardi's questions in mind, we will need to decide, “How green can we go?” Will it be pale, medium or deep “green”? Given the present environmental crisis, we will need to consider what roofing materials will make the least impact on the environment. That criterion is new. It is one way that we are changing our behaviour.

As Mardi Tindal says in her letter, this is a transformative moment in the planet's history. The world will be shaped by how we, and our communities, respond. We have the opportunity to use our gifts and our imaginations to help heal God's world and make it a life-giving place of beauty for generations yet to come. The choices on how to live with respect IN creation are ours, and I am confident that we will choose life!



EASTER DATES TO REMEMBER

As you are able please check the calendar on our website for all the latest information and news.

(Click on the “Events” tab).

March 28	10:30 am. Palm Sunday
April 1	7:00 pm. Maundy Thursday - Taizé Service
April 2	7:30 pm Good Friday Joint Service with TUCT
April 4	10:30 am Easter Sunday (Communion)

CONGREGATIONAL RETREAT

On Saturday, February 27th we will gather as a congregation and with the facilitation of Paul McLean of Potentials, we will evaluate our present ministries.

Are we trying to do too much? not enough? Who is doing the work? Are some people wearing too many hats? What is my call/contribution? Can we continue to do all that we do? Is all of it still the right thing for us to do? If we think of the Newtonbrook congregation as an engine pulling all the ministries, with in many cases, outside help, how many cars can be pulled without loss of power. Each time we add a car, momentum is slowed. Are there cars that need to be uncoupled? Added? This is our chance to make key decisions together. All are welcome.

In the Fellowship Room, Saturday, February 27th 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Lunch will be served.

FROM THE GREEN TEAM...

Most of us know that air travel is not good for the earth. Flying has a bigger negative impact than driving because the warming effect of emissions in the clouds is about 2.7 times greater than on the ground. Short-haul flights of three hours or less are one of the most wasteful sources of greenhouse gases, with a greater per-kilometre impact than long-haul flights (since the most fuel is burned during take-off and landing.)

So, what are the alternatives? In place of short-haul flights, it is better for the earth if one is able to take a train or a ferry, or, even drive. When there is no reasonable alternative to flying, there is an opportunity to buy carbon off-sets. Many airlines have links to organizations which allow one to participate in projects, such as reforestation, to offset the amount of CO₂ emitted by the aircraft. For example, Air Canada has a link to www.zerofootprint.com. An emissions calculator on the site allows one to determine one's share of emissions and the cost of carbon offsets.

There are a wide variety of carbon offset providers available. Recommended ones are providers that have been audited and accepted into one of the two global standards in offsetting, The Gold Standard or The Voluntary Carbon Standard.

GLOBAL ISSUES - THEME FOR 2010 REDUCING POVERTY

At our January meeting, the team agreed that in 2010 we would offer leadership on the theme of 'Reducing Poverty' – locally and internationally.

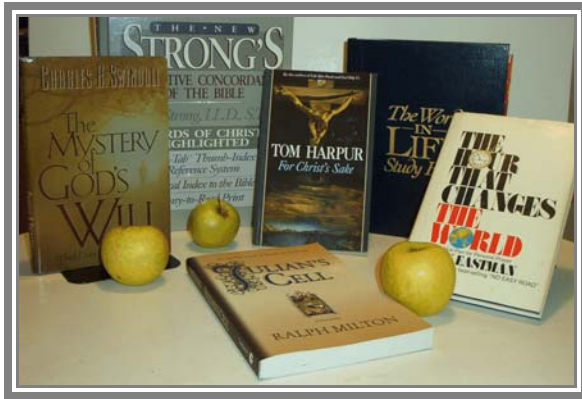
At the moment we are planning a special themed service on Conference Sunday - Sun. May 30. At this time we will look at poverty in Toronto and may invite one or more speakers followed by a poverty lunch. More information to follow.

Have you heard of ISARC – Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition? This group represents “Faith Groups in Action Against Poverty” and it actively seeks to contribute to new public policies based on greater justice and dignity for Ontarians marginalized by poverty. They have a very informative website at www.isarc.ca and you can add your name to their E-newsletter mailing list. One of their current goals is to gain an additional \$100 a month food allowance for people on Social Assistance and Disability Benefits programs in Ontario.

Internationally, the Making Poverty History team, is urging Canadians to push Prime Minister Harper to add long-term global poverty alleviation to the agendas at the G8 and G20 summits being held this year. Canada is hosting the G8 Toronto June 25-27. You can do this through: <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/en/set-agenda-action-g8>

We need to convince him that Canadians support the commitment to long-term poverty alleviation and the measures needed to support low-income coping with climate change.

As inspiration for action, consider: Proverbs 14:31
Those who oppress the poor, insult their maker.

BROWSING....**SLOW DEATH BY RUBBER DUCK**

by Rick Smith and Bruce Lourie

(Publisher: Knopf Canada 2009)

Intrigued by the title and seeing this book on the best seller list, I began to read. This is no horror story but a real account of how we can be harmed unknowingly by our daily activities. Who knew that deodorant, non-stick frying pans, carpets, house dust, and plastic baby bottles and toys could be toxic?

The authors, both scientifically trained, and fathers of young children, live and work in Toronto. As environmentalists, they were becoming increasingly concerned with the levels of pollution in which we all live, and the effects they could have on our bodies and our health. In Chapter One, we are given an overview of pollutants over the centuries, and in many cases things have improved. (e.g. clean water) Between March 1 and March 6, 2008 Bruce and Rick performed a number of experiments upon themselves in a closed room, followed by sending blood and urine samples to a reputable Canadian lab.

The next seven chapters outline the results for different classes of chemicals: phthalates, Teflon, PCBs, Mercury, antibacterials, pesticides, and BPA. [Their chapter titles are much more amusing.] Each class is defined in terms any of us can understand, and gentle humour is often used.

Chapter Nine; DETOX. offers ways to diminish the effects of the "chemical soup" to which we are exposed. Key words to look for while reading labels are explained.

...PERCHANCE TO READ

Their information is carefully foot-noted and well referenced. This is an easy book to read from a literary point of view. The information is scary at first, but there are solutions. After all, as Rick stated, "You shouldn't have to be a chemical engineer to shop for your dad for Christmas, or to supply your child's baby needs."

Armed with knowledge we can make healthier choices for ourselves and for our families. As soon as my two daughters have read this book I'll donate it to the church library.

Andrea Journeaux

PEACE PIECES

"Terrorism is not an act of war. It is a criminal act and must be treated as such. There are root causes to the hate that feeds these crimes. The anger raging in so many poor and conflicted parts of the world have allowed some individuals, corporations and countries to reap the wealth of the world while billions live in poverty".

Maude Barlow -Council of Canadians

LIMERICK CORNER

Church pews are hard, that's true,
So one row has pads for a few.
An old man, not Joe,
Now sits in that row.
We could call it the "Comfortable" pew.

Alan's delivery modes are various,
From the prosaic to the hilarious.
And one unique mode
(The step ladder episode)
Was certainly the most precarious.

Eldon Comfort

VISION 2020 UPDATE

Your Vision 2020 task force continues its work and meets on a regular basis. The members are: Valerie Ferrier, Rodger Thompson, Sheila Gordon Dillane, Robert Liao, Vicky Chen, Harry Ort and Irene Carriere.

We continue to maintain open relationships with other congregations and are always happy to suggest shared programming to the appropriate committee. For example, Thornhill United Church has an active youth group which meets on the 1st and 3rd Sundays every month. Vision 2020 has suggested that our youth be made aware of this group and be encouraged to participate.

We are also pleased with the extent of cooperation between ourselves and Northminster United.

Sheila Gordon-Dillane and her committee (community needs) continue to meet with a number of community agencies which may be looking for a home. The difficulty this committee has is that while Newtonbrook wants to respond to community needs we don't know when we will be in a position to do so. In the meantime Sheila and her group are compiling a good list of agencies, services and contacts so that they will be in a position to bring you some recommendations.

There is no news with regard to the transit issue but we continue to monitor the activity and announcements on this front.

Harry Ort and his committee continue to negotiate with our neighbours (plaza) regarding the sale of Newtonbrook air rights/density to them for future development. There are two important points which this committee wants to be sure we all understand. First, no matter what rumors you may have heard, we will not have any receipts of sale to disburse until after the official transfer of the air rights takes place. This date might easily be 5 years in the future.

Secondly, the use of the money we do eventually realize from the sale of air rights/density is limited to building renovation and update as per a plan which must be submitted to Presbytery for approval. A business plan will be required and it is very unlikely that operating costs or staff salaries can be paid from this money. In

due course a plan will be put in front of the congregation but this cannot be done until we have a firmer idea of our net receipts from the sale and how the building will be used.

Most importantly, we need to understand that achieving an influx of money is only one small aspect of our survival as a vibrant congregation, it simply allows us to remain in the building. Newtonbrook needs to be spiritually healthy and at core a healthy worshipping congregation. To that end Vision 2020 strongly recommends your attendance at the congregational retreat on Feb 27th (see article elsewhere in the Newsletter). This retreat will address concerns about our focus and our human resources. Vision 2020 encourages your attendance on Feb. 27th.

UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA**COMMITTEE & TASK GROUP OPPORTUNITIES**

Each year there are two recruitment cycles for General Council committees, task groups and representative roles (September-October and February-March). Details on these opportunities to serve are posted on the Website (www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/servegc) and circulated through the conferences and networks of the church. Individuals are invited to offer their skills and gifts for a specific position and encourage others to do so.

Skills and Experience

The church is looking for people with many of the following characteristics: active participants in a local pastoral charge or ministry, familiar with the polity of the United Church of Canada, predisposed to collaboration and teamwork, sensitive to diversity issues, leaders in any court of the church, passionately committed to the mission of the United Church of Canada, and willing to discern God's yearning for this work.

MILESTONES**Baptisms**

- ❖ Aidan Charles Willoughby. Son of Sean Willoughby and Alison Vanstone on November 29, 2009.
- ❖ Mark Cicotelli on November 29, 2009.

Deaths

- ❖ Kathleen Woodrow on November 14, 2009.
- ❖ Keith McGregor on December 13, 2009
- ❖ Charles Harry Ort on January 25, 2010.

Saving Jesus – Part II

Did you miss the first sessions last Fall? You are still welcome to join us for Part II, focussing on the life and ministry of Jesus. With video insights from contemporary theologians, we will be exploring new ways of looking at Lent and Easter, leading up to a discussion of the question: “Is Jesus worth saving?”

Six Thursday evenings, commencing February 11 from 7:30 to 9:00 pm.

Contact Ian or Edna Miller or sign up outside Carol’s office.

Next Newsletter Deadline: Sunday April 25th 2010
(Lent/Easter Edition)

Your Contact is: _____
Telephone No.: _____