Mobilizing Cedar Spring Baptist Church, Spartanburg, South Carolina, for creation care through project "C.A.R.E." (Christians Assuming Responsibility for the Earth)

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MOBILIZING CEDAR SPRING BAPTIST CHURCH, SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA, FOR CREATION CARE THROUGH PROJECT “C.A.R.E.” (CHRISTIANS ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EARTH)

A PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
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BOILING SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
MALCOLM TODD LOWE
MAY 12, 2014
APPROVAL FORM

MOBILIZING CEDAR SPRING BAPTIST CHURCH,
SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA,
FOR CREATION CARE THROUGH PROJECT “C.A.R.E.”
(CHRIStIANS ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EARTH)

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Date: ____________________

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I give thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ who called me in my youth to be his follower and has walked by my side over the many years. I give thanks to the Lord for my life and all the blessings he has allowed me to experience. I give thanks that one day my life’s journey will culminate with me meeting my Lord and Savior face-to-face.

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ABSTRACT

For many Baptist churches, the theology and practice of environmental stewardship has historically been viewed as irrelevant to the Great Commission. However, as environmental degradation increasingly affects the lives of people and the earth’s ecosystems, it is imperative that Christians understand the connection between the care of the environment and God’s redemptive work for humanity. Through a designed project called C.A.R.E. (Christians Assuming Responsibility for the Earth) which involved the congregation and a Bible study group from Cedar Spring Baptist Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina, this project proves that theological education can positively influence attitudes towards environmental stewardship.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Genesis 1:31a*  
*NIV*

On August 16, 1993, I arrived in Haiti at the Port-au-Prince airport ready to begin a two year assignment as an agricultural missionary. As I disembarked the plane, my eyes were drawn to the mountains surrounding Port-au-Prince. I was instantly struck by the realization that the mountains in this subtropical country were bare and empty; victims of deforestation. Even from a great distance, it was apparent that the mountains were excessively eroded. Thus began my experience working in one of the greatest ecological disasters on earth. My time in Haiti, my agronomic background, and my Christian convictions have convinced me that the followers of Christ have a responsibility to God and their fellow human beings to care for the environment.

For many Baptist churches, the theology and practice of creation care have historically been ignored. Traditionally, environmental issues have been viewed as irrelevant and disconnected from the church’s call to the Great Commission. Fortunately, there are signs that this perception is beginning to change even among conservative Baptists. In 2008, forty-six influential members of the Southern Baptist Convention, including the convention’s president, Rev. Frank Page, signed a statement criticizing the denomination for being "too timid" in confronting global warming. In 2010, Baptists all

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along the Gulf Coast saw firsthand the devastating impact of the British Petroleum Deepwater Horizon oil spill on the ecology and economy of the region. As environmental degradation increasingly affects the lives of people and the earth’s ecosystems, it is imperative that Christians realize the connection between creation care and God’s redemptive work for humanity.

Cedar Spring Baptist Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina, became the focus of project C.A.R.E. (Christians Assuming Responsibility for the Earth). It is my belief that churches like Cedar Spring Baptist have a God-given responsibility to address the pressing environmental issues of our world. There are too many people suffering, too many lives at risk, for churches to continue to ignore the problems. It is imperative that the church comes to understand the biblical call to environmental stewardship. If we as Christians would only assume our God given responsibility to creation care, the world would be a better place for all of humanity. This report chronicles the story of project C.A.R.E. and the conclusions I discovered.

**Ministry Setting**

Cedar Spring Baptist Church is a typical Baptist church in the southern United States. The church has the stereotypical rectangle shape, red brick exterior, and white steeple that towers over the front entrance. Located just outside the city limits of Spartanburg, South Carolina, Cedar Spring has a rich history of ministering to the local community for over two centuries. Founded in 1786, Cedar Spring Baptist Church is one of the oldest churches in Spartanburg County and ranks among the oldest churches in the state of South Carolina. Cedar Spring has been in its present location since the end of the
nineteenth century. The educational space of the church was completed in 1959 with the sanctuary being finished in 1964. Many families in the church have been part of Cedar Spring for decades.

Cedar Spring Baptist Church’s location is unique for several reasons. First, the church is located adjacent to the historic Cedar Spring. The spring is an artesian well that has been a source of water in the area for centuries. Second, Cedar Spring Baptist is located beside a Revolutionary War battlefield. The area surrounding the church was the setting for the First Battle of Cedar Spring on July 11, 1780. Third, Cedar Spring Baptist Church is located adjacent to the Hub City Connector hiking trail. This connector is part of the 425 mile long Palmetto Trail. And fourth, Cedar Spring’s property is divided by Kelsy Creek. This creek is a popular location for gold panning. In many ways, Cedar Spring Baptist Church’s setting is very nature oriented. Because of its location, the church’s parking lot is often used by visitors enjoying these outdoor activities.

As of May 2013, church records indicate that Cedar Spring had 217 members with many of these being inactive. Cedar Spring Baptist Church is a predominately older, white congregation. The average age of the membership is 52 years old. The average Sunday morning worship attendance is between 100-120 worshippers.

Cedar Spring Baptist has a long history of being theologically and politically conservative. Historically, Cedar Spring Baptist Church has been an avid supporter of the Southern Baptist Convention and its mission endeavors. However, over the last thirty years, Cedar Spring Baptist Church’s conservative stance has become more moderate with the affirmation of ordained women deacons and ministers, the acceptance of divorced individuals as deacons, the affiliation with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
of South Carolina, and the willingness to call pastors trained in non-Southern Baptist seminaries. Today, Cedar Spring would still be considered a conservative church. However, the church is open to new theological ideas.

The main governing body of Cedar Spring Baptist Church is the church deacons. Although I am the pastor of Cedar Spring Baptist and have a certain amount of authority in leading the congregation, I ultimately answer to the deacons. However, I am very thankful that throughout my Doctor of Ministry studies, the deacons have been very supportive and encouraging.

On September 1, 2013, I completed my fifth year as pastor of Cedar Spring Baptist Church. I consider myself blessed to have been in this ministry setting where the congregation has been very supportive of all of my ministerial endeavors.

**Ministry Question**

There are many biblical issues that churches such as Cedar Spring Baptist should be addressing. However, there were four basic concerns that prompted me to select project C.A.R.E. as the focus of my Doctor of Ministry project. The first concern was the continued degradation of the world’s environment. There are many reputable scientists that agree the world’s environmental problems are becoming worse instead of better. Second, people throughout the planet are feeling the devastating effects of pollution, deforestation, and climate change. Each day, millions are suffering because of the human mismanagement of the environment. Third, I believe that there is a biblical call for God’s people to care for God’s creation. I believe that the Bible leads us to creation care. Fourth, I believe that God has called his people, individually and collectively, to share in
his redemptive work through the care of his creation. God’s creation should not be haphazardly used and discarded. It is my belief that each member of Cedar Spring Baptist Church, each member of the universal church, bears a personal responsibility as a global and kingdom citizens to be involved in creation care.

It was these four concerns that inspired me to focus my Doctor of Ministry project on the theological and practical aspects of creation care. These concerned helped me to develop the following ministry question, “How can Cedar Spring Baptist Church engage in the pressing environmental needs of the earth through creation care as part of its involvement in God’s greater redemptive work for humanity and for the world?”

I believe that this ministry question can be answered within the context of Cedar Spring Baptist Church. Cedar Spring has always been a missions-minded church. But I believe that it is vital for the church to understand that its mission efforts are sometimes hindered by environmental degradation. In fact, it is the lack of creation care that can directly or indirectly lead to the floods, famines, wars, and epidemics; the focus of many relief and mission efforts. It is my opinion that Cedar Spring Baptist needs a deeper understanding of how the lack of creation care has consequences for millions of people both now and in the future. If the world’s environmental issues are not addressed, they will become worse and affect millions more. As Jürgen Moltmann writes, “Unless there is a radical reversal in the fundamental orientation of our human societies, and unless we succeed in finding an alternative way of living and dealing with other living things and with nature, this crisis is going to end in a wholesale catastrophe.”

But not only is this ministry question important for the congregation of Cedar Spring Baptist, it is important to the universal church. It is time for the universal church to be part of the solution and stop ignoring the problem. By expanding the church’s biblical understanding of creation care and then engaging in that work, I believe the church as a whole will be more effective in sharing the Gospel. But first the church must acknowledge the environmental problems of the world. As Wendell Berry writes, “Our predicament now, I believe, requires us to learn to read and understand the Bible in the light of the present fact of Creation.”

I am aware that Cedar Spring Baptist’s congregation is only a tiny fraction of the world’s population. I have no illusions that Cedar Spring can singlehandedly stop climate change, halt the polar icecaps from melting, or save the world’s rainforests. But I do believe that as part of the larger church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Cedar Spring has a God-given responsibility to be involved in the pressing environmental issues of our time. Though Cedar Spring’s place in creation may be small, it is not insignificant. Project C.A.R.E. emerges from my belief that Cedar Spring Baptist has the ability, if it chooses, to do what it can to personally address the environmental needs of the earth, unite with others in the universal church in caring for the victims of environmental degradation, and join God in his greater redemptive work for humanity.

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CHAPTER 2

DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The earth is the LORD’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it, for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters. Psalm 24:1-2 NIV

In May 2013, I participated in a church building mission trip to Haiti. The area where our team worked was about an hour’s drive from the town of Gonaives. Each day as we made our way to the construction site, we passed the ruins of a small church in the countryside. All that remained of the building was the front wall which still held the church’s front doors. At the top of this wall was a solitary cross.

One evening as we made our way back to Gonaives, our group stopped to take pictures of this broken-down church. As we made our way to the church, a Haitian man came walking by our group. I asked him what had happened to the church. He told me that years before, floodwaters had washed the church away. I later learned that in 2004 torrential rains from a tropical storm had hit that area. With no trees to cover the deforested mountainsides, the soil could not absorb enough of the rainfall. The pouring rain washed down the mountainsides flooding the town of Gonaives and surrounding area. Over 2,800 people lost their lives in the flood. Thousands were left homeless.⁵

That destroyed Haitian church became a poignant reminder to me that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot continue to ignore the environmental problems of our planet. The church is in the world and is affected by what happens to the world. The church is not immune from the devastating impact of environmental degradation. This experience in Haiti and others like it helped to deepen my personal commitment to

environmental stewardship and to inspire my personal decision to undertake the C.A.R.E. project. This chapter will explain the project’s goals, activities, and evaluation methods.

**Project Goals**

For Cedar Spring Baptist Church, project C.A.R.E. had three basic goals: theological, informational, and pragmatic. The first of my theological goals was to educate the congregation on the biblical basis for environmental stewardship. To achieve this goal, I prepared a four-week creation care sermon series. My goal was that through these sermons, a biblical basis for creation care would elicit positive attitudinal and behavioral changes in the congregation. For two of the creation care sermons, I would host a post-sermon discussion/luncheon for the congregation to obtain feedback about the day’s sermon. My deadline to start implementing this goal was September 8, 2013.

Sermon one in the creation care series was titled, “Creation Care: Seeing God’s Glory.” The goal of this sermon was to lead the congregation to a biblical understanding of how God has revealed God’s self through creation. Sermon two was titled, “Creation Care: Assuming Our Responsibility.” The goal of this sermon was to examine the biblical responsibility of humanity, in particular Christ-followers, in caring for God’s earth.

Sermon three was titled, “Creation Care: Engaging in Justice.” This sermon’s goal was to explore the biblical concept of loving our neighbor by addressing environmental problems. The fourth and final sermon was titled, “Creation Care: Anticipating Redemption.” The goal of this sermon was to examine the biblical understanding that God is working through his fallen creation and will one day redeem creation from the sin that corrupts it.
The second of my theological goals for project C.A.R.E. included a small group Bible study. My goal was to involve eight to ten participants selected from the congregation. My plan was for this Bible study group to meet each Sunday afternoon during the project for an hour and a half study. My hope was that the Bible study group would grow deeper in its understanding of the biblical call to creation care than the congregation. Since I hold a Bachelor of Science in Agronomy, a Master of Agriculture Education, a Master of Divinity, and have worked with environmental issues, I felt qualified to write the Bible study curriculum. My deadline to start implementing this goal was September 8, 2013.

The second goal of project C.A.R.E. was to educate the congregation on how the lack of environmental stewardship adversely affects human life. I believed it was important for Cedar Spring Baptist to understand that millions suffer daily as a result of environmental mismanagement. Through the use of bulletin inserts, sermon illustrations, and verbal communication, my goal was to cite stories of people affected by environmental degradation. My goal was to also use these same communication avenues to give examples of how Christians were using environmental stewardship as a way to minister to the suffering. My hope for the informational portion of project C.A.R.E. was to inform Cedar Spring Baptist of the environmental realities of the world. My deadline to start this aspect of my project was September 8, 2013.

The third goal of project C.A.R.E. was to help Cedar Spring Baptist Church to identify practical steps, procedures, and habits to personally engage in environmental stewardship. My hope was that through project C.A.R.E., Cedar Spring Baptist Church would take practical steps to reduce its carbon footprint, curb its impact on the
environment, and take a more active role in keeping the local environment clean.

Through project C.A.R.E., my goal was to implement the following five creation care steps at Cedar Spring Baptist Church:

1. Begin a recycling program. Before project C.A.R.E., Cedar Spring Baptist did minimal recycling. One of my goals was for Cedar Spring to adopt a recycling program. My deadline to start implementing this goal was September 23, 2013.

2. Evaluate the church’s energy usage. With the help of Cedar Spring Baptist’s Property’s Committee, my goal was to identify how the church could reduce its energy consumption. My deadline to start implementing this goal was September 23, 2013.

3. Host a creation care clean-up day. The purpose of the cleanup day was to encourage the membership of Cedar Spring Baptist to take an active role in keeping the environment clean around Kelsy Creek, the Palmetto Trail, and the church. My deadline to implement this goal was October 5, 2013.

4. Create a creation care information area. My goal was that a creation care information center in the Sunday School hallway would encourage members to take personal steps to engage in creation care. From energy-saving tips to composting, this information area would provide practical creation care information. My deadline to begin implementing this goal was September 8, 2013.

5. Evaluate the potential for a community organic garden at Cedar Spring Baptist. Cedar Spring has an old fenced in tennis court that has not been utilized in many years. My goal was to explore the possibility of converting this unused space into a raised bed garden for the spring of 2014. I thought it would be helpful for the accomplishment of this fifth goal to consult with a representative of the Clemson University Cooperative
Extension Service. My deadline for evaluating this organic garden possibility at Cedar Spring Baptist was October 5, 2013.

It was my hope that by accomplishing these theological, informational, and pragmatic goals of project C.A.R.E., Cedar Spring Baptist Church would be more informed and committed to the biblical call to creation care.

**Project Outline**

To meet my goal of starting project C.A.R.E. on September 8, I spent the month of August researching and writing sermons and Bible studies, collecting needed project materials, refining the project calendar, and recruiting Bible study participants. I recruited two, third party project administrators to help me maintain the anonymity of survey participants. By August 25, twelve members of the congregation were identified for the C.A.R.E. Bible study.

On August 25, two weeks before the start of the project, the Cedar Spring Baptist congregation and the project’s Bible Study group were given a pre-project survey. The object of this survey was to provide a benchmark by which any change in attitude regarding creation care could be measured.

As planned, project C.A.R.E. began on September 8, 2013. On the Sundays of September 8, 15, 22, and 29, I preached a creation care sermon during the morning worship services at Cedar Spring Baptist Church. Following the Sunday morning worship services on September 8 and 22, the congregation was surveyed. Following the Sunday morning worship services on September 15 and 29, the congregation was invited to a post-sermon luncheon and discussion time. At the end of these congregational
discussions on September 15 and 29, those who attended the luncheon/discussion were surveyed.

On the Sundays of September 8, 15, 22, and 29, I taught a creation care Bible study from 2:00-3:30 P.M. for the C.A.R.E. Bible study group. Bible study participants examined in greater depth the sermon topic of the day. Bible study participants were surveyed at the end of each study.

To fulfill my other goals for the C.A.R.E. project, I met with the Properties Committee on September 11 to discuss the church’s energy usage. During the second week of the project, I implemented a recycle program at the church. And on September 21, instead of October 5, Cedar Spring Baptist Church hosted a creation care cleanup day for the immediate area surrounding the church.

On October 6 and November 3, the congregation and the Bible study group were given post-project surveys which were identical to the pre-project surveys of August 25. All of the surveys were catalogued and evaluated.

**Detailed Project Description**

**Research Groups Recruiting**

I began the process of recruiting participants for the project C.A.R.E. Bible study in August 2013. For the project’s congregational group, recruiting was achieved by advertising the program through the bulletin and verbal announcements. The congregational group was composed of those who attended the morning sermons.

For the Bible study group, my goal was to have at least eight to ten individuals who could participate. Ideally, I needed a diverse study group that represented the
different demographics and various opinions of the church. However, it quickly became apparent that finding eight to ten Bible study participants would not be as easy as I had hoped. Numerous unforeseen issues affected my Bible study recruitment efforts. One problem for many potential participants was the Bible study time of 2:00 P.M. As some voiced, the Bible study schedule provided barely enough time for participants to leave church, go home, eat lunch, and be back for the Bible study. Unfortunately, the 2:00 P.M. time was necessary because of Cedar Spring’s new 4:45 P.M. contemporary service that started the same day as the Bible study. Other variables such as meeting dates, previous commitments, and interest all affected the Bible study’s recruitment.

Eventually, I decided that the best way to recruit the Bible study group was to simply ask for volunteers. I decided that I would accept the first twelve volunteers who expressed interest in the Bible study. Although this was not the ideal selection method, I believe it helped to remove some of the personal biases that would have resulted if I had personally selected the group. Asking for Bible study volunteers also helped me to contend with the other variables which hindered participation. On August 18, I included an insert in the bulletin asking for Bible study volunteers (Appendix A).

By August 25, two weeks before the start of the project, I had twelve individuals signed up for the creation care Bible study. The twelve volunteers included three men and nine women. All volunteers were adults between the ages of 50 and 80 plus. Although I needed only eight to ten volunteers as specified in my project proposal, I hoped the extra Bible study participates would be helpful in the event that some of the participates had to end their participate in the Bible study before the project’s conclusion.
Project Orientation

In the weeks prior to the start of project C.A.R.E., I attempted to give the church a basic orientation about the project. I spoke about the upcoming project from the pulpit and placed an announcement in the August 2013 newsletter (Appendix A). To aid in the project’s visual identification, I asked my sister, Mrs. Jennifer Cobb, to design a logo for my project. The C.A.R.E. logo incorporated a cross with a single green leaf and the project’s name (Appendix A). For my communications with the congregation and the Bible study group about the C.A.R.E. project, I included the project’s logo. This logo appeared on project related sermon notes, surveys, bulletin inserts, newsletter announcements, and PowerPoint projections. For the congregation and the Bible study, this logo became the iconic symbol for the four week of project C.A.R.E.

Because the Bible study group was also a part of the general congregation of Cedar Spring Baptist, much of the project orientation directed toward the congregation also helped to inform the Bible study group. However, to emphasize the requirements of the C.A.R.E. Bible study, I personally discussed the expectations with the volunteers. I reinforced this one-on-one orientation with a letter distributed to the Bible study participants on August 25 (Appendix B). Each Bible study participant was encouraged to ask questions about their role in the project.

For my third party administrators, I gave an overview of project C.A.R.E. and their role. I stressed the importance of insuring that all congregational and Bible study surveys remained anonymous. I explained to my third party administrators how they were to assign a number to each of the C.A.R.E. Bible study participants. This individualized tracking number was to be place on the corresponding survey of the
particular participant. I stressed to my third party administrators that I was never to know which Bible study participant had which number. They could ask me questions related to project’s participants as long as they did not disclose identities.

Weekly Project Description

This section of the report will summarize project C.A.R.E.’s weekly activities.

Pre-Project

A pre-project survey was administered to the congregation and the Bible study group on August 25. Survey 01b (Appendix C) was distributed to the Bible study group prior to the morning worship service with instructions not to complete the congregational pre-project survey. Bible study participants were told to give their pre-project surveys to one of the two third party administrators. Following the morning service on August 25, the congregation was asked to remove survey 01a (Appendix C) from the bulletin, rate the statements, and return the completed survey to an usher, one of the third party administrators, or place it in one of the designated survey boxes at the sanctuary’s exits. The congregation was reminded not to write their names on the survey. I announced to the congregation that I could not accept their completed surveys. When all congregational surveys had been returned, my two third party administrators collected the congregational surveys, placed them in an envelope, and gave them to me. On August 25, 118 people attended the morning worship service with 39 of these choosing to complete pre-project survey 01a. The survey response rate was 33%. I asked the third
party administrators to keep the pre-project Bible study surveys until the end of the project in the event some of the participants dropped out of the study.

Prior to the start of the C.A.R.E. project, a member of the church’s Properties Committee asked me if Cedar Spring Baptist could help with the local Ruritan Club’s road cleanup day on Saturday, September 21. As I thought about my project’s October 5 cleanup day, I knew it would be difficult to persuade the congregation to participate in two work days. So I asked this person if the Ruritans would mind if I moved my project’s cleanup day from October 5 to September 21 and called it a Creation Care Cleanup Day. This would help me fulfill a project goal while helping the Ruritans. The person was very agreeable. I volunteered to provide breakfast in the church fellowship hall for those who attended the event.

**Week One (September 8-14)**

Before Sunday School on September 8, I set up the creation care information center located in the Sunday School hallway beside the sanctuary entrance. The information center held nine different types of printed publications. These publications were developed by various governmental, industrial, and environmental groups. For example, one publication from Clemson University focused on how to convert organic lawn and garden waste into mulch. Each week in the sermon notes, an announcement encouraged the congregation to visit the information center.

The September 8 Sunday morning bulletin alerted the congregation once again that a sermon series on creation care was beginning that day (Appendix A). The September 8 bulletin also invited the congregation to a sermon discussion/luncheon
following the morning worship service on September 15. An announcement for the upcoming creation care cleanup day was also included (Appendix A).

Each week, Cedar Spring Baptist projects the bulletin announcements on the sanctuary screens prior to the 11:00 A.M. morning worship. To help publicize the project C.A.R.E. activities, I created a set of PowerPoint slides to be included with these weekly announcements (Appendix A).

On September 8, I talked to one of co-chairs of the Cedar Spring Baptist Church Properties Committee. I asked if I could come to the committee’s September 11 meeting to discuss how Cedar Spring Baptist could improve its energy efficiency. The co-chair said I was welcome to attend and discuss the topic.

On Sunday morning, September 8, I preached the first sermon of project C.A.R.E. The sermon was titled, “Creation Care: Seeing God’s Glory” (Appendix D). The Old Testament reading came from Psalm 19:1-6, and the New Testament reading came from John 1:1-3. This first sermon focused on how all of creation gives testimony to God’s existence, greatness, and power. The sermon noted that according to the scriptures, God made everything through the Lord Jesus Christ. Because Christ made all things, this should inspire his followers to value and care for creation. The sermon outline consisted of four basic points: 1) the glory of God is revealed through creation, 2) the glory of God gives creation value, 3) the glory of God in creation points to Christ, and 4) the glory of God leads us to creation care.

For the benefit of the congregation, I created a PowerPoint presentation which followed the sermon outline. This presentation was projected on the sanctuary screens as I preached (Appendix D). I gave the projector operator a copy of my sermon with
notations that alerted him which slides to show at different points in the sermon. The sermon outline and the scriptures were printed and place in the bulletin (Appendix D). Each week, the back of the sermon notes presented a creation care calendar. Also, the September 8 bulletin included a real world example from Haiti of how the lack of creation care had devastated lives (Appendix D). For the September 8 morning service, the Director of Music selected the congregational hymn, “He’s Got the Whole Word in His Hands,” because it reflected a God as Creator theme.

Following the invitational hymn at the end of the September 8 worship service, I asked the congregation to be seated and to remove survey 02a from their bulletin (Appendix C). Ushers were instructed to give surveys to persons who did not have one. The congregation was instructed to complete survey 02a and return it to one of the ushers, one of the third party administrators, or place it in one of the specially marked survey boxes located at the exits. The congregation was instructed not to place their names on the surveys. Those who were part of the afternoon Bible study group were reminded not to participate in the congregational survey. In order to protect anonymity, I told the congregation that I could not accept their completed surveys. After approximately five minutes passed, I closed the service with prayer. Following the service, one of my third party administrators collected all the surveys from the ushers and the survey boxes. These surveys were placed in an envelope and given to me. On September 8, 110 people attended the morning worship service. Sixty-nine completed survey 02a providing a 63% response rate.

On this first Sunday of my project, I was disappointed to learn that two of my Bible study participants could not attend the Bible study due to a death in their family.
The couple asked if they could complete the Bible study at home. Though I appreciated their desire to honor their commitment, I informed the couple they would need to withdraw from the Bible study. By missing the Bible study and the group discussion, the couple’s post-Bible study survey would not be comparable with the rest of the Bible study group. The loss of this couple left me with ten Bible study participants.

Losing two people on the first day of the project greatly concerned me. I shared this concern with one of my third party administrators. Wishing to help, this person volunteered to be part of my Bible study group in order to increase the number of participations to eleven. I gladly accepted his offer. I will refer to this administrator who was added late to the Bible study as participant A.

The first creation care Bible study began at 2:00 P.M. Though I was only anticipating eleven participants, thirteen attended the study. Ten were part of the original twelve Bible study participants who were in place on August 25. Participant A, whom I had added hours earlier, also attended. The two unexpected attendees were members of the congregation. They had heard about the Bible study and decided to attend. Wanting additional people to cushion my Bible study numbers, I told these two additions that they were welcome to participate. I will refer to these participants as B and C.

Because I had not planned for participants A, B, and C to be in the Bible study group, I had not given them the pre-project survey (01b) that the rest of the Bible study participants took on August 25. At the beginning of the Bible study on September 8, I gave participants A, B, and C the pre-project survey 01b. It was here that I made several critical sampling errors which I did not realize until the end of the project. I will discuss these errors later and how I corrected them.
For the Bible study, each participant was given a three-ring notebook with the C.A.R.E. logo on the front cover. The participants were instructed to bring their notebooks to Bible study each week. On week one, I distributed the September 8 Bible study and asked the participants to place it in their notebook. We began the study with prayer and then processed through the various elements of the study as a group. Participants were encouraged to ask questions and make comments.

The September 8 study was titled, “Creation Care: Seeing God’s Glory,” just as the morning sermon (Appendix B). The September 8 Bible study opened with a section called, “Just think about it…” which gave an example of God’s glory in creation. The Bible study focused on the four major points of the morning’s sermon. Under each major point, insights and additional scriptures were offered. Questions were presented in each section to guide and encourage group discussion. The September 8 Bible study included a Bible reading section called, “Listening to God’s World.” This section presented scriptures related to the topic of the day. Participants were encouraged to read the biblical passages and then complete the questions in “Responding to God’s Word.” The final part of the September 8 Bible study was called, “Today in the World.” The goal of this section was to give the Bible study participants a real world example of how people in Haiti were being harmed by poor environmental stewardship. The Bible study ended with a bibliography page listing the sources used.

I was very pleased with the first Bible study. Discussion was very lively as the group made its way through each section. One of the common comments of the participants was that they had never heard the subject of creation care preached or taught in the church.
At the end of the Bible study at 3:30 P.M., I distributed the Bible study survey 02b (Appendix C) and gave final instructions. I left the room so that the Bible study participants could freely ask the third party administrators any questions about the survey. The third party administrators collected the surveys and assigned the participant’s numbers to their surveys. I asked the third party administrators to keep all post-Bible study surveys until the end of the project.

I later learned that two of the Bible study participants had to leave immediately after the September 8 Bible study and did not give their completed 02b surveys to the third party administrators. This couple brought their surveys by the church the next morning and gave them to the church secretary. I instructed the church secretary not to give me the surveys but to mail them to one of the third party administrators. Unfortunately, this effort to maintain the anonymity had an unforeseen impact on my project. As I will later discuss, these surveys became lost in the mail.

During week one of project C.A.R.E., the Director of Music approached me with a recycling idea. He suggested that we designate an area outside the choir room to collect used Bibles, devotion books, and Sunday School literature. He knew of an organization that took these outdated materials and reused them for Christian education. I thought this was a wonderful idea. That week, I labeled a recycling bin outside the choir room to collect these materials. An announcement about this recycling opportunity appeared in the September 15 sermon notes (Appendix D).

On Wednesday, September 11, I met with the Cedar Spring Baptist Church Properties Committee. During the meeting, I asked for their suggestions in how we could improve our energy efficiency as a church. We discussed that the church had already
greatly improved its energy efficiency by updating the majority of the heat and air conditioning units. However, it was noted that the company which installed the units stated that the efficiency of the new units could be further increased by installing a central control panel. With this panel, timers and thermostats would monitor the heating and cooling needs of the church. Unfortunately it was noted that a central control system would cost thousands of dollars and that the church needed to spend these monies on other capital improvement projects.

A second energy efficiency consideration was the lighting of the church. The majority of the church is lit by T12 florescent bulbs. A more efficient florescent bulb is the T8. However, to upgrade all of the church’s lighting to the T8 would require new fixtures as well as new bulbs to be installed. Again, it was determined that such as improvement would be cost prohibitive.

The Properties Committee concluded that any new energy efficiency improvements undertaken by the church would need to be small and incremental. I prepared a brief summary of the meeting and included it in Appendix E.

On Saturday, September 14, my family and I spent most of the day preparing the meal and the church fellowship hall for the post sermon discussion/luncheon. All the possible preparations were made in anticipation of a very busy Sunday.

**Week Two (September 15-21)**

My family and I arrived early at Cedar Spring Baptist Church on September 15. Last minute details were attended to for the post-sermon discussion luncheon and the morning worship.
Before Sunday School on September 15, I updated my creation care PowerPoint slides which were part of the morning announcements (Appendix A). I double checked the C.A.R.E. information center to make sure enough literature was available in the display rack.

For week two, I preached my second project C.A.R.E. sermon. The sermon was titled, “Creation Care: Assuming Our Responsibility” (Appendix D). The Old Testament reading came from Genesis 1:27-31, and the New Testament reading came from I Corinthians 8:4b-6. This second creation care sermon focused on the thoughts of how can those who are physically hungry accept spiritual food and how can those who are physically thirsty for clean water respond to the Gospel? The sermon noted that Christians should be leading the way in creation care because of how poor environmental stewardship influences the Gospel’s proclamation. The sermon challenged Christians to step forward and assume responsibility for the earth’s care. The sermon outline consisted of four basic points: 1) Humanity is part of God’s created word, 2) God’s world is humanity’s home, 3) the God/humanity creation care partnership, and 4) creation care is for Christ’s followers.

I created a PowerPoint presentation for sermon two which followed the sermon outline and was projected as I preached (Appendix D). The projector operator used a notated copy of my sermon to know which slides to show throughout the sermon. The sermon outline and the scriptures were printed and placed in the bulletin (Appendix D). Also, the bulletin insert included a real world example of how the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s clean water initiative was providing safe drinking water to people in developing countries (Appendix D).
Following the morning worship, all of those who attended were invited to the post-sermon discussion and free luncheon in the fellowship hall. The menu was chopped BBQ, rolls, baked beans, coleslaw, chips, dessert, and beverages. The September 15 morning worship service attendance was 106. Sixty three of those who attended the service chose to stay for the meal and discussion time in the Fellowship Hall resulting in a 60% response rate. I am very appreciative to my wife, Donna, my son, Chapman, my daughter, Isabella, my father, Johnny, and my mother, Carolyn, for helping to prepare and serve the meal. My family decorated all the tables with a creation care theme with the project’s logo prominently displayed.

After everyone had finished their meal, I opened the discussion about the morning’s sermon topic. I asked for thoughts and input related to the sermon. There were a lot of responses. The assertion that environmental stewardship was a Christian calling was a new concept to many. A couple of those attending voiced their thoughts that environmental stewardship was linked to more politically progressive groups. However, overall, the discussion was very positive. One adult female stated on her post-discussion survey, “We are called to take care of creation and the inhabitants” (Appendix G). Another adult female wrote on her post-discussion survey, “I am so amazed by the wonderful world and creation God has created! All that is good come from him and we should treasure and care for it daily” (Appendix G). This first post-sermon discussion lasted approximately 30 minutes. Following the discussion, participants were asked to complete survey 03a (Appendix C). Of the 63 who attended the discussion time, 38 completed a survey. The 03a survey response rate for the discussion participants was 60%. The surveys were collected by the third party facilitators, placed in an envelope,
and given to me. For more feedback regarding the two post-sermon discussion times, I have included a reflection in Appendix G.

Immediately following the post-sermon discussion, I arranged the fellowship hall for the weekly C.A.R.E. Bible study. Virtually all of those involved in the Bible study attended the discussion time. The second creation care Bible study began at 2:00 P.M. The Bible study was distributed and placed in the participants’ notebooks (Appendix B). Everyone was in attendance except for participant C who had been added to the group the previous week. I informed one of my third party administrators that because participant C missed the second Bible study, this person’s survey results could no longer be included in the project. This decreased my number of Bible study participants to twelve.

During the September 15 Bible study, we discussed the Christian’s responsibility toward environmental stewardship. Our study began with the “Just think about it…” section which discussed how God had created so many plants and animals with medical benefits to humankind. We discussed each point of the sermon and examined various scriptures in depth. We talked about how God created the earth to be our home and how God has called us into partnership with him in caring for our home. In the “Listening to God’s Word” section, we examined scriptures where God instructed humanity to care for the world. Questions from the “Responding to God’s Word” section were answered. The group examined in depth the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s water initiative and how individual churches like Cedar Spring Baptist could be involved.

At the end of the Bible study at 3:30 P.M., I distributed the Bible study survey 03b (Appendix C) gave a few final instructions, and then left the room. My third party administrator collected the surveys and assigned the participant numbers to the surveys.
After the conclusion of the Bible study, one of the Bible study participants told me that they could not attend the September 22 Bible study. A family event had been scheduled at the same time as the Bible study and this person felt obligated to attend. I reminded this participant of the Bible study’s requirement that each participant must attend all four sessions to be included in the study. The participant decided to withdraw. This reduced the number of Bible study participant to eleven.

During project C.A.R.E.’s second week, I implemented a recycling program for the church bulletins, sermon notes, and bulletin inserts. I placed a designed recycling bin at the front and back exits of the sanctuary to collect these unwanted items. The goal was to periodically recycle the contents of the bins.

In the second week of project C.A.R.E., I began researching the possibility of Cedar Spring Baptist Church sponsoring an organic garden. I knew that the ideal garden site, the church’s unused tennis court, needed lots of work before it could be used a garden. I thought it would be productive to consult with a representative from the Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service. I contacted the Spartanburg office and spoke to the Master Gardener Coordinator. I made an appointment with the coordinator to visit Cedar Spring Baptist on Friday, October 4.

Following the second Sunday of project C.A.R.E., I was somewhat disappointed that very few, if any, of the creation care publications had been taken from the information center. Although the information area was well labeled and located in one of the busiest locations in the church, it was not being utilized by the congregation. I continued to promote the available creation care literature at the Wednesday prayer luncheon on September 18 (Appendix A).
At 8:00 A.M. on Saturday, September 21, Cedar Spring Baptist Church hosted a Creation Care Cleanup Day at the church. This date was thoroughly promoted to the congregation. To encourage participation, I personally provided breakfast with assorted sausage, steak, and chicken biscuits, juice, and coffee. However, I was disappointed that only seven people attended this event. After breakfast, our cleanup group picked up trash around the church, along the roadsides, beside the stream, and in many other places in the surrounding area. For those who attended, it was an enjoyable time of work and fellowship. We collected numerous bags of trash. Several commented how the area around the church looked much better. Though only a few participated, the event was definitely worth the effort. Workday survey 04 was administered to the group (Appendix C). Neither of my third party administrators attended this event. I preserved the anonymity of the participants by asking them to place their completed surveys on a table in the fellowship hall which I collected at a later time.

**Week Three (September 22-28)**

Before Sunday School at Cedar Spring Baptist on September 22, I updated my creation care PowerPoint slides that were part of the Sunday morning announcements. I checked the C.A.R.E. information center to make sure enough literature was available in the display rack.

The September 22 bulletin as well as the project C.A.R.E. calendar in the sermon notes reminded everyone of the upcoming project C.A.R.E. events (Appendix A and D). An announcement in the bulletin invited the congregation to the second post-sermon discussion and luncheon scheduled for Sunday, September 29.
For week three, I preached the third project C.A.R.E. sermon. The sermon was titled, “Creation Care: Engaging in Justice” (Appendix D). The Old Testament reading came from Psalm 139:13-18, and the New Testament reading came from Matthew 22:34-40. In this sermon, I introduced the topic by reminding the congregation that God has called us as Christians to minister to all the world’s people. God instructed us to care for the sick, the hungry, the poor, the homeless, and the sorrowful. One of the ways that we could care for the suffering peoples of the world would be caring for God’s world. Much of the suffering experienced in the world today is caused by a lack of environmental stewardship. We as Christians are called to seek justice for all humankind. The sermon outline consisted of four basic points: 1) each person, created in God’s image, has value, 2) each person has the basic needs: food, water, shelter, 3) Christians are called to care for others, and 4) we care for others by caring for creation.

I created a PowerPoint presentation which followed the sermon outline and was projected on the sanctuary screens as I preached (Appendix D). The projector operator was given a copy of my sermon with notations that designated which slides to show at different parts in the sermon. The sermon outline and the scriptures were printed and placed in the bulletin (Appendix D). The bulletin included a real world example of how the First Baptist Church of Austin, Texas, was making a difference by raising money to drill water wells in Ethiopia (Appendix D).

Following the invitational hymn, I asked the congregation to be seated and to remove survey 05a from their bulletin (Appendix C). Ushers were instructed to give surveys to persons who did not have one. The congregation was instructed to complete survey 05a and return it to one of the ushers, one of the third party administrators, or
place it in one of the specially marked survey boxes located at the exits. The
congregation was instructed not to put their names on the surveys. Those who were part
of the afternoon Bible study group were reminded not to participate in the congregational
survey. I reminded the congregation that to protect their anonymity, I could not accept
their completed surveys. After approximately five minutes passed, I closed the service
with prayer. Following the service, one of my third party administrators collected all the
surveys from the ushers and the survey boxes. These surveys were placed in an envelope
and given to me. On September 22, 91 people attended the morning worship service.
Forty-seven completed the post-sermon survey 05a providing a 52% response rate.

The third creation care Bible study began at 2:00 P.M. on September 22. The
Bible study was distributed for the participant’s notebooks (Appendix B). I was
disappointed to learn that one of my Bible study participants had become sick and could
not attend. This dropped the number of the C.A.R.E. Bible study group to ten. Because
of this person’s absence, I informed my third party administrators to remove this
participant’s previous surveys from the project.

We began our third study with the “Just think about it…” section that discussed
the growing population of the world. Most of the Bible study participants were shocked
at how fast the world’s population was increasing. The group discussed the four main
points of the morning sermon and the responsibility of Christians to seek justice for all
people. We discussed how this justice often began with environmental stewardship. The
Bible study group was very interested in how First Baptist Church Austin, Texas, raised
money to drill wells in Ethiopia. The comment was made that the project was something
that Cedar Spring could do. I was pleased that the group had made this connection.
At the end of the Bible study at 3:30 P.M., I distributed Bible study survey 05b (Appendix C), gave final instructions, and then left the room. My third party administrators collected the surveys and assigned the participants’ numbers to the appropriate surveys.

Following the September 22 Bible study, one of my third party administrators informed me that they had not yet received the two 02b surveys that the church secretary had mailed almost two weeks prior. This was definitely bad news. If the two surveys did not arrive in the mail soon, I would need to remove two additional individuals from the Bible study. This development could potentially drop my Bible study group to eight; the lowest level of my project proposal. I was very concerned.

During week three, I continued developing plans for the community garden. One important consideration was the organic aspect of the garden. To be truly organic, no synthetic fertilizers or materials could be used in the growing medium. I decided that a certified organic garden would be too cost prohibitive to create. Instead, I determined that a low input garden would be more feasible. For the growing boxes, I elected to use treated lumber. During week three of project C.A.R.E., I visited a local lumber store to estimate the construction costs for the raised bed garden.

On Saturday, September 28, my family and I spent much of the day preparing for the final post-sermon discussion/luncheon scheduled for the next day.

**Week Four (September 29-October 5)**

My family and I arrived early to church on September 29. Last minute details had to be attended to for the post-sermon luncheon/discussion. My mother and father once
again helped with the luncheon. Prior to Sunday School on September 29, I updated the project C.A.R.E. PowerPoint announcements on the sanctuary computer.

For week four, I preached the final project C.A.R.E. sermon. The sermon was titled, “Creation Care: Anticipating Redemption” (Appendix D). The Old Testament reading came from Isaiah 65:17-25, and the New Testament reading came from Romans 8:18-21. This sermon focused on the redemptive hope shared by all of creation. As Christians, we cling to the hope that one day God will make all things new, including his creation. And if God views his creation as redeemable, then we as Christians should see creation as redeemable as well. The sermon outline consisted of four basic points: 1) creation has a place in God’s ultimate will, 2) creation is suffering from the effects of sin, 3) creation will ultimately be redeemed, 4) and Christians must seek creation’s redemption. For the benefit of the congregation, I created a PowerPoint presentation which followed the sermon outline and was projected as I preached (Appendix D). I gave the projector operator a copy of my sermon with notations that alerted him which slides to show at different points in the sermon. The sermon outline and the scriptures were printed and placed in the bulletin (Appendix D). The bulletin included information about the ecological disaster of the Aral Sea in the region of Uzbekistan (Appendix D).

Following the morning worship, all of those who attended the service were invited to the post-sermon discussion in the fellowship hall. My family provided a free luncheon of homemade chili, loaded baked potatoes, and brownies with ice cream. The worship attendance on September 29 was 86. Forty-eight of those who attended the morning worship chose to stay for the meal and discussion time giving a 56% response rate. Again, I am very appreciative to all my family for their help.
After everyone had finished their meal, I opened the discussion on the morning’s sermon topic by asking input about the day’s creation care topic. There was a lot of response to the question. One male stated on his post-discussion survey, “We as Christians have a responsibility to take care of God’s creation. We as humans are destroying the earth due to political reasons and the earth is being destroyed because of sin” (Appendix G). A senior adult female stated on her post-discussion survey, “God loved and still cares for His earth. He was very creative in how the world appears. We, as God’s examples of one part of creation should have a seed of care and dedication buried deep within our soul and show a desire to care and protect the earth” (Appendix G). There were a few negative comments towards creation care. However, the overall discussion was positive. This second post-sermon discussion lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Following the discussion, participants were asked to complete survey 06a (Appendix C). Of the 48 who attended the post-sermon discussion, 28 completed survey 06a. The survey rate of the discussion participants was 58%. The surveys were collected by my third party facilitators, placed in an envelope, and given to me.

Immediately following the post-sermon discussion, I arranged the fellowship hall for the weekly Bible study. Most of those participating in the Bible study attended the luncheon and discussion time. The fourth and final creation care Bible study began at 2:00 P.M. The Bible study was distributed for the participant’s notebooks (Appendix B). Many in the group expressed their sadness that this would be the last time our group would meet. The group’s discussion focused on the major points of the morning’s sermon about anticipating creation’s redemption. Most expressed shocked at the “Today
in the World…” example from the Aral Sea disaster. The groups on the whole was surprised that this unprecedented ecological problem was not daily in the news.

At the end of the Bible study at 3:30 P.M., I expressed my sincerest appreciation to all the Bible study participants. I thanked them for their willingness to dedicate four weeks to helping me complete my Doctor of Ministry project. I distributed Bible study survey 06b (Appendix C) and left the room. The third party administrators collected all of the surveys and assigned numbers to the appropriate surveys.

Following the Bible study, a third party administrator informed me that the September 8 02b surveys of the two Bible study participants still had not arrived. Unfortunately, it appeared that the participants would need to be removed from the study.

On Thursday, October 3, I met with Dr. Steven Harmon, my Supervising Professor, to discuss the progress of my project. I shared my project’s successes as well as the challenges. I provided Dr. Harmon a copy of all my printed materials and updated survey results. We discussed briefly the issue about the two lost 02b surveys and their impact on the project.

On Friday, October 4, the Master Gardener Coordinator of the Spartanburg County Office of the Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service visited Cedar Spring to examine the potential site for a community garden. The coordinator felt that the ten foot high lockable fence provided excellent security. However, there were several challenges to the site. First, the shading from neighboring trees would be an issue for part of the site. The heavier fruiting vegetables such as tomatoes and squash would need to be planted in the more sunny locations to ensure that they received at least eight hours of direct sunlight. Leafier crops such as lettuce and spinach which need less light could
be planted in the more marginal areas. Possibly trimming some of the neighboring trees could help bring more light into the garden.

A second issue would be water. There is no close water source to the garden site other than Kelsy Creek. The coordinator cautioned that the stream could easily become polluted with bacteria. He recommended that the church install a water line to the site.

A third concern was the growing medium. Since the tennis court was paved, raised beds would need to be constructed. The beds would need to be deep enough to support plant growth and retain adequate moisture. I told the coordinator that I was planning to construct 36 inch deep, 4 foot wide, 12 foot long planting boxes. He agreed that these size containers would be sufficient for vegetable growth. Overall, the coordinator felt that the site was good for a community garden. I prepared a brief summary of what would be needed to start a raised bed garden on the site (Appendix E).

Post Project

The week following the end of project C.A.R.E., I began pulling together my survey data from the congregation and the Bible study group. As I was considering the situation with the two lost surveys, I began to think about the 01b surveys of participants A, B, and C. Even though participant C’s involvement in the Bible study ended in the second week of the project, participants A and B had attended all the Bible studies. It was here that I realized several errors that I had made with participants A, B, and C.

The first error that I made was that by giving participates A, B, and C the August 25 pre-project 01b survey on September 8, I really did not have a true picture of these individual pre-project attitudes toward creation care. There was a two week difference
from when the rest of the Bible study group was surveyed and these participants were surveyed.

A second problem with participants A, B, and C was that they had completed the pre-project congregational 01a survey on August 25. Bible study participants were not to complete the congregational surveys because it would result in them being double surveyed. When I asked these three participants to complete the August 25 01b pre-project Bible study survey, they were inadvertently doubled surveyed.

A third problem encountered with participants A, B, and C was that they were in attendance during the morning worship service that day I preached the first creation care sermon. By hearing a pro-creation care sermon, it was very likely that the creation care attitudes of A, B, and C were influenced and reflected on survey 01b.

A fourth problem with participants A, B, and C was that they had also completed the congregational survey 02a that morning after the first creation care sermon. For a second time, participates A, B, and C were double surveyed.

With the busyness of the project and my responsibilities as pastor, these errors were not noticed until the fourth week of the project. After consulting with Dr. Steven Harmon, my Supervising Professor, and Dr. Danny West, the Executive Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, I felt that for the integrity of my project results, data from participants A and B could not be used in evaluating project C.A.R.E.

Regarding the two lost 02b surveys, I felt I had no choice but to drop these two participants as well. One problem that I faced was that I knew the identities of the ones whose surveys were lost. To preserve the anonymity of these two individuals, I felt I had to remove them from the study. Unfortunately, this left me with six Bible study
participants; two less than I had proposed. This also left me with a Bible study group of only women and no men.

On Sunday, October 6 and November 3, post project C.A.R.E. surveys 07a and 08a were given to the congregation of Cedar Spring Baptist, respectfully. At the end of the morning worship service on both of these days, the congregation was asked to complete the post-project survey located in the bulletin (Appendix C). The October 6 07a survey and the November 3 08a survey asked the identical questions as the August 25 01a survey. On both October 6 and November 3, the congregation was instructed to complete the survey and return it to one of the ushers, one of the third party administrators, or place it in one of the specially marked survey boxes located at the exits. The congregation was instructed not to place their names on the surveys. Those who were part of the creation care Bible study group were reminded not to participate in the congregational survey. The congregation was reminded that to protect their anonymity, I could not accept their completed surveys. After approximately five minutes passed, I closed the services on October 6 and November 3 with prayer. Following the services, one of my third party administrators collected all the surveys from the ushers and the survey boxes. These surveys were placed in an envelope and given to me. On October 6, 86 people attended the morning worship service. Thirty-one completed the post-project survey 07a providing a 45% response rate. On November 3, 98 people attended the morning worship service. Twenty-nine completed the post-project survey 08a providing a 30% response rate.

On Sundays October 6 and November 3, post-project C.A.R.E. surveys 07b and 08b were given to the Bible study group, respectively. Bible study participants were
instructed to give surveys 07b and 08b to the third party administrators when the surveys were completed.

Following the November 3 08b survey, I asked my third party administrators to give me all the Bible study surveys from project C.A.R.E. I gave the administrators the list of six Bible study participants that I could use in my evaluations. These surveys were returned to me in the second week of November. However, as I was looking through the surveys, I noticed an error in the September 8 surveys of Bible study participant two. Survey 02b from September 8 only had participant two’s number at the top but with none of the statements rated. The mistake had not been caught by the third party administrators. Because I did not know the identity of participant two and my Bible study pool had already shrunk below my goal, I decided to include the participant’s data in my results for September 8.

**Evaluation Methods**

To evaluate project C.A.R.E., I used quantitative and qualitative methods to measure the changes in attitude of the congregation and the Bible study group toward the subject of creation care. For quantitative data, I relied on surveys where participants assigned a numerical value from one to five, one representing strongly disagreed and five representing strongly agreed, to specific statements (Appendix F). Over the course of project C.A.R.E., seven surveys were given to the congregation, seven surveys were given to the Bible study group, and one survey was given to the creation care workday participants. All surveys contained thirteen statements. The pre-project surveys (01a, 01b) and the post-project surveys (07a, 07b, 08a, 08b) all posed identical statements.
The following eight statements were present on all of the project C.A.R.E. congregational and Bible study surveys. Because these statements appeared on each survey, changes in attitude could be more easily followed throughout the project. The following eight statements were classified as “tier one statements:”

1. Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment.
2. Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.
3. Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness.
4. The care of the environment is biblically based.
5. God is revealed through/in the natural world.
6. Christians have a responsibility to be actively involved in environmental issues.
7. God cares for his creation.
8. Each person bears a personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation.

The following nine statements were not included in every project survey, but they did appear more than once in the project C.A.R.E. surveys. Though changes in attitude could not be as easily followed as with the Tier One statements, these statements could be used to note some attitude changes. The following nine statements were classified as “tier two statements:”

9. The earth is currently experiencing human-made environmental problems (surveys 01a, 01b, 06a, 06b, 07a, 07b, 08a, 08b)
10. People in the world are suffering today as a result of human-made environmental problems (surveys 01a, 01b, 05a, 05b, 06a, 06b, 07a, 07b, 08a, 08b).
11. If not addressed, global environmental problems will adversely affect future generations (surveys 05a, 05b, 06a, 06b).

12. Global environmental problems personally impact my life (surveys 01a, 01b, 07a, 07b, 08a, 08b).

13. Caring for the environment is an important component of missions (surveys 01a, 01b, 04, 05a, 05b, 07a, 07b, 08a, 08b).

14. Jesus Christ is seen through creation (surveys 01a, 01b, 02a, 02b, 04, 7a, 7b, 08a, 08b).

15. “Loving our neighbor as ourselves” involves the care of the environment (surveys 05a, 05b, 06a, 06b).

16. Improving the standard of living for people should be a part of the church’s evangelistic efforts (surveys 05a, 05b, 06a, 06b).

17. We glorify God by caring for his creation (surveys 02a, 02b, 04).

For project C.A.R.E., eight statements appeared only once in the congregational and Bible study surveys. These statements were meant to give a snapshot of the congregation’s and Bible study group’s attitude about a particular aspect of creation care on a given day. The following statements were classified as “tier three statements:”

18. God created the natural world as a witness to his glory (surveys 02a, 02b).

19. God created every part of the natural world for a reason (surveys 02a, 02b).

20. Since sin corrupted God’s original creation, the present world is of little value (surveys 02a, 02b).

21. God created earth to be humanity’s home (surveys 03a, 03b).
22. God gave humanity the responsibility to care for the earth (surveys 03a, 03b).

23. God would be pleased at how humanity has cared for the earth thus far (surveys 03a, 03b).

24. It is of no real consequence if human activity causes various life forms to go extinct since humanity was given dominion over the earth and one day God will usher in a new creation (surveys 03a, 03b).

25. Not taking care of the environment is a sin (surveys 03a, 03b).

Numerical data from the various surveys were compiled and averaged (Appendix F). The results of these surveys provided the quantitative data for project C.A.R.E.

Throughout the project, qualitative data was collected through comments written on surveys, comments voiced in congregational discussion times, and comments voiced in the Bible study group meetings. On the back of each survey throughout project C.A.R.E., qualitative data was collected by using the following question, “Based on today’s sermon/Bible study/work day, what are your thoughts regarding creation care?” Although numerical value could not assigned to these comments, they were valuable in gauging the personal thoughts of the respondents towards creation care (Appendix G).

Other activities of project C.A.R.E. such as the post-sermon discussion times, the recycling program, the church’s energy use survey, the creation care clean-up day, the creation care information center, the community garden prospects, and all the other aspects of the project were evaluated, in part, subjectively based on qualitative data.
CHAPTER 3
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. 3 They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. 4 Yet their voices goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. Psalm 19:1-4

May 7, 2013. Even as it unfolded before my eyes, I could not believe what I was seeing. The dry ravine that our truck had crossed eight hours earlier was now filled with a flashflood. The churning torrent of water, mud, and debris had hit the ravine just minutes before our truck was to cross. In an unabated flood, the rainfall from this first storm of the rainy season had raced down the treeless Haitian mountainsides filling the ravines. From the ruins of an old concrete bridge jutting out of the water, it was apparent that such flashfloods were common in this place and had been much worse. As I stood there in the rain with hundreds of others waiting for the floodwaters to subside, I could not help but wonder how many other places in the world were like this; places where people were being negatively impacted by the lack of environmental stewardship.

In many ways, Christians in North America are disconnected from the daily plight of millions around the world who suffer as a result of environmental degradation. In our pristine churches surrounded by groomed landscapes, American Christians do not fully understand nor appreciate how daily life is a struggle for those living with deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, and poor water quality. Sure, American Christians will go to great lengths to raise money for disaster relief. But most do not realize that poor environmental stewardship is an attributing factor to famines, wars, and epidemics. In many cases, if environmental degradation did not cause the events, it made them worse.
Unfortunately, many evangelical Christians in the United States view environmental issues in political terms instead of theological and human terms. They see no connection between the Great Commission and the care of God’s creation. They see no correlation between environmental degradation and the plight of the world’s poor. However, I believe that an intentional reading of the Old Testament and the New Testament reveals a theology of creation care embedded in the scriptures and an implicit call to care for those suffering as a result of environmental neglect. I believe that out of the scriptures emerges a theological foundation for creation care.

The Old Testament

Throughout the Old Testament, there is a deep connection between God and his creation. In the opening verses of Genesis one, we read how God created the universe. God the Creator was the one through whom and for whom all things were made. In the beginning, God made all things with a purpose. As the scriptures give testimony, every atom, molecule, star, planet, and everything else made in creation was meant to give God glory and accomplish his work. Walter Brueggemann writes, “The assertion, ‘Creator creates creation,’ articulates the main issue before us. It affirms that God has a powerful purpose for his creation. Creation is not a careless, casual, or accidental matter.”

In Genesis 1:3, 1:10, 1:12, 1:18, 1:21, 1:25, and 1:31, we read how God looked at his creation and proclaimed it “good.” Terence Fretheim writes, “The recurrent

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litany that all is created ‘good’ stands as a beacon regarding the nature of God’s creative work and the divine intentions for the creation.”⁷ The good creation is a reflection of the good God who made all things.

In Genesis 2:15 we read, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” From this passage, we see that the first task that God gave humanity was creation care. Gordon Wenham writes, “It should be noted that even before the fall man was expected to work; paradise was not a life of leisured unemployment.”⁸ It was and continues to be God’s will that humankind care for his good creation.

God’s love and care for his creation is evident in the Laws of Moses. According to the Mosaic laws, there was a mandatory observance of the Sabbath. With the purpose of honoring God, the Sabbath also provided for the care of people, animals, and earth. In Exodus 23:10-12, God stated, “For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what is left. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove. Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed.”

Regarding the Sabbath observance, J. Gerald Janzen writes, “If the fallow year rotated among various Israelites, the poor and the wild animals would annually have some place

to enjoy this ‘moveable feast.’”\(^9\) In part, the observance of the Sabbath helped to preserve and care for what God had made.

In Deuteronomy 22, the Jewish people were given instructions to help protect the natural world. Deuteronomy 22:6-7 stated, “If you come across a bird’s nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young. You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life.” This law instructed the Jewish people in how to preserve and care for God’s creation. Duane L. Christensen writes, “To kill the mother removes a capital asset, a future means of supplying more food.”\(^10\)

Again, referencing to the Sabbath laws, God stated in Leviticus 26:2-5, “Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the Lord. If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit. Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land.” John Hartley writes, “...Yahweh will so bless the fields that the people will not be idle, but gainfully occupied. With bumper harvests the people will have enough to eat until satisfaction. They will not have to ration their food.”\(^11\) If humanity would obey and observe all the aspects of the Sabbath including properly caring for God’s creation, God the Creator would provide for all of

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In the Old Testament, God the Creator was viewed as actively involved in guiding the world he had made and the nations he had established. God the Creator was often called upon to lend aid to his creation. In seeking God’s help against the Assyrian King, King Hezekiah prayed in II Kings 19:15, “Lord, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.” Hezekiah believed that God, Creator of heaven and earth, was deeply involved in his creation and governed the path of his people.


Perhaps one of the greatest places in the Old Testament where God is viewed as the glorious Creator is in the Psalms. Throughout the Psalms, the psalmists link the glories of creation to the God of heaven and earth. From the writings of the psalmist, God was worthy of praise because of what he had made.

In proclaiming God’s glory, the psalmist wrote in Psalm 8:1, “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens...” As Konrad Schaefer writes, “The poet speaks for the liturgical assembly. Praise of God and
contemplation of the natural world evoke wonder and the contemplation of humanity.”14

In Psalm 8:3–4, the psalmist continued, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?” Konrad Schaefer continues to write, “The worshiper gazes on eternity then targets the self. How small the human is when compared with divine greatness, yet how great by God’s favor!”15

In Psalm 8:5–8, the psalmist acknowledged humanity’s God-given responsibility for creation’s care, “You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.” As can be deduced from this passage, humanity’s rule over creation is not a license to be reckless with the earth’s resources. Instead, the care for creation is a great responsibility. Konrad Schaefer writes, “God invested them with glory, an attribute of the divine, and appointed them as co-regents of creation.”16

In Psalm 19:1, the psalmist wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.” Peter Craige writes, “...as mankind reflects upon the vast expanse of heaven, with its light by day and its intimation of a great universe by night, that reflection may open up an awareness and knowledge of God, the Creator, who by his

15 Schaefer, 23.
16 Schaefer, 24.
hands created a glory beyond comprehension of the human mind.” Creation is a testimony to God’s awesome power.

In Psalm 24:1-2, the psalmist penned these words, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.” Peter Craigie notes, “There are few themes more central to the Old Testament literature than the kingship of God. It is a concept rooted in creation and elaborated in historical experience...” God is the King and rightful Ruler of the universe he had made.

The psalmist wrote in Psalm 57:5, “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.” This statement of worship is repeated again in Psalm 57:11. The psalmist acknowledged God’s glory in heaven and earth.

In Psalm 65:8, the psalmist stated, “The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy.” J. Clinton McCann, Jr., writes, “Thus the creation joins in praising God in recognition of God’s gracious rule.” The beauty of creation gives God glory.

In Psalm 65:9-10, the psalmist continued to write, “You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it. You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops.” God cares for creation and causes it to produce food to care for humanity. Regarding this passage, Hans-Joachim Kraus

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18 Craigie, 214.
notes, “In the song of praise, Yahweh is glorified as the giver of all the gifts of life (vv. 10f). He generates the moistening and the fertilization of the clods of soil.”

The author of Psalm 89:11 wrote, “The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth; you founded the world and all that is in it.” In Psalms 102:25, the psalmist wrote, “In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands.” Leslie Allen notes that in Psalm 89 and 102, T. M. Ludwig observed that the formula, “founded the earth,” is associated with Yahweh’s kingship. Again, the psalmist reiterated the fact that God was Creator.

The psalmist wrote in Psalm 96:4-5, “For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.” Psalm 96:11-13 continues, ”Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy. Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth.” As Peter Craige writes regarding this Psalm, “The ecological implications are staggering; we humans are somehow partners with oceans and trees and soil and air in glorifying God.” Marvin Tate also writes, “Creation is called to celebrate because the great king is coming to judge the world (v.13). The trees of the forest (in v 12) are singled out to shout for joy at the coming of Yahweh.” Psalm 96 describes a God closely connected with his world. All of creation give God praise, honor, and glory.

\[22\] Craige, 1066.
In Psalm 115:15, 121:2, 124:8, 134:3, and 146:6, God is referred to as the “Maker of heaven and earth.” As noted by Hans-Joachim Kraus, these references to God recognize that “his creative power guarantees blessed success.”\textsuperscript{24} God and God alone is to be recognized as the Creator.

In Psalm 115:16 we read, “The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to mankind.” As Psalm 115, humanity has a God-given responsibility for creation care. Hans-Joachim Kraus writes, “The earth by virtue of its origins is also Yahweh’s possession and dominion (cf. v. 15b), but Yahweh has ‘given’ it to humans as viceroys.”\textsuperscript{25}

The praises of God as Creator is also noted in the writings of the prophets. In Job 38:4-7, God asked Job, “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?” The Creator God answers to no one. It is he and he alone who made the world. James A. Wharton writes, “One point on which almost all students of Job agree is that chapters 38–41 are the poet’s attempt to describe the transcendent and inscrutable wisdom and power of God in the creation and governance of the universe.”\textsuperscript{26}

In several places, the author of Isaiah acknowledges God as Creator. In Isaiah 40:28, we read, “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his

\textsuperscript{24} Kraus, 382.
\textsuperscript{25} Kraus, 382.
understanding no one can fathom.” Christopher Seitz writes that “the one who calls each of the host of heaven by name and who can tell if just one is missing has an understanding that is unsearchable.”

God is the eternal, matchless Creator.

In Isaiah 44:24, the Lord acknowledged his wondrous work when he addressed Cyrus the Great, “This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself...” Claus Westermann writes, “The prophet uses various terms and combinations of terms to say to his fellow-countrymen that, from the beginning, the end which their God had had in view in all his activity was the redemption of his chosen people, and that this was why he brought them into being.”

God made creation to fulfill his purposes.

In Isaiah 45:18 we read, “For this is what the Lord says—he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited...” The context of this passage reminds us that the God of heaven created the world for a purpose. God created the world as a place for humanity to live. John D. W. Watts writes, “God created all the world for order and habitation.”

The prophet Jeremiah asserted God’s supremacy over the Babylonian gods in Jeremiah 10:11-12; “These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens. But God made the earth by his power; he

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founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.” Page Kelley writes, “The verse makes it clear that the idol-gods, who had no part in the creation, will perish from the earth, and thus the exiles need not fear them.”30 The God of Israel is the one true God.

In Amos 4:13, the prophet wrote, “He who forms the mountains, who creates the wind, and who reveals his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth— the LORD God Almighty is his name.” Douglas Stuart writes, “Yahweh is indeed one to be feared. He has the power to destroy, all adversaries, including Israel, not merely because he is influential among the gods...but because he is the creator and sustainer…the created order answers to him.”31

In Habakkuk 3:3b-4a, the prophet said of the God of heaven and earth, “His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. His splendor was like the sunrise...” Regarding the prophet’s vision of God, Elizabeth Achtemeier writes, “...he comes as King over all the earth: His glorious manifestation so illumines the heavens that all the earth responds in praise.”32 Habakkuk proclaimed God as the Creator who was worthy of honor and praise for the works he had done.

As the Old Testament gives testimony, creation glorifies God. Through his glorious creation, God is praised and honored. God created the world to provide for his beloved creation, humankind. The elements of God’s world provides humanity with food, shelter, clothing, and all the other essentials of life. And as part of his creative

purpose for the world, God called humanity into partnership to care for his world and all those who live in it.

Unfortunately, humankind has largely ignored its call to care for creation. With its modern industry, humankind has pushed God’s creation beyond sustainable limits. Millions are suffering today because of humanity’s indifference toward environmental issues. Those who affected the most by environmental degradation are the poor and the marginalized who have no means of escaping their situation. As we consider the universe that God made and his call to creation care, it is important to consider those who suffer the most from poor environmental stewardship. Closely linked to creation care is the care of the poor. In many parts of the world, the two cannot be separated. The Old Testament is very specific when it comes to the welfare of the poor and disadvantaged.

Leviticus 19:18 tells us, “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.” As we improve the living conditions of people and help them live healthier lives through a healthier environment, we can show love to our neighbor. We love our fellow human being as ourselves when we address the environmental problems causing them to suffer.

In Proverbs 29:7, the Bible tells us, “The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.” The followers of Christ cannot ignore the needs of the poor who are suffering because of environmental degradation. To ignore their needs is to ignore the second greatest commandment. Regarding Proverbs 29:7, Richard Clifford writes, the wicked have no “concern for the poor, and they have no knowledge (wisdom), that is, they know nothing, they are fools.”

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In Proverbs 14:31, we read, “Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.” As American Christians, we must consider how our affluent American lifestyle is affecting the rest of the world. As Richard Clifford writes, “God is the maker of all, rich and poor, and God’s honor is bound up with each person, no matter how lowly.”

Proverbs 17:5 tells us, “Whoever mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.” Throughout the scriptures, God has a special place in his heart for the poor and the outcasts. Ronald Murphy writes, “One’s treatment of others, especially the poor, is an index of one’s treatment of God; one who is kind to the poor is making a loan to the Lord.”

In Proverbs 22:16, we read, “One who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and one who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty.” Christians must consider how our affluent western lifestyle is affecting the world and its people. As Paul Koptak notes, “We must ask if there are ways that the very economy that provides us with jobs and income sets a good name above riches or whether it takes from the poor and gives to the rich.”

Proverbs 31:9 tells us, “Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” The followers of Christ must be the advocates for the world’s poor who daily suffer from deforestation, desertification, and pollution. If Christians will not be the advocates of the world’s poor, who will?

34 Clifford, 147.
In Ezekiel 16:49, the Lord said to Jerusalem, “Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.” Could it be said that we in our western culture are arrogant, overfed, unconcerned, and not helping the poor? Joseph Blenkinsopp writes, “It is interesting to observe that Sodom is castigated not for sexual deviance but for arrogance induced by affluence, resulting in indifference to the needs of the poor and disadvantaged – a point that has lost none of its relevance in our contemporary society.”

Throughout the Old Testament scriptures, God is viewed as the Maker of all things. Creation is God’s work through which God will fulfill his purposes. Creation gives God praise and glory. God calls humanity to be involved with his work through the care of his creation. And part of that creation he calls us to care for are the world’s poor who suffering disproportionately from environmental degradation.

**The New Testament**

Like the Old Testament, the New Testament also proclaims God as the Creator of all. In this proclamation, the New Testament often links Jesus with the Creator. From the testimony of the New Testament, Jesus is one with the God of heaven.

Although Jesus Christ and the Father were one, Jesus prayed to the Creator God. In Matthew 11:25, Jesus prayed, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth....” Craig Keener writes, “Before the Lord of heaven and earth, human wisdom and power

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are nothing..."  

Jesus reiterates this Old Testament theme of God as the Lord over all of his creation.

When the Pharisees demanded that Jesus rebuke his disciples who were praising God as he entered Jerusalem, Jesus responded in Luke 19:40, “I tell you...if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.” As noted by Jesus, the praises of God would spring forth from creation itself if humanity were to stay silent.

In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, the Apostle John identified Jesus Christ as one with the Creator. In John 1:1-3 we read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” Gail O’Day writes, “John 1:1 stresses the eternal existence of the Word of God, an existence outside the bounds of time and history.”

Through the words of the Apostles, God the Creator was proclaimed as part of the Gospel message. In Acts 4:24, Peter and John prayed, “‘Sovereign Lord,’ they said, ‘you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.’” F. F. Bruce writes that Peter and John “addressed God as Sovereign Lord, the Creator of all, in time-honored liturgical language derived from Hebrew scripture.”

While preaching before the people of Lystra, Paul and Barnabas proclaimed the God of creation. In Acts 14:15, they told the people, “We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens

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and the earth and the sea and everything in them.’” As Paul W. Walaskay writes, “There is only one God who lives, and yet this God cannot be seen except through the gifts of God’s abundance in nature.”

To the people of Lystra, Barnabas and Paul also testified to God’s care of humanity through creation. According to Acts 14:17, they preached, “Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.” Joseph A. Fitzmyer writes that the Apostle Paul taught the people of Lystra “that the living God is the creator and provider of all that is good for human life. This God sends them rain, seasons of fruitfulness, food, and all that gladdens the heart.”

In his speech before the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers of Athens, Paul commented in Acts 17:24, “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.” F. F. Bruce writes, “He it is who created the universe and everything in it; he is Lord of heaven and earth. Here is the God of biblical revelation; no distinction is pressed between a supreme being and a demiurge who fashioned the material world.”

In Colossians 1:15-16, Paul linked Jesus with the Creator when he said, “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.”

Paul identified Christ as the one through whom creation was made. Lewis R. Donelson

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43 Bruce, 336.
writes, “Jesus Christ functions in the cosmos as word and wisdom, for he is the agent, the purpose, and the bond of creation.”

In Hebrews 1:1-2, the author of Hebrews referred to Jesus as the Creator when he said, “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.” William Lane notes, “As the pre-creational Wisdom of God, the Son not only embodies God’s glory, but also reveals this to the universe as he sustains all things and bears them to their appointed end by his omnipotent word.”

As in the Old Testament, the New Testament provides a strong emphasis on the care of the poor and disadvantaged. This is an important consideration for Christians today as we come to understand how humanity’s mismanagement of God’s creation has led to the suffering of millions.

When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus replied in Mark 12:29-31, “The most important one...is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” In this passage, Jesus reiterated the summary of the Law from Deuteronomy 6:5-6 and Leviticus 19:18. The motivation to care for our brothers and sisters who are suffering from environmental degradation should emerge out of our love for the God who loves us. As Craig Evans notes, “The highest ethic of the

Law is not sacrifice or other cultic activity; it is loyalty to God and compassion for human beings.”

According to the final judgment of Jesus as noted in Matthew 25:37ff, “…the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” As Thomas Long writes, “The world will be judged according to whether it did or did not show hospitality to Jesus Christ, the Messiah clothed not in royal majesty but coming to the world hidden among the ‘least of these.’”

The world’s poor is among the “least of these.”

The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 5:13-14, “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” We emulate God’s love when we empathize and care for those struggling in the world.

In Philippians 2:3-4, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” Morna D. Hooker writes, “Paul urges the members of the Christian community in Philippi to regard others as better than themselves; this is not meant to foster false modesty or a lack of self-esteem, but to

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encourage a recognition of the rights and achievements of others.”

As Christians, it is vital that we see those who are suffering under environmental distress as God sees them.

In I John 4:7-8, we read, “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” When we do not love our neighbor who is in need, then our love for God is drawn into question. I. Howard Marshall writes, “A person who does not love does not know God. His lack of love demonstrates that he does not belong to the divine sphere, since God is love. The implication is that knowledge of God as love leads men to love one another.”

As the Bible begins with a picturesque setting of creation, so it ends with one. In Revelation 22: 2b-3a, the Bible describes the New Jerusalem by saying, “On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse.” As M. Eugene Boring writes, “John’s vision of the new Jerusalem pictures a purified and redeemed humanity and a fallen world delivered from the bondage of evil by the God whose grace transforms pious souls as well as all of creation, ‘far as the curse is found.’” One day, all of creation will be made new. This is the hope embedded in the Gospel that we should be carrying to the world.

As in the Old Testament, the New Testament honors God as the Creator. Creation serves God’s purpose and gives him glory. The Lord Jesus Christ is the person of God

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through whom the world was made and will be judged. And as followers of Christ, we are called to show the Father’s love by caring for others.

Theological Summary

Although the previously noted scriptures are not an exhaustive examination of the biblical text regarding environmental stewardship and the care of others, I believe they do provide a foundation for a theology of creation care. In summary, I believe five basic theological thoughts can be drawn from these scriptures. First, the Bible proclaims God as Creator. All things were made by God and serve his purpose. Second, all of creation glorifies God. The glory of creation is a beacon that points humanity toward the Creator. Third, God has called humanity to join him in caring for the earth. Since the beginning, humanity has been given the job to care for creation. Fourth, all of creation was made through our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The followers of Christ are the followers of the Creator through whom the world was made. And lastly, the followers of Christ the Creator are called to sacrificially love and care for all people. As Christians, we can show our love for the people of the world, especially the poor, by helping to correct the environmental problems that are negatively impacting lives.

It is from this theological foundation that the biblical rationale for project C.A.R.E. emerged.

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CHAPTER 4

CRITICAL EVALUATION

...since the creation of the world, God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. Romans 1:20

“In all my years going to church, I have never heard a pastor preach about God wanting us to care for the environment,” said one of the senior adult members of Cedar Spring Baptist’s congregation to me following my first creation care sermon. It was a sentiment that I encountered over and over again throughout the project. Though the congregation of Cedar Spring Baptist had heard countless sermons on faith, discipleship, and missions, virtually none had ever heard a sermon on the biblical call to environmental stewardship.

This section of my report will evaluate the various aspects of project C.A.R.E. in relation to the project’s goals. This section will evaluate the recruitment of the research groups, the presentation of the creation care materials, the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the congregational and Bible study surveys, the qualitative data received from the two post-sermon discussion times, the church’s energy use survey, the creation care clean-up day, the creation care information center, and the prospects of a community garden.

Research Groups Recruitment Evaluation

The recruitment of the congregational group was the least challenging aspect of this project. As mentioned earlier in this report, the congregation consisted of those of
Cedar Spring Baptist Church who attended the morning worship services during the project. My recruitment of the congregation involved notices in the newsletter, bulletins, and verbal announcements about project C.A.R.E. and the corresponding sermon series (Appendix A). Anyone could be a part of the congregation. Although I did not document which members of the congregation attended the Sunday worship services during the project, it appeared that the services were consistently attended by a majority of the same people. I feel confident about my efforts to inform and invite the congregation to participate in project C.A.R.E. I believe I sufficiently utilized the tools at my disposal to effectively recruit the congregation.

Unfortunately, I did not find the recruitment of the Bible study group to be as easy as the congregation. As I previously reported, my goal was to recruit a Bible study group that reflected the demographics of the church. Ideally, I wanted a group of eight to ten individuals that was equally divided between men and women. One challenge that I faced during the Bible study recruitment process was that while the project was my top priority, it was not the top priority of the congregation. The congregation’s willingness to participate in project C.A.R.E. was determined by how the project fit into their schedules. I quickly realized how difficult it would be to find eight to ten individuals who could dedicate four consecutive Sunday afternoons to the study.

A second challenge to recruiting the C.A.R.E. Bible study group was determining the criteria for participation. Did I want individuals with certain preconceived ideas toward creation care? How many Bible study participates did I want to recruit from the various demographics of the church? How could I guard against my own bias in the selection process? Unfortunately, my goals quickly came face-to-face with reality.
The determining factors for the Bible study participation eventually became their availability and willingness. Through announcements and personal discussions, I eventually recruited twelve individuals for the Bible study (Appendix A). Though not very happy with this recruitment process, I accepted the fact that I did not have any other options. The original twelve participants consisted of ten women and two men ranging in age from the fifties to the eighties. Though I would have liked a more balanced representation, I was very thankful that I had twelve people willing to participate.

One issue that must be evaluated in this project report is the motivation of those who volunteered to participate in the creation care Bible study. As I looked back over my pastoral tenure at Cedar Spring, I realized that the individuals who volunteered for the Bible study were among my greatest supporters. For each Bible study participant, I had a connection that extended beyond the project. For some, I visited them or a close family member in the hospital. For others, I had conducted a funeral service for a loved one. There were several in the Bible group that I had worked closely with on various church committees. In some way, I had a deep connection with each participant. Although I am uncertain how these individual relationships affected the project, I do feel confident that the project was somehow influenced by them. From a strictly scientific approach, I believe that this influence would have made the project’s conclusions questionable. However, from a ministerial approach, I feel that such relationships are inevitable for pastors, if not needed, to facilitate change.
Presentation of the Creation Care Materials Evaluation

One of the challenges of project C.A.R.E. was determining how to communicate the creation care concepts to the congregation and the Bible study group. For the congregation, I decided that the best way to convey these concepts was to preach a four part sermon series with each sermon focused on a particular aspect of creation care (Appendix D). As previously described, I attempted to enhance these sermons with color coordinated sermon notes placed in each bulletin (Appendix D). Within these sermon notes, there was also a colorful insert describing a real world example of environmental stewardship or environmental degradation (Appendix D). Each C.A.R.E. sermon followed a PowerPoint slides presentation that highlighted the points of the sermons (Appendix D). My goal for the sermon series was to have a didactical approach to the creation care concepts. Given the congregational setting, time restraints of project C.A.R.E., and the resources at my disposal, I am pleased with how I was able to communicate the creation care concepts to the congregation. However, one critic that I would offer to my sermon series is that given the amount of biblical material available on the subject, I could have easily preached a ten to fifteen week sermon series.

Because the Bible study group was selected from the congregation, it had the added benefit of hearing the morning sermons before attending the afternoon Bible study sessions. For this reason, I decided it would be best to keep the weekly Bible study topics linked to the creation care sermon topics. I felt that it was advantageous to the project’s goals to use the Bible study as a reinforcement for the creation care sermons. Like the sermon notes, the Bible study materials were multicolor and user friendly (Appendix B). The outline of the Bible study followed the same points as the sermon.
The Bible study included stories, guided discussion questions, and places for participants to give feedback. During the actual Bible study time, I led the group through guided discussions which provided each participant the opportunity to give input. Bible study participants were encouraged to ask questions. Overall, I am very pleased with how the Bible study group progressed. I believe the Bible study was both informative and interesting. In my opinion, the Bible study format was well organized.

Although I was pleased with the Bible study, I believe that there are three changes that would have made the Bible study better. First, I think the study should have met later in the day on Sunday afternoons. The two o’clock Bible study time was too close to the end of morning worship and did not give participants much time for lunch. Second, I would have preferred the weekly Bible study meetings to be longer than an hour and a half. From past experiences, I enjoy teaching two hour Bible studies with a fifteen minute break in the middle. Though this adds only fifteen minutes of actual Bible study time, the fifteen minute break provides an informal opportunity for the participants to interact. Third, I would have liked more Bible study participants. Having six sets of data from six participants was hardly enough to make any substantial conclusions related to the project. Though the problems I faced with the Bible study participants were beyond my control, the fact is that I needed eight to ten Bible study participants and had only six.

For both the congregation and the Bible study group, I believe that I chose the best venues for communicating the creation care concepts to Cedar Spring Baptist Church. Though there is always room for improvement, I believe that the quantitative and the qualitative data supports the methodology I used.
Evaluation of Attitude Change

For both the congregational and the Bible study groups, project C.A.R.E. collected quantitative data and qualitative data through weekly surveys (Appendix C). This section will report and evaluate the data that was collected.

As described in the Evaluation Method section of chapter two, the congregational and Bible study groups were given a total of twenty-five statements distributed at various intervals throughout the project. Surveys were dated and numbered to help organize the data. Survey numbers ending in the letter “a” were congregational surveys, and survey numbers ending in the letter “b” were Bible study group surveys. As previously described, each survey statement was classified as a tier one, tier two, or tier three statements. These three tiers of statements were used as the primary measurement of quantitative data for attitudinal change among the congregational and Bible study groups.

For each post-sermon and post-Bible study survey, the responses to each individual statement were averaged for the corresponding date (Appendix F). These averages related to their specific statements were followed throughout project C.A.R.E. As one supplemental evaluation instrument, I used a statistical t-test with an alpha value of .05 as a gauge to measure significant change (Appendix F). Although the t-test was informative, theological studies cannot always be neatly packaged statistically or scientifically. As previously noted, each survey provided a place on the back where respondents could write their comments. This qualitative data was also evaluated for indications of attitude change (Appendix G).
**Tier One Survey Statements**

Survey statement one: “Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment.” According to the August 25 pre-project congregational survey, the average response for statement one was 4.3; almost half way between “agree” and “strongly agree.” Congregational support for this statement continued to grow throughout the four week project. A significant change was noted on September 29 when the congregational response to statement one reached 4.7. However, by November 3 the congregational response had returned to 4.5 resulting in only the slightest net gain. For congregational males, response to statement one rose from 3.8 on August 25 to 4.4 on November 3. This increase in favorability by congregational males missed the t-test statistical significance threshold by one percent. For congregational females, both the August 25 pre-project survey and the November 3 post-project survey revealed a response of 4.5.

For the Bible study group, the August 25 pre-project survey reflected a 4.2 response for statement one. The Bible study group’s response to this question peaked at 4.8 on September 29 and held strong through the post-project surveys of October 6 and November 3.

The response to statement one by the congregation and Bible study group shows that the issue of creation care had importance. I was especially surprised and encouraged by the response of the congregational males. I believe that the positive growth in male attitude towards statement one shows that the sermon series had a positive impact. As one male in his seventies noted on his September 8 survey, “We all need to be better stewards of God’s creation” (Appendix G).
It should also be noted that for statement one, the Bible study group showed growth. Although the t-test did not indicate a significant change for the Bible study group, I believe that the data indicates that an in-depth Bible study on this subject helped to increase and maintain a positive attitude toward creation care. As one Bible study participant wrote on September 15, “…God created all things for our good and then charged us to take care of it. We accepted the things he made for us, but we forgot our part of the deal” (Appendix G).

Survey statement two: “Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.” According to the pre-project congregational survey of August 25, the average response to this statement was 2.0 or “disagree.” The November 3 survey gave a 2.0 response to statement two resulting in no statistical change in congregational attitude. For congregational males, the pre-survey response to statement two was 2.5; halfway between “no opinion” and “disagree.” By the November 3 post-project survey, the congregational male response to this statement was 2.1 or almost to “disagree.”

Regarding creation care, one congregational male commented on September 22, “This is a critical area that has too long been avoided by our denomination” (Appendix G). Surprisingly, the congregational female response to statement two began on August 25 at 1.6 and then gradually moderated to 2.1 by the post-project survey of November 3.

For the Bible study group, the August 25 pre-project survey indicated 2.8 or almost a “no opinion” response for statement two. The responses to this statement fluctuated somewhat throughout the project. In particular, the Bible study response to this statement dropped to 1.8 following the September 15 Bible study entitled, “Creation Care: Assuming Our Responsibility.” Although this one point drop was not statistically
significant according to a t-test, I believe the change suggests that the Bible study had an impact on the perceived personal responsibility to creation care. On September 15, a Bible study participant wrote, “I think it is great I have learned a lot, am more aware of my surroundings that God has created for us” (Appendix G). In the post-project survey on November 3, the Bible study group’s response to statement two was 1.8.

I was pleased that the congregation and the Bible study group disagreed with the statement that environmental issues were too political and should be avoided by the church. I believe that this consistent response is a positive indication that Cedar Spring Baptist could be open to addressing creation care issues. But I also believe that the Bible study groups’ response to this statement also suggests that any creation care project must be supported with sound theological teaching and preaching.

Survey statement three: “Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness.” The pre-project congregational rating for this statement was 4.4 indicating an “agree” to “strongly agree” response. The response to statement three peaked at 4.6 on September 29. Both the October 6 and November 3 post-project surveys gave statement three a final rating of 4.5; virtually the same as the pre-project level. For congregational males, the pre-project survey of August 25 indicated a 4.1 response. The response of males trended up from this point to 4.5 as noted on the November 3 post-project survey. For congregational females, the response to statement three remained at 4.5 from the pre-project survey to the final post-project survey.

For the Bible study group, the pre-project survey indicated a 3.7; slightly more than halfway between “no opinion” and “agree.” A t-test indicated a significant increase to 4.8 on September 22 following the “Creation Care: Engaging in Justice” Bible study.
The November 3 post-project survey indicated that the Bible study group’s response to statement three had settled back to 4.5. Though the t-test did not consider this response statistically significant when compared to the pre-project survey, I believe the data suggests an increase in support that environmental stewardship is an evangelistic witness. As one Bible study participant wrote on September 22, “It is hard to teach a hungry, sick person about God and Jesus. We have a responsibility to meet their basic needs before we can meet their spiritual needs” (Appendix G).

For an evangelical Baptist church in the south, I was very pleased with the response to statement three by the congregation and the Bible study group. I believe the data shows that the congregation and the Bible study group would be open to mission work that addressed environmental issues. As one person wrote on their September 22 survey, “It is difficult for the average church to find a ‘start’ point and envision a mission that would address environment issues at home and abroad. Where do we go/do with this” (Appendix G). It appears from the responses to statement three, Cedar Spring Baptist could welcome an evangelistic outreach that dealt with an environmental issue.

Survey statement four: “The care of the environment is biblically based.” The pre-project congregational response to statement four was 4.4; almost between “agree” and “strongly agree.” The congregational response to this question continued to trend slightly upward throughout project reaching 4.7 on September 29. However, the November 3 post-project survey indicated a congregational rating of 4.5; virtually the same as the pre-project level. For congregational males, the pre-project survey revealed a 4.0 response. However, from the first post-sermon survey on September 8 to the final post-project survey on November 3, the congregational male response to statement four was
consistently in the 4.5 range. For congregational females, the August 25 pre-project survey was 4.7 and the November 3 post-project survey was 4.6.

For the Bible study group, the pre-project survey of August 25 revealed a 4.3 rating for statement four. Throughout project C.A.R.E., the Bible study group’s rating for this statement consistently stayed at or near to 5.0. The post-project survey of November 3 indicated the rating had dropped to 4.7.

For statement four, the congregational rankings of this statement started high and remained high. I was surprised by the growth in the congregational male response to this question. Although the change from the pre-project survey of September 8 and the post-project survey of November 3 is not statistically significant according to a t-test, I believe the data shows a growing trend among congregational males concerning the issue of creation care. On one of the September 8 congregational surveys, a male respondent wrote on his survey regarding creation care, “It is essential for our continued life on this earth” (Appendix G).

Like the congregational response to statement four, the Bible study response was also very high. I believe the high ratings for statement four continues to show that biblical education on a topic can have a significant impact on the participants.

Survey statement five: “God is revealed through the natural world.” The pre-project and the final post-project congregational surveys indicated 4.9 or “strongly agree.” The lowest congregational response to statement five was 4.7 on September 15. Congregational male and female response to statement five never dropped below 4.7 throughout the project. On the November 3 post-survey, congregational males gave the statement a rating of 4.8 whereas congregational females gave a rating 4.9. There was no
significant change in attitude toward statement five for the congregation. The general consensus was that the revelation of God is revealed in nature.

For the Bible study group, the August 25 pre-project survey noted a 4.7 rating for statement five. The post-project Bible study survey of November 3 indicated a 5.0 rating. Like the congregation, the Bible study group had no significant change in the attitude towards statement five.

As with the responses of previous statements, I was encouraged by the reactions to statement five. The congregation acknowledging the evidence of God in the natural world is a wonderful foundation from which to put creation care into action. As one person wrote on their September 15 post-discussion survey, “God’s creation is revealed by the miracle of life each day. We each should be able to see the Creator each day and see how he cares for each of us. Nature reveals God’s majesty” (Appendix G).

For statement five, I was also encouraged by the responses of the Bible study group. I believe the high rating for statement five continues to support the importance of biblical study on an issue like creation care. On November 3, one Bible study participant wrote on their post-project survey, “Everything and everyone is God[‘s] creation…we all should take care of each other and our environment” (Appendix G).

Survey statement six: “Christians have a responsibility to be actively involved in environmental issues.” The August 25 pre-project congregational response was 4.4. Congregational sentiment toward statement six rose slightly to a high of 4.6 on September 29, and then back to 4.4 on November 3. For congregational males, the August 25 pre-project survey rated the sixth statement 4.0. Over the course of the project, the congregational male response rose to 4.5 before returning to its pre-project
level of 4.0 on November 3. For congregational females, the pre-project survey gave the sixth statement a 4.7 which fluctuated slightly before returning to 4.7 as reflected by the November 3 post-project survey.

For the Bible study group, the pre-project survey of August 25 gave the sixth statement a 4.2 rating. By the last day of the project, September 29, this rating had risen to 4.7. The post-project survey of November 3 also received a rating of 4.7.

Like the other survey statements that received pro-creation care ratings, I am very pleased with the survey results for statement six. This recognition of responsibility that was reflected in the surveys can be facilitated into action. I was interested to see the fluctuations in statement six responses for the congregational males. I believe that the increase in positive response to statement six is the result of the creation care sermons.

For the Bible study group, I believe the continued focus on creation care helped to maintain the high survey levels for statement six. Though the change in the Bible study’s response to statement six is not statistically significant according to a t-test, I believe the increase shows that the in-depth Bible study helped the group grow in its understanding of Christian responsibility to environmental stewardship. I enjoyed what one Bible study participant wrote on September 15: “I have become so aware of what God has created in this last week. I feel like I should try everything to take care of our environment. I will certainly do my part” (Appendix G). I believe that the project C.A.R.E. Bible study has helped the participants to move from conviction to action.

Survey statement seven: “God cares for his creation.” For each of the seven surveys given to the congregation, statement seven received a 4.9 rating. For congregational males, the August 25 pre-project response was 5.0 and the November 3
post-project response was 4.8. For the congregational females, the pre-project response was 4.8 and the post-project response was 4.9. There was no significant change in the congregational attitude to statement seven.

For the Bible study group, the August 25 pre-project survey received a 4.8 rating for statement seven. This high rating was maintained throughout the project with the November 3 post-project survey yielding a result of 5. There was no significant change in the Bible study group’s attitude toward statement seven.

I believe the value of the statement seven response is that the congregation and the Bible study group acknowledged that God loves what he has made. God is actively involved in the world. As one congregational respondent wrote on her September 8 survey, “God created a beautiful world for us to enjoy. We should preserve and treasure it every day” (Appendix G).

Survey statement eight: “Each person bears a personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation.” The pre-project August 25 congregational survey indicated a 4.7 for this statement. This rating remained consistently high finishing the project with a 4.6. For congregational males, the pre-project and post-project rating for statement eight was 4.5. For congregational females, the pre-project rating was 4.8 and the post-project rating was 4.6. There was no significant change in attitude for the congregation regarding statement eight.

For the Bible Study group, the pre-project survey was 4.5. The rating for this statement trended upward to 4.8 where it remained for the October 6 and November 3 post-project surveys. As with the congregational response, there was no significant change in attitude recorded for statement eight.
Though there was not very much change in the response to statement eight from either group, I am grateful the rating began high and even slightly rose higher. I appreciate the fact that the congregation and the Bible study group recognize that each person bears a personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation. In my opinion, such sentiment continues to build the case that Cedar Spring Baptist may be ready to undertake a post-project creation care emphasis. As one Bible study participant wrote, “…Christians are commanded to care for their bodies, others, and the earth. To abuse and neglect the earth is a disrespect for God’s creation/God’s gift to us” (Appendix G).

Tier Two Survey Statements

Survey statement nine: “The earth is currently experiencing human-made environmental problems.” Statement nine appeared in surveys on August 25, September 29, October 6, and November 3. The August 25 pre-project congregational response was 4.3, and the November 3 post-project congregation response was 4.2. The congregational male response to statement nine was 3.6 on August 25 and reached 4.6 by September 29; a significant changed noted by a t-test. However, by the November 3 post-project survey, the congregational male response had dropped to 3.9 erasing the statistical change in the response to statement nine.

The congregational female pre-project response to statement nine on August 25 was 4.6 and the final post-project response on November 3 was 4.4. Though the congregational female response had slightly increased by September 29, the November 3 post-project survey indicated that the response had dropped to back to 4.4.
For the Bible study group, the August 25 pre-project survey received a 4.5 rating, and the November 3 post-project survey received a 4.7 rating. There was no significant change noted in the Bible study group’s response to statement nine.

I believe that the positive response to statement nine indicates that the congregation of Cedar Spring Baptist and the Bible study group are beginning to understand that humankind is causing many of the environmental problems of the world. Given the fact that Cedar Spring is mostly theologically and politically conservative, the significance of this response should not be underestimated. There have been many conservatives who have dismissed the idea that humans are causing global warming. I will gladly take a positive response to statement nine from Cedar Spring.

Survey statement ten: “People in the world are suffering today as a result of human-made environmental problems.” Whereas statement nine asked the congregation and the Bible study group if they believed that the earth was experiencing human-made environmental problems, statement ten asked the groups if there was a connection between the human-made environmental problems and human suffering. Statement ten appeared in the August 25, September 22, September 29, October 6, and November 3 surveys. The August 25 pre-project congregational response was 4.0. The response rose significantly on September 29 to 4.6. However, this statistical significance was lessened by the November 3 post-project response of 4.3. For congregational males, the August 25 pre-project survey received a 3.4; somewhat between “no opinion” and “agree.” The response of males rose significantly on September 29 to 4.4. However, this significance was lessened by the November 3 post-project response of 4. For congregational females, the pre-project survey response was 4.3 and the post-project survey response was 4.6.
For the Bible study group, the pre-project survey of August 25 noted a response of 4.3. By September 29, the Bible study group’s response to statement ten had reached 4.8 which it maintained throughout the post-project surveys of October 6 and November 3. Although this change is not statistically significant, I believe that the sustained increase is related to the influence of the Bible study. The Bible study’s final survey was half a point higher than the congregations. I believe this supports the idea that Bible study can influence a group’s perception of an issue.

I believe statement ten represents an increased understanding for the congregation and the Bible study group regarding creation care. I believe this understanding was especially important for the males of the congregation. As related to statement ten, the congregational males moved solidly into the “agree” category that human-made environmental problems are causing people to suffer. In statement nine, congregational males grew in their understanding that human beings were causing environmental problems. In statement ten, congregational males linked these problems to human suffering. I believe these insights should be celebrated as part of project C.A.R.E.

Before a problem can be corrected, it must be identified as a problem.

Survey statement eleven: “If not addressed, global environmental problems will adversely affect future generations.” This statement was included in the September 22 and the September 29 surveys. The congregation responded to statement eleven with a 4.6 rating on September 22 and a 4.7 rating on September 29. The congregational males responded with a 4.3 rating on September 22 and a 4.7 rating on September 29. Though this increase was not statistically significant according to a t-test, I believe this data shows how congregation males were influenced by project C.A.R.E. For the
congregational females, the September 22 and September 29 rating for statement eleven was 4.7.

For the Bible study group, September 22 received at 4.7 rating and September 29 received a 4.8 rating for statement eleven. One Bible study participant commented on her September 29 survey, “It frightens me for future generations because resources are becoming increasingly depleted in an exploding population growth. Humans abusing the environment causes other humans to suffer; therefore, humans are destroying creation and mankind” (Appendix G).

Survey statement twelve: “Global environmental problems personally impact my life.” This statement appeared on the August 25 pre-project surveys and the October 6 and November 3 post-project surveys. The pre-project congregational survey received a 3.7 rating. An increase in the statement’s rating was noted on October 6 with a 4.2. However, four weeks later on the November 3 post-project survey, statement twelve’s rating was back down to 3.9. The congregational male pre-project survey revealed a 3.4 rating. This congregational male rating trended upward to 4.0 by the October 6 post-project survey but returned to 3.7 by the November 3 post-project survey. For congregational females, the pre-project survey revealed a 3.9 rating. By the October 6 post-project survey, this rating had reached 4.3. However, by the November 3 post-project survey, the congregational female rating of statement twelve had returned to 4.0. For the congregation, no significant change could be noted from the surveys regarding statement twelve.

For the Bible study group, statement twelve received a 4.2 rating. This rating increased by the October 6 post-project survey to 4.7. However, by the November 3
post-project survey, the rating for statement twelve had fallen back to 4.5. Statistically, there was no significant change in the survey results for statement twelve.

I believe statement twelve reveals an area where project C.A.R.E. could improve by highlighting more how global environmental issues affect us all. Though statement twelve receive a positive response, I believe there is room for improvement related to this statement. I believe that true and lasting change related to creation care issues will only happen when people see how the problems personally affect them.

Survey statement thirteen: “Caring for the environment is an important component of missions.” This statement appeared on the surveys for August 25, September 22, October 6, and November 3. The pre-project congregational survey obtained a 4.4 rating. This same rating was received on both the October 6 and the November 3 post-project surveys. For congregational males, the August 25 pre-project rating was 3.9. The congregational males’ rating was 4.3 on September 22, 4.1 on October 6, and 4.2 on November 3. For congregational females, the August 25 pre-project rating was 4.6. This rating for statement thirteen by congregational females stayed at 4.6 for both the October 6 and November 3 post-project surveys. There was no significant survey change in congregational attitude toward statement thirteen.

For the Bible study group, statement thirteen received a pre-project survey rating of 4.2. This rating rose to 4.8 for September 22, October 6, and November 3.

I am grateful for the positive response to statement thirteen and the slight increase in the perceived link between missions and environmental stewardship. I believe that the Bible study influenced the group’s positive response to statement thirteen. One of the Bible study participant wrote on her survey regarding creation care, “…we as God’s
chosen are responsible for God’s world and we have been charged by God to do his commands” (Appendix G).

Survey statement fourteen: “Jesus Christ is seen through creation.” This statement appeared in the congregational and Bible study surveys of August 25, September 8, October 6, and November 3. The pre-project congregational survey rated the statement at 4.9 and the post-project congregational surveys rated it at 4.8. For the congregational males, the pre-project survey response to this statement was 4.9, and the final post-project survey response was 4.8. For the congregational females, the pre-project survey revealed a 4.9 rating and the final post-project survey revealed a 4.8 rating. For the congregational response to statement fourteen, there was no significant change in attitude noted.

For the Bible study group, the August 25 pre-project survey rated statement fourteen at 4.8. The post-project Bible study survey of November 3 rated the statement at 5.0. According to the Bible study survey, there was no significant change in the Bible study group’s attitude toward statement fourteen.

I believe statement fourteen was important to project C.A.R.E. in that it helped to remind the two groups that the Lord Jesus Christ is linked to creation. I believe that as Christians come to identify Christ with creation and as the Creator, there will be a greater appreciation for the care of the environment. As one member wrote on her October 6 survey, “We as the body of Christ could and ought to be doing more for creation care” (Appendix G). For both the congregation as well as the Bible study group, statement fourteen received very high positive ratings. This is encouraging for Cedar Spring Baptist’s future environmental stewardship endeavors.
Survey question fifteen: “‘Loving our neighbor as ourselves’ involves the care of the environment.” This survey statement appeared on the September 22 and 29 surveys. For both of the survey dates, the congregational response was 4.6. Congregational males responded 4.5 on both survey dates. Congregation females responded with a rating of 4.6 for September 22 and a 4.7 for September 29. The Bible study group gave a 4.3 rating for both survey dates. The congregational and Bible study ratings of statement fifteen remained high for the September 22 and 29 surveys.

Survey statement fifteen helped to show that the congregation and the Bible study group connected environmental stewardship with loving their neighbors. The response of “agree” to “strongly agree” for both groups provided encouraging feedback.

Survey statement sixteen: “Improving the standard of living for people should be a part of the church’s evangelistic efforts.” This survey statement was included in the September 22 and 29 surveys. For the congregational survey, a rating of 4.6 was received on both dates. The congregational males responded to this survey statement with a 4.5 rating for September 22 and 29. For congregation females, survey statement sixteen received a 4.6 response for both dates. For the Bible study group, the September 22 response was 4.3 and the September 29 response was 4.8.

I was encouraged by the overwhelming positive response to statement sixteen. One of my goals with project C.A.R.E. was to help the congregation and Bible study group see that the caring of physical needs should be a part of a church’s evangelistic outreach. As one of the congregational members included in her September 22 survey, “God created the earth. God created each of us. Therefore it is our responsibility as Christians to go and take care of what God gave us” (Appendix G).
Survey statement seventeen: “We glorify God by caring for his creation.” This statement appeared on the September 8 survey which was given to the congregation following the sermon entitled, “Creation Care: Seeing God’s Glory.” The congregational response to this statement was 4.8. The congregational male and female response to statement seventeen was 4.8. One congregation member wrote on his September 8 survey, “We have [an] obligation as Christians to take care of God’s creation. We [as] a church should be more involved as far as cleaning up the environment” (Appendix G).

The Bible study group also responded with a 4.8 following the Bible Study entitled, “Creation Care: Seeing God’s Glory.” These ratings represent an extremely high positive response to the idea that creation mirrors God’s glory. One Bible study participant wrote on her September 8 survey, “Each of us as Christians and non-Christians are responsible for keeping our Lord’s earth beautiful. It should be an honor and not a job. We are the recipients of God’s love for all of us and should return this love by our pride in his creation” (Appendix G). I believe that a group that see God’s glory in creation is a group that is more open to caring for the environment.

Tier Three Survey Statements

Survey statement eighteen: “God created the natural world as a witness to his glory.” This statement appeared on the September 8 congregational survey following a sermon about God’s glory witnessed in God’s creation. The congregational response to the statement eighteen was 4.8. The congregational male response was 4.7 and the congregational female response to statement eighteen was 4.9. On the September 8 congregational survey, one respondent wrote, “The creation was created and solely
designed by God. God had a plan from [that] day to make a beautiful place for us to live” (Appendix G).

Statement eighteen also appeared on the September 8 Bible study group survey. The Bible study group gave this statement a 5.0 rating. This was one of the highest ratings given by the Bible study group for a statement.

As I have already said before regarding other positive statements, I was very pleased with this snapshot of the congregation’s and Bible study’s attitude toward creation’s purpose. This response continues to affirm the goals of project C.A.R.E.

Survey statement nineteen: “God created every part of the natural world for a reason.” This statement appeared on the September 8 surveys following the “Creation Care: Seeing God’s Glory” sermon. The post-sermon congregational response to this statement was 4.9. The congregational male and female response was 4.9. One member of the congregation wrote on his September 8 survey, “I believe nature is a testament to God’s glory and power and has give[n] us the task of being stewards of the earth” (Appendix G).

For the Bible study group, survey statement nineteen followed the “Creation Care: Seeing God’s Glory” Bible study. The Bible study group rated this statement 4.6. Statement nineteen sparked some interesting discussion; especially when it came to the subject of mosquitos!

I was pleased with the responses to statement nineteen by both groups. I believe the positive response shows that the congregation and the Bible study group affirmed that God created all parts of creation for a reason. I believe this sentiment is a positive step in Cedar Spring Baptist’s commitment to creation care.
Survey statement twenty: “Since sin corrupted God’s original creation, the present world is of little value.” This statement appeared only on the congregational survey and Bible study survey of September 8. The congregational response to statement twenty received a 1.7 or a “disagree” to “strongly disagree rating.” Both congregational males and females rated this statement as 1.7. One congregational member wrote on her September 8 survey, “God created the world as a gift to us. We need to do everything we can to care for it” (Appendix G). The Bible study group gave this statement a 2 rating.

I was very pleased with the responses from the congregation and the Bible study group regarding statement twenty. I believe that too many evangelical Christians see the world as disposal and do not realize that this attitude contributes to the suffering of many around the world. If creation is viewed as having value, then it will be seen as worth saving.

Survey statement twenty-one read, “God created earth to be humanity’s home.” This survey statement appeared on the September 15 congregational survey that followed the post-sermon congregational discussion time. The sermon and the Bible study on September 15 were both titled, “Creation Care: Assuming Our Responsibility.” The sermon and the Bible study noted that God made the earth to be the home of humanity. The congregational response to the statement was 4.9. Congregational males gave statement twenty-one a 5.0 rating, and the congregational females gave it a 4.9 rating. A congregational member wrote on her September 15 survey, “God created the earth for us and we should take care of what God has given to us” (Appendix G). The Bible study group gave the statement a 4.8 rating. One Bible study participant wrote on her survey, “I think we are commanded to do our part and will be held accountable for what we haven’t
and have done” (Appendix G). This positive response to statement twenty-one shows that the respondents agreed with the thought that the earth was made by God to serve as humanity’s home. If this is our home, we should care for it.

Survey statement twenty-two: “God gave humanity the responsibility to care for the earth.” This statement appeared on the September 15 congregational and Bible study surveys. The congregational response to this statement was 4.8. The congregational male and female response to statement twenty-two was 4.8. A member of the congregation wrote on her September 15 survey, “I believe that God wants us to help take care of all the things he created” (Appendix G). The Bible study group responded with a 4.7 rating for this statement. The high rating was very encouraging for project C.A.R.E.

Survey statement twenty-three: “God would be pleased at how humanity has cared for the earth thus far.” This statement appeared only on the September 15 congregational and Bible study surveys. From the congregation, this statement received a 1.7 rating of “disagree” leaning towards “strongly disagree.” This statement received a rating of 1.9 from congregational males and a rating of 1.7 from congregational females. The Bible study group gave statement twenty-three a rating of 2.2 or an approaching “disagree” rating.

Statement twenty-three probably represents another area in project C.A.R.E. that needs additional work. Looking at this statement now, I feel the statement was somewhat manipulative. Who am I to say what pleases or displeases God? If I were doing this project over, I would remove this statement from the surveys or at least reword it.

Survey statement twenty-four: “It is of no real consequence if human activity causes various life forms to go extinct since humanity was given dominion over the earth
and one day God will usher in a new creation.” This statement appeared in the congregational and Bible study surveys on September 15. The congregational response to statement twenty-four was 1.8 or solidly in the “disagree” section. The congregational male response was 1.8 and the congregational female response was 1.6 or almost midway between “disagree” and “strongly disagree.”

The Bible study response to this statement was 2.3; a little less than half way between “disagree” and “no opinion.” I was a little surprised by this response. In the context of the larger Bible study, I do not believe this response reflects a digression from the group’s previous positive responses toward creation care. I do think that one contributing factor to this response is the reduced Bible study survey pool.

Unfortunately, a lot of Christians agree or even strongly agree with statement twenty-four. I believe that this statement, in context of project C.A.R.E., addresses this idea that creation is disposable. I am very pleased that this statement received a largely “disagree” response. The response helps to show that progress was made in through project C.A.R.E.

Survey statement twenty-five: “Not taking care of the environment is a sin.”
This statement appeared on the September 15 congregational and Bible study surveys. The congregational response to this statement was 3.8 or approaching “agree.” The congregational male response was 3.6 and the congregational female response was 4.1. I was surprised by these responses at the end of the second week of the project. I expected the congregational response to be a little higher. I was very surprised by the congregational male response. Throughout the project C.A.R.E., the congregational male response to the survey questions was trending more positive. I wish I had included this
statement on all the surveys and followed the male response throughout the course of project C.A.R.E.

The Bible study group’s response to statement twenty-five with a 4.5 rating. This rating was notable higher than the congregational response to the same statement. I believe this higher response by the Bible study group can be attributed to the teaching influence of the Bible study.

Though a little surprised by the response to statement twenty-five, I am overall pleased with the response. As I previously stated, statement twenty-five would have been a great statement to have included on all the others surveys. This statement addresses a subject that is not discussed in churches. Is it a sin to misuse the environment? I believe a majority of Christians have never considered this thought.

The three tiers of survey statements for the congregation as well as the Bible study were the heart of project C.A.R.E. Without this survey data, I believe it would have been very difficult to draw any substantial conclusions about the effectiveness of project C.A.R.E. I believe that the survey data supports the conclusion that project C.A.R.E. was successful in facilitating a positive creation care attitude at Cedar Spring Baptist Church.

**Post-Sermon Discussions Evaluation**

One of my project goals was to host two post-sermon discussion times. As previously described in week two (September 15-21) and in week four (September 29-October 5), I hosted a luncheon/post-sermon discussion on Sundays, September 15 and 29. Those who attended the morning worship services on these dates were invited to the
free luncheons in the church fellowship hall where the sermon topics of each of the morning services were discussed. In Appendix G, I have included a personal reflection of these discussion times. The following is a summary of the two post-sermon discussions.

First, the discussion times provided feedback from the congregation regarding the sermon series. From these two discussion times, I was reminded of the “newness” of this topic to the congregation. In both discussion sessions with the congregation, I heard many people comment that they did not realize that environmental stewardship was a biblical calling. In fact, I would say that the congregation as a whole had never heard this topic preached. Many seemed surprised that God valued creation.

Second, the discussion time showed me that I needed to proceed with care regarding the creation care topic. Whereas I have had many years to consider the biblical rationale for creation care, the congregation of Cedar Spring Baptist Church had only a few weeks. It reminded me not to be frustrated if creation care concepts were not readily accepted or adopted by the congregation.

Third, the discussion times reminded me that as a pastor I needed to be diligent in providing a sound theological foundation for creation care. The discussion times provided an opportunity for those opposed to a biblical based approach to environmental stewardship to voice their thoughts. Several of the participants felt that the issue was too politically connected. The discussion time reminded me of the importance of presenting a solid theological foundation for environmental stewardship. If Christians from both sides of the political aisle are to address environmental issues together, then the theological justification must transcend politics. To be effective, creation care must be biblically based.
Fourth, the discussion times showed me that the Cedar Spring Baptist congregation could be open to additional creation care initiatives. I believe the discussion times reinforced what was noted in the congregational and Bible study surveys. Cedar Spring Baptist as a whole has a positive view of creation care. Though there are some who oppose the church’s involvement in any environmental issue, the overwhelming majority appears to be supportive of biblically based environmental stewardship. I believe that the discussion times show that Cedar Spring Baptist Church would be open to mission efforts that were both environmental and evangelical. I believe Cedar Spring Baptist would be willing to adopt more environmentally friendly practices as a church. It was encouraging to hear the congregation verbally voicing its support for creation care. I believe that a solid creation care foundation has been laid for environmental stewardship efforts beyond project C.A.R.E.

Fifth, I believe the discussion times helped to connect the congregation as a whole to the subject of creation care. It was easy for me to forget that the congregation did not have access to the survey data as I did. The congregation could not see that the majority of those responding to the surveys had an overwhelming positive attitude toward creation care. But when the congregation gathered together to discuss the topic, it was clear that the topic had broad support. I believe the discussion times could embolden those who emerge from project C.A.R.E. with a strong conviction about biblically based environmental stewardship. I would not be surprised to see in the future certain individuals coming forward with creation care ideas for Cedar Spring Baptist.

Sixth, the discussion times helped to remind the congregation of God’s promise to redeem creation. I was surprised by the number of comments that were related to how
one day God would restore creation to the way it was in the beginning. Several
mentioned how they were looking forward to the day when God would make all things
news. Creation’s restoration was closely linked to the Messianic rule of Christ.

Lastly, I would say that the discussion times were beneficial to myself as a pastor.
The discussion times showed me that I could use the basic framework of project C.A.R.E.
to address a vast number of other biblical subjects. It was encouraging to see the
congregation coalesce around the creation care topic in the discussion times. As I move
beyond project C.A.R.E., there are other issues that I would like to address in a similar
fashion.

I am very confident that the congregational discussion times were a success for
project C.A.R.E. These discussion opportunities provided vital feedback for the project
as well as for my ministry. I believe that I successfully met this project goal.

**Cedar Spring Baptist’s Recycling Program Evaluation**

As reported earlier in this report, I was able to implement a recycling program for
outdated Sunday School literature, devotionals, and Bibles in week one of project
C.A.R.E. and a recycling program for used bulletins, sermon notes, etc., in week two.
Though I do not anticipate these recycling programs to collect vast quantities of
materials, I believe they are important first steps for Cedar Spring. The recycle bins are a
constant reminder that everyone can do their part in recycling. And maybe even more
important, these bins represent that Cedar Spring Baptist Church is helping with creation
care. I believe that I have achieved this goal for project C.A.R.E.
Cedar Spring Baptist’s Energy Usage Survey Evaluation

For the church’s energy usage survey, I was not very pleased with my progress toward this goal. The two main ideas that would reduce Cedar Spring Baptist’s energy usage, installing a central control panel for the heating/air units and changing the interior lighting from T12 florescent bulbs to more efficient T8 bulbs, were viewed as cost prohibitive. Though these changes would have reduced the church’s energy usage and costs over the long run, the cost to implement these changes was considered too much. The Properties Committee was not opposed to the thought of reducing energy usage. However, there were more pressing issues such as a new roof needed for the courtyard’s covered walkway, structural repairs to the church steeple, and an overdue painting for the church’s exterior. I believe I at least achieved my goal by identifying two major energy saving changes. A brief summary regarding the September 11, 2013, Properties Committee meeting is included in Appendix E.

Cedar Spring Baptist’s Creation Care Clean-Up Day Evaluation

As part of my project goals, I arranged for a creation care work day for Cedar Spring Baptist Church. Originally scheduled for October 5, an opportunity arose that the church could join the local Ruritan Club to clean up the local area near the church on Saturday, September 21, beginning at 8:00 A.M. To help attendance, I advertised that a free breakfast would be provided at the church. For weeks, this clean-up day was advertised in the bulletin, sermon notes, and PowerPoint announcements. Unfortunately, only seven members of the church participated in the event. The participants ranged in
age from their 50’s to their 80’s. The clean-up day lasted approximately two hours. Numerous bags of trash were collected.

The clean-up day participants were surveyed (Appendix C). The creation care clean-up day survey included different statements than the surveys given to the Cedar Spring Baptist congregation and the Bible study groups. This survey was meant to evaluate the attitudes of the participants related to the clean-up day. Listed below is a brief summary of the clean-up day survey statements and the average response of the participants.

Clean-up day survey statement one: “As a member of Cedar Spring community, Cedar Spring Baptist has a responsibility for the care and beautification of the community.” Statement rating: 4.9.

Clean-up day survey statement two: “Creation care work days help the public image of Cedar Spring Baptist.” Statement rating: 4.6.

Clean-up day survey statement three: “Creation care work days are helpful in teaching people the importance of creation care.” Statement rating: 4.4.

Clean-up day survey statement four: “Creation care work days are helpful in teaching others about the Lord Jesus Christ.” Statement rating: 4.7.

Clean-up day survey statement five: “Creation care work days have the potential of attracting people to Cedar Spring Baptist.” Statement rating: 4.4.

Clean-up day survey statement six: “Cedar Spring Baptist should host a quarterly creation care cleanup day.” Statement rating: 4.6.

Clean-up day survey statement seven: “The church’s time could be better spent on projects other than creation care work days.” Statement rating: 1.9.
Clean-up day survey statement eight: “Today’s work day has encouraged me to personally do more to care for God’s creation.” Statement rating: 4.4.

Clean-up day survey statement nine: “Christians have a responsibility to care for God’s creation.” Statement rating: 4.7.

Clean-up day survey statement ten: “I would volunteer for another creation care work day.” Statement rating: 4.6.

Clean-up day survey statement eleven: “Jesus Christ is seen through creation.” Statement rating: 5.0.

Clean-up day survey statement twelve: “Caring for the environment is an important component of missions.” Statement rating: 4.9.

Clean-up day survey statement thirteen: “We glorify God by caring for His creation.” Statement rating: 4.7.

I believe the survey results show that the creation care clean-up day was viewed very positively. No comments were included on the survey. However, those who participated in the work day appeared to enjoy the fellowship and the knowledge that they had helped beautify the grounds around the church. I am not sure what I could have done to persuade more people to participate. But I am thankful for the seven that did attend this event. I believe that I successfully met this goal.

Cedar Spring Baptist’s Creation Care Information Center Evaluation

I was surprised at the lack of a response that I had to the creation care information center. Not very many of the publications, if any at all, were taken from the center. I am not sure if it was the lack of interest for the publications that were displayed or a lack of
interest for the subject matter. The creation care center was publicized in the bulletin each week. I can think of no better location for the center than at the main entrance to the sanctuary from the Sunday School hallway. Regardless of the reason, the creation care center was not utilized. I believe this goal was successful in that I did at least provide the opportunity for additional environmental stewardship information.

Cedar Spring Baptist’s Community Garden Evaluation

I was very excited to explore the possibility of a community garden at Cedar Spring Baptist Church. I believe it would be very beneficial to the local community for Cedar Spring Baptist to host a community garden that could teach people about gardening, provide fresh vegetables to the community, and be a witness for Christ. At first, I thought about making the garden a strictly organic garden. However, after much consideration, I decided that an organic garden would be cost prohibitive if not impossible given the site. It is my opinion that a low-input garden where chemical pesticides and fertilizers were used at a minimum would be the best option. As part of my goal for this portion of my project, I developed a preliminary layout and a very basic start-up cost analysis for the community garden (Appendix E).

As I mentioned in my week four (September 29-October 5) report, I met with the Master Gardener Coordinator of the Spartanburg Office of the Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service to discuss the possibility of a community garden. Issues that we identified as important to the garden’s success were a good water source, amount of direct sunlight, and the growing medium for the plants. With lots of work, the old tennis court could potentially serve as a good community garden.
There were numerous issues to consider in implementing a community garden. First, the start-up costs would be significant. The major cost would be the garden’s raised beds. For example, according to cost estimates that I collected from a local home improvement store, to construct a thirty-six inch deep, four foot wide, twelve foot long raise bed out of treated lumber would cost approximately $200.00. This cost does not take into consideration the cost of the growing medium to be placed in each bed.

A second consideration would be volunteers. A community garden is a big undertaking. Ideally, I would like to have a garden coordinator who monitors the garden, coordinates the volunteers, and distributes the produce. I believe a retired individual who had a passion for gardening and ministry would be ideal for this task. We would also need church volunteers who could help construct the garden site. I believe it would be beneficial to create a Garden Committee at Cedar Spring Baptist.

A third consideration is community involvement. The purpose of the community garden is ultimate community outreach. However, such outreach must be well organized. We would need to determine the criteria for those outside the church to participate in the garden. Issues of liability would also need to be discussed.

I believe that the church would be very supportive of a community garden. One member of the congregation wrote on her September 22 survey, “Community gardens! Each church should have one” (Appendix G). However, I also believe that such an undertaking would need substantial church-wide support. A community garden would be a tremendous undertaking. With this in mind, I have pushed back my goal of beginning the garden to 2015 or beyond. However, I do feel confident that I was able to successfully meet this project goal in evaluating the potential of a community garden.
Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.” Revelation 21:1-3 NIV

In November 1994, I was working in Haiti when Tropical Storm Gordon tracked across Haiti. In a twenty-four hour period, the storm dropped fourteen inches of rain on the country. During the storm, I was at the mission’s house in Port-au-Prince. Though the rain was prolonged and heavy, I did not think much of it. In fact, that evening I joined some friends at a restaurant in Petion-Ville. I later learned that while I was enjoying a nice meal at a French restaurant, people were dying in floods and mudslides largely attributed to the deforested hillsides. In all, over 1100 people died in Haiti as a result of Tropical Storm Gordon.52 While I enjoyed the benefits of being from an industrialized, prosperous country, people in Haiti were dying because of environmental degradation. Project C.A.R.E. is the culmination of many years of personal experience and thought on the subject of creation care.

Overall, I believe that project C.A.R.E. was very successful at Cedar Spring Baptist Church. Through project C.A.R.E., I believe I was able to achieve my theological, informational, and pragmatic goals. Regarding my theological goals, I feel that the four-week creation care sermon series and the creation care Bible study were

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overall very successful. From the quantitative and the qualitative data received from the post-sermon and post-Bible study surveys and the two post-sermon discussion times, the response to the theological aspects of project C.A.R.E. was very positive and encouraging. I believe that the data and the feedback suggest that project C.A.R.E. was successful in both creating and reinforcing a positive response to creation care. I think that the sermons and the Bible study lessons will cause the members of Cedar Spring Baptist to see and understand the Bible’s creation related passages in a new way. I cannot see how the response to project C.A.R.E. could have been any better. Granted, I do not believe Cedar Spring Baptist Church is ready to be the flagship church for a Baptist environmental movement. However, I do believe that project C.A.R.E. has at least created a theological foundation at Cedar Spring Baptist where biblically based creation care events or projects can be successfully undertaken in the future.

Although I experienced major setbacks with the Bible study group, I believe it was still a successful theological experience. Even though more participants would have made the Bible Study survey results more reliable, I believe that the study was a rewarding experience for the participants. I enjoyed watching the group members as they grew in their understanding of the subject. On a deeper level, the Bible study helped the participants to connect scriptures to the creation care concepts. From my interactions with the Bible study participants, I have heard wonderful comments about the study.

My second goal for project C.A.R.E. was to educate the congregation on how the lack of environmental stewardship adversely affects human life. I thought it was important for Cedar Spring Baptist to understand how millions suffer daily as a result of environmental mismanagement. To achieve this goal, I used bulletin inserts, sermon
illustrations, and verbal communication to cite stories of people affected by environmental degradation. I communicated the same stories to both the congregation and the Bible study group. I cited the devastating impact of Tropical storm Jeanne on Haiti in 2004, how today 1.1 billion people living sub-Saharan African and South Asia do not have access to clean water, and the ongoing environmental disaster of the Aral Sea near Uzbekistan. I also used these same communication avenues to cite examples of how Christians were using environmental stewardship as a way to minister to the suffering. I highlighted the CBF’s clean water initiative as well as how First Baptist Church of Austin, Texas, raised money to dig wells in Ethiopia. My goal was to inform Cedar Spring Baptist of the environmental realities of the world and how we could potentially help make a difference.

Regarding my informational goals, I believe I was successful in drawing attention to the harsh realities that people face on a daily basis due to environmental degradation. I wish I had more time to cite more examples. However, I do believe the few examples I did cite were good for communicating the dire situation of millions. I also think I was successful in communicating how Christian organizations were attempting to address environmental issues. From the reactions I received from the congregation and the Bible study group about the cited environmental disasters, it was apparent that they were surprised to be so uninformed about such events.

My third goal for project C.A.R.E. was to help Cedar Spring Baptist to identify practical steps, procedures, and habits to personally address creation care. My hope is that through project C.A.R.E., Cedar Spring Baptist would take practical steps to reduce its carbon footprint, curb its impact on the environment, and take a more active role in
keeping the local community environment clean. Through project C.A.R.E., my goal was to implement five creation care steps.

The first step was to begin a recycling program. As previously described, I was able to begin a recycling program through project C.A.R.E. for outdated church study materials and used bulletins. Though this was a small step, I believe it has opened the door to additional recycling opportunities for the future.

The second step was to evaluate Cedar Spring Baptist’s energy usage. As I described earlier in the report, though two important energy saving items were identified, the implementation of these steps proved too cost prohibitive. Though we were successful in identifying what we needed to do, we were not successful in implementing the changes.

The third step was to host a creation care clean-up day. Although the September clean-up day was not well attended, I believe those who participated enjoyed it. From the survey results and comments of the participants, I believe the day was successful.

The fourth step was to create a creation care information center. Though placed in one of the main hallways of the church, this creation care information center was not very successful. Very few, if any, of the publications were taken. I succeeded in providing the information center but was not successful in convincing people to utilize it.

The fifth and final step was to evaluate the potential of beginning a community organic garden at Cedar Spring. As previously discussed, I decided that a low input garden would be more cost effective than an organic garden. From my discussions with the Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service and my own evaluation as a former agronomist, specific recommendations were identified for the community garden.
However, the evaluation revealed that a community garden would need lots of coordination and financial backing. This is a project that could not be implemented at Cedar Spring Baptist in the spring of 2014. Regardless, I feel that the evaluation was successful.

Though I believe project C.A.R.E. had a positive impact on Cedar Spring Baptist Church, I believe I was personally impacted by project C.A.R.E. as well. First, project C.A.R.E. has helped me as a minister. Project C.A.R.E. has given me the confidence and the courage to explore new and innovative forms of ministry. If I can successfully conduct an environmental stewardship emphasis in a conservative Baptist church, I believe I can tackle other important biblically based issues as well.

Second, I believe project C.A.R.E. has impacted me in my own personal journey with the Lord. Project C.A.R.E. has reminded me of the beauty of God’s world and his love for it. The project has helped to bring alive the biblical text. Even though I have always felt God was revealed in nature, I feel that project C.A.R.E. helped me to grow in how I personally view the scriptures related to creation.

And lastly, I believe project C.A.R.E. has heightened my concern for those in the world who are daily facing the struggles of environmental degradation. As I type these final words, I am aware that in many parts of this world, people are suffering this day needlessly. It is my prayer that God would help me to do my part in alleviating the pain of others.

May the God who made heaven and earth be glorified.
APPENDIX A

CONGREGATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Appendix A contains samples of bulletin communications, the project C.A.R.E. logo, newsletter communications, Wednesday prayer luncheon communications, and PowerPoint congregational announcements.
Would you like to be a part of Rev. Todd Lowe’s graduate project? Todd is looking for 8-10 people to be part of a 1-2 hour Bible study on the subject of creation care. This four week Bible study will be held each Sunday afternoon during the month of September beginning on September 8th at 3:00 p.m. If you would like more information, please fill out the contact information below. You can return this form to Todd, place it in the door of his office, or return it in the offertory plate.

Name: ____________________________________________

Phone: ___________________________________________

Email: ___________________________________________
Beginning Sunday, September 8th, Rev. Todd Lowe will begin a four week sermon series on the subject of creation care. This series will focus on how the care for God's creation is part of God's greater work of redemption. Please join us!
Cedar Spring Baptist Church
Project C.A.R.E. Bulletin Announcements

September 8, 2013
New Sermon Series: Beginning today, Rev. Todd Lowe will begin a four week sermon series on the subject of creation care. This series will focus on how the care of God’s creation is part of God’s greater work of redemption. Please join us!

FREE Church Luncheon! As part of Rev. Lowe’s graduate project and sermon series on creation care, there will be two post-sermon discussions on the Sunday, September 15th and 29th immediately following the morning service. A free luncheon will be provided for both discussions. For Sept. 15th, the menu will be BBQ sandwiches, baked beans, slaw, chips, and dessert. Come for the worship and stay for lunch!

Creation Care Clean Up Day: Saturday, September 21st at 8:00 a.m. Please join us as we clean-up the Carolina Country Road and place around the spring and the church. Breakfast will be provided.

September 15, 2013
Current Sermon Series: Rev. Todd Lowe continues today with a sermon series on the subject of creation care. This series will focus on how the care of God’s creation is part of God’s greater work of redemption.

FREE BBQ Luncheon: As part of Rev. Lowe’s graduate project and sermon series on creation care, there will be a post-sermon discussions immediately following the morning service. The menu will be BBQ sandwiches, baked beans, slaw, chips, and dessert. A second luncheon discussion will be on September 29th. Come for the worship and stay for lunch!

September 22, 2013
Current Sermon Series: Rev. Todd Lowe continues today with a sermon series on the subject of creation care. This series will focus on how the care of God’s creation is part of God’s greater work of redemption.

FREE Luncheon! As part of Rev Lowe’s sermon series on creation care, there will be post-sermon discussion immediately following the morning service next Sunday, September 29th. Come for the worship and stay for lunch!

September 29, 2013
Current Sermon Series: Rev. Todd Lowe continues today with a sermon series on the subject of creation care. This series will focus on how the care of God’s creation is part of God’s greater work of redemption.
FREE Luncheon Today! As part of Rev. Lowe’s sermon series on creation care, there will be post-sermon discussion immediately following the morning service. The menu will be: homemade chili, loaded baked potato, and brownies with ice cream.
Cedar Spring Baptist Church  
Project C.A.R.E. Announcements  
Wednesday Prayer Luncheons

Wednesday, August 28, 2013  
**Creation Care Sermon Series:** Begins Sunday, September 8th during morning worship service.

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Wednesday, September 11, 2013  
**Creation Care Sermon Series:** Continues Sunday during morning worship service.  
**FREE Church Luncheon:** Sunday, September 15th following morning service. Menu: BBQ, baked beans, coleslaw, chips, and dessert. This will be a discussion time regarding Sunday’s sermon on Creation Care.

**Creation Care Clean Up Day:** Saturday, September 21st at 8:00 a.m. We will be cleaning up Carolina Country Club Road and the area around the church and the spring. Breakfast will be provided.

**Creation Care Information Center:** Be sure to check out the Creation Care information center beside the sink in the educational hallway.

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Wednesday, September 18, 2013  
**Creation Care Sermon Series:** Continues Sunday during morning worship service.  
**FREE Church Luncheon:** Sunday, September 28th following morning service. Menu: TBA. This will be a discussion time regarding Sunday’s sermon on Creation Care.

**Creation Care Clean Up Day:** Saturday, September 21st at 8:00 a.m. We will be cleaning up Carolina Country Club Road and the area around the church and the spring. Breakfast will be provided.

**Creation Care Information Center:** Be sure to check out the Creation Care information center beside the sink in the educational hallway.

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Wednesday, September 25, 2013  
**Creation Care Sermon Series:** Continues Sunday during morning worship service.  
**FREE Church Luncheon:** THIS Sunday, September 29th following morning service. Menu: Chili, baked potatoes, and dessert. This will be a discussion time regarding Sunday’s sermon on Creation Care.
**Creation Care Recycling:** Please recycle your old Sunday School books, devotional books, Bibles, music, and related materials by placing them in the recycle bin beside the choir room. Also, there will be recycle bins in the vestibule for old bulletins and sermon notes.

**Creation Care Information Center:** Be sure to check out the Creation Care information center beside the sink in the educational hallway.
Creation Care Sermon Series Starts today!

Please complete your sermon survey before leaving today.
Cedar Spring Baptist Church
Project C.A.R.E. PowerPoint Announcements
September 8, 2013 (Continued)

FREE BBQ Luncheon
Sunday, September 15th

Creation Care Cleanup Day
Saturday, Sept. 21 at 8:00 a.m.
Creation Care Bible Study
Today at 2:00 p.m.
Creation Care Sermon Series continues today!

BBQ Luncheon in the Fellowship Hall following today’s service
Cedar Spring Baptist Church
Project C.A.R.E. PowerPoint Announcements
September 15, 2013 (Continued)

Creation Care Cleanup Day
Saturday, Sept. 21 at 8:00 a.m.
Cedar Spring Baptist Church
Project C.A.R.E. PowerPoint Announcements
September 22, 2013

Creation Care Sermon Series continues today!

Luncheon in the Fellowship Hall following next Sunday’s service
Today’s Sermon Topic:
Creation Care: Engaging Justice
Cedar Spring Baptist Church
Project C.A.R.E. PowerPoint Announcements
September 29, 2013

Creation Care Sermon Series concludes today!

Today’s Sermon Topic: Creation Care: Anticipating Redemption
FREE luncheon in the Fellowship Hall following today’s service

Today’s Menu:
Homemade chili, loaded baked potato, and brownies with ice cream
Cedar Spring Baptist Church
Project C.A.R.E. PowerPoint Announcements
September 29, 2013 ( Continued )

Please recycle your old Sunday School books, devotional books, Bibles, music, & related materials by placing them in the recycle bin beside the choir room.

Please recycle your unwanted bulletins and bulletin inserts in the recycle bins in the vestibule and beside the sink in the Sunday School hallway.
APPENDIX B

BIBLE STUDIES AND RELATED MATERIALS

Appendix B contains samples of Bible study group communications, Bible study one, Bible study two, Bible study three, and Bible study four.
August 25, 2013

Greetings!

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in the creation care Bible study! Words cannot express how much I appreciate your help. I think you will enjoy the creation care Bible study and the discussion it generates.

The Bible study is four weeks long. It will be held on Sunday afternoons from 2:00-3:30 p.m. September 8, 15, 22, and 29. PLEASE plan to attend all four Bible studies. If you miss a Sunday, it will impact the data I am able to collect and use for my project.

Each Sunday we will meet and discuss the creation care subject of the week. You will have an opportunity to write answers in a Bible study workbook. At the end of each Bible study, you will be asked to complete a survey. Your workbook and survey responses will be anonymous. Your identity will be kept confidential as related to the data collected for this project. No effort will be made to discover or disclose your identity regarding your answers. For the purposes of the Bible study, you will be assigned a number. This number will be placed on your surveys and in your Bible study workbook. This number will be used to ensure that your responses are anonymous as I refer to your surveys and Bible study responses in my report. This number will be assigned to you by a third party facilitator within our group so that I will not be able to identify you by your responses.
There are no tests. There are no right or wrong answers. The project seeks to measure the perception of the creation care at Cedar Spring Baptist Church. I will be looking at how that perception changes or does not change as a result of the Bible study and sermon series on creation care. This is why it is so very important that you are completely honest in your responses. Do not base your responses on what you think I would want to hear.

During the worship services on September 8, 15, 22, and 29, I will be preaching in the morning worship service on the subject of creation care. At the end of each service, a survey will be collected from the congregation. Because you are part of the Bible study group and your survey responses are cataloged, please do not complete any surveys at the end of any of the services. If you do, you will be double surveyed which can potentially affect the survey results.

I hope you will have fun in this Bible study. I believe that you will be enriched by it. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at XXX-XXXXX or email me at XXXXXXXX.

Thanks,

Todd Lowe
August 25, 2013

Creation Care Bible Study Group:

Again, thank you for your help with my graduate project!

Please complete the attached survey before you leave church this morning. Once completed, please give your survey to XXXX XXXXX. Please do not take the survey that is in the bulletin.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Todd
Bible Study One

“Creation Care: Seeing God’s Glory”

Psalm 19:1-4 NIV

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. 3 They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. 4 Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

Just think about it...

One of NASA’s most celebrated space ventures was the 1990 launch of the Hubble Space Telescope. From its orbit around the earth, Hubble has the ability to take high resolution photos of deep space without the light interference experience by earth-bound telescopes. The telescope has allowed astronomers to see stars in the universe never before seen by human eyes. However, even with its great capabilities, Hubble can only see the smallest fraction of the stars in the heavens.

According to a Yale University study, the estimated number of stars in the universe is 300 sextillion or the number “3” followed by twenty-three zeros. To help us grasp the significance of this number, consider the study by the University of Hawaii to estimate the number of grains of sand on all the beaches of the world. According to this research, there are approximately seven quintillion five quadrillion grains of sand on all the world’s beaches. This is the number “7.5” followed by eighteen zeros. Using the numbers generated from these two studies, we can say that for approximately every grain of sand on the beaches, there are 40,000 stars in the universe. Just think, we cannot even see one grain’s worth of stars in a clear night sky!

In Psalms 147:4, the Psalmist wrote, “He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.” The vastness of God’s universe, the number of stars that God placed in the heavens, and the assertion that God has named every star, gives praise, honor and glory to God. This Bible study will focus on how the glory of God found in creation is a basis for caring for the environment.
I. The Glory of God is Revealed through Creation

God is the Creator. God is the One who made all the things; the stars we see, the flowers we smell, the fruits we taste, the cool breeze we feel, the songbirds we hear. God as Creator is not an ancient name relegated only to the beginning of time. On the contrary, God the Creator is actively engaged in His world. It is through God’s creation that God’s glory is daily revealed and displayed for all to see. Each day, creation gives testimony to the greatness of God through a countless number of activities. From the billowing nebulas that are light years away to the tiny bumblebees collecting pollen, every act of creation proclaims the glory of the Lord. In Psalm 19:3-4, the Psalmist wrote, “They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” Creation in motion glorifies the One who made it.

Group Discussion

1. Read Genesis 1:1-8. How was the glory of God revealed in the days one and two creation narrative? As we view the activities of the created world today, how can the glory of God be observed?

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2. Read Psalm 104:10-28. How is God continuously active in his creation? How does this activity show us his glory? What does creation tell us about the one who created it?

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II. The Glory of God Gives Creation Value

The created universe is a glorious testimony to the personhood of God. Like a flashing billboard all around us, creation give testimony that there is a Creator. Because creation is a beacon that points us toward the glory of God, it has value. There is not one thing in all of creation that was not originally created by God. From the flowering cactus in the desert to the mysterious sea creatures of the deepest ocean, all were created to be a source of praise to the name of the Lord. In communicating the words of the Lord, the prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 45:8, “You heavens above, rain down my righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness flourish with it; I, the Lord, have created it.” Only God has the power to create. Yes, humanity can refashion aspects of creation into different forms, but only God can make something from nothing. Creation has value because God alone made it.

Group Discussion

1. Read Nehemiah 9:6. According to this passage, what is the purpose of creation? How does creation’s purpose give it value?

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2. Read Genesis 1:3, 1:10, 1:12, 1:18, 1:21, 1:25, and 1:31. How does God’s “good” creation give him glory? If creation is good and glorifies God, does creation care glorify God? Why or why not?

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III. The Glory of God in Creation Points to Christ

The glory of God that is displayed in creation leads humanity toward the personhood of God through whom creation was made; the Lord Jesus Christ. In identifying Christ as the Creator, the Apostle John wrote in John 1:1-3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” Christ is the human embodiment of the Creator. Every aspect of creation is a testimony to Christ through who the universe was made. Romans 1:20 tells us, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.” The glory of creation is a testimony to Christ the Creator.

Group Discussion

1. Read Hebrews 1:1-3. How is God glorified through Christ the Son as Creator?

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2. Read Colossians 1:15-16. If Christ is affirmed by Scripture as the Creator, what should be our responsibility as Christ-followers to the world he created? How do we glorify Christ through the creation he made?

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IV. The Glory of God leads us to Creation Care

If creation displays God’s glory, if everything in creation has a God-derived value, and if the glory of creation points us toward the Lord Jesus Christ, it is reasonable to assume that creation care should be an important part of a believer’s life. May we always remember that humankind itself is a valuable part of God’s glorious work. Humanity is the pinnacle of God’s creation. And as Genesis 1:28ff gives testimony, God has entrusted the care of his created world to humanity. God has given humankind the privilege of caring for natural world that testifies to His very existence. In essences, humanity has been given the responsibility to care for the elements of creation that glorifies Christ our Savior as the Creator. Creation is a blessed sanctuary from which the praises of God imamate. God’s mandate to care for his creation has never been removed. Humankind is still responsible for the care of God’s creation.

Group Discussion

1. Read Genesis 1:27-31. From this passage, how did God want the first humans to care for creation? Thinking about this mandate from God, how are we to care for creation today?

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2. Read Genesis 2:8-9. According to the Genesis narrative, why did God prepare a garden for the first humans? Read Genesis 2:15. What was Adam’s responsibility in this garden? From these verses, are there any lessons we can learn regarding creation care in the world today?

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Photo from Office.com Clip Art
In Job 38, we are given the Lord response to Job’s complaint against him. As you hear this Scripture, consider how creation reveals God’s glory.

Job 38:1-41

Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm. He said: 2 Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? 3 Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. 4 “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. 5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? 6 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone— 7 while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? 8 “Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, 9 when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, 10 when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, 11 when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt?’ 12 “Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, 13 that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it? 14 The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment. 15 The wicked are denied their light, and their upraised arm is broken. 16 “Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? 17 Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the deepest darkness? 18 Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this. 19 “What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? 20 Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings? 21 Surely you know, for you were already born. You have lived so many years! 22 “Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail, 23 which I reserve for times of trouble, for days of war and battle? 24 What is the way to the place where the lightning is dispersed, or the place where the east winds are scattered over the earth? 25 Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain, and a path for the thunderstorm, 26 to water a land where no one lives, an uninhabited desert, 27 to satisfy a desolate wasteland and make it sprout with grass? 28 Does the rain have a father? Who fathers the drops of dew? 29 From whose womb comes the ice? Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens 30 when the waters become hard as stone, when the surface of the deep is frozen? 31 “Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades? Can you loosen Orion’s belt? 32 Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? 33 Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God’s dominion over the earth? 34 “Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water? 35 Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, ‘Here we are’? 36 Who gives the ibis wisdom or gives the rooster understanding? 37 Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens 38 when the dust becomes hard and the clods of earth stick together? 39 “Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions 40 when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in a thicket? 41 Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food?
1. As you listened to God’s response to Job, what thoughts came to mind?

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2. How did God reveal his glory to Job through his response?

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3. As you listened to Job 38, did you sense that God cares for His creation? Why or why not?

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4. Does this passage influence your perception of Christ as the Creator? As a follower of Christ, does this passage influence your attitude toward creation care? Why or why not?

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There are many places in the world that are suffering as a result of a lack of environmental stewardship. One such place is the country of Haiti. Haiti is slightly smaller than the state of Maryland but has a population of 9.9 million people. Eighty percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Fifty-four percent lives in abject poverty. One of the most devastating human-made environmental problems facing Haiti is deforestation. In 1492 when Christopher Columbus landed on the northwestern shores of the island of Hispaniola, Haiti was heavily forested. Today, 98% of the Haitian forests are gone. From crop production to timber exports to making cooking charcoal, Haiti’s forests are now virtually gone. Unfortunately, the deforestation of Haiti has had a devastating effect on the Haitian people. With no trees covering the land, much of the already shallow tropical topsoil has washed away. There is little soil to absorb the torrential rains that frequent Haiti. This has led to regular flash-flooding. In 2004, Tropical storm Jeanne caused a flood that killed approximately 3,000 mostly near the town of Gonaives. The eroded soil leaves very little behind for farmers to raise crops. Many of the farmers of Haiti are subsistence farmers whose families rely on the food they can produce. According to a recent study, Haiti is the nation most at risk of rising sea levels, floods, and climate change. Much of Haiti today lives in misery because of the unsustainable pressures placed on the environment.

But even in a desperate place like Haiti, God’s glory is still evident in creation. The breathtaking sunsets, the tropical beaches, and the rolling mountains all praise the name of the Lord. But creation is suffering and thus is causing suffering among the Haitian people. As Christians seek to minister to the needs of Haiti, efforts must be made to address the environmental problems that cause so much suffering. Only through a commitment to creation care can Haiti begin to emerge from its environmental disaster. When we take care of God’s glorious creation, we take care of ourselves and our fellow human beings.
Notes


Bible Study Two

“Creation Care: Assuming Our Responsibility”

Genesis 1:27-28

27 So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

Just think about it...

The world that God created is filled with many different forms of life. According to scientist, there are ~8.7 million different species (plus or minus 1.3 million) living on earth. A species represents a plant or animal that has traits and characteristics that set it apart from other forms of life. On this planet there are millions of different types of fish, birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, plants, etc. All of these are part of the earth’s biological treasure.

The importance of each and every species of life cannot be underestimated. Consider medicine research. From wild species, humankind has developed medicines: penicillin to treat infections, aspirin to reveal pain, Taxol for use in cancer chemotherapy, and Quinine to prevent malaria. Forty percent of humanity’s medicines originate from plant and animal species. Scientist are only beginning to unlock the potential medical use of the world’s plant and animal life. However, when we allow a species to go extinction, we forever lose the potential benefit that species could have held for humanity.

God created this world. He put each species here for a purpose. But God also gave the responsibility for the care of this world to humankind. The Psalmist in Psalm 115:16 wrote, “The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to mankind.” When humanity does not properly care for God’s creation, not only does creation suffer, humankind suffers. The species that appears unimportant may hold the biggest blessings for humanity. This Bible study will focus on how humankind has a God-given call to care for creation.
I. **Humanity is Part of God’s Created World**

Each year, the United States becomes more urbanized. In 1910, 45.6% of the U.S. population lived in an urban setting. However, by 2010, this number had increased to 80.7%. The migration away from the rural setting has created a distance between people and the natural world. More and more people are forgetting their connection to the earth. But as the Bible gives testimony, humanity is an intricate part of creation. In the first and second chapters of the Genesis narrative, we read how the creation of humanity took place within the context of God’s greater creative work. In the same way that the final piece of a puzzle completes a picture, God’s creation of humanity completed God’s creative work for the earth. And as a part of creation, humanity should never forget that whatever affects the environment also affects us. Through God’s design, humanity is part of His created world.

**Group Discussion**

1. Read Ecclesiastes 3:18-20. What connection did Solomon make between humanity and the rest of creation?

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2. Read Romans 8:18-22. Read Genesis 3:17-19. How has humanity’s connection with creation adversely affected it?

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II. God’s World is Humanity’s Home

Planet Earth is the home for humanity. No other planet in our solar system or the known universe can sustain life. So far (9/2013), astronomers have discovered 942 planets orbiting other stars. However, not one of these planets is believed to be able to sustain human life. But even if one of these distant planets were a “second Earth,” the great distance separating the two worlds would be impossible to cross. In Isaiah 45:18, the prophet Isaiah wrote, “…he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited…” It was God’s will in the beginning that planet Earth would be humanity’s home. According to the Genesis creation account, God spent five days tailor-making a home for the first human beings. God sought to create a world that would provide for all the needs of the man and woman. And this world that God created will be our home until God draws time to a conclusion.

Group Discussion

1. Acts 14:8-20 chronicles the account of Paul and Barnabas in the city of Lystra. Read Acts 14:15-17. From this passage, how had God sustained the earthly home for humanity?

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2. If God has created the earth to be the earthly home for humanity, what responsibility should we bear for its care? Read Psalm 24:1-2. What does this passage say about our earthly home?

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III. The God/Humanity Creation Care Partnership

As part of God’s creation, as ones who make their home in God’s created world, human beings have been called into a “creation care partnership” with the Lord. God has given humanity the opportunity and responsibility of helping him care for the earth. For example, in the Law, God gave the Jewish people various creation care instructions. Regarding the working of animals, God said in Leviticus 23:12, “Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest…” Though this passage is set in the context of the Sabbath observance by the Jewish people, it reminds us that God has set limits on the durability and renewability of creation. Over time, animals become weary from too much work, soils become depleted from too much farming, fish populations drop from overfishing, forests disappear from over harvesting, etc. But, as the Scriptures give testimony, God has given humanity the responsibility of managing earth’s resources. As God sustains life in his creation, humanity is charged with its care.

Group Discussion

1. Read Deuteronomy 22:6-7. What creation care lessons can we draw from this passage? What does this passage say about environmental sustainability?

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2. Read Deuteronomy 11:8-15. Describe the creation care partnership viewed in these verses between God and the Jewish people.

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In Bible study one, we saw how Jesus is the Creator. Jesus is the human revelation of God through whom all things were made. In Revelation 3:14, Jesus referred to Himself as “the ruler of God’s creation.” As followers of Christ, this connection between Jesus and creation cannot be ignored. In fact, this truth should lead us to a deeper commitment to the created world. Jesus made us to be part of this world. He fashioned this awe inspiring planet to be our home. And as the Bible give testimony, God entered into a holy partnership with humankind in the beginning to care for His world. Yes, as Christians, Jesus is our Savior through whom our sins are forgiven. Yes, Jesus is our Lord, and it is his will that we seek to follow in our lives. But as followers of Christ, it is also important that we acknowledge him as Creator. And what Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, has created and bless, we should care for as part of our commitment to him.

**Group Discussion**

1. Read Acts 17:24-27. This passage reminds us that God is the Creator and that all things serve the purpose of drawing people to the Lord. How can creation be used to lead people toward Christ?

2. Read I Corinthians 8:4-6. This passage reminds us that Jesus and God are one and that through Christ, all things were made. How do we honor Christ by caring for the creation he made?
Listening to God’s Word

In the books of Exodus and Leviticus, we read about the Sabbath Year in Jewish religious life. The Sabbath Year was an expanded concept that was based on the Sabbath Day observance given to the Ten Commandments. The Sabbath Year was designated by God as a time of rest for land and an acknowledgement that all things were created by God and belonged to God. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., writes, “To demonstrate that God is the ultimate owner of everything, nothing is to be harvested in the seventh year. The natural produce of the land is to feed poor people (see Exodus 23:11). The wildlife is to be given a chance to repopulate itself. Moreover, enough food is promised in the sixth year to carry the people through the sabbatical year.” In part, the purpose of the Sabbath year was to care for creation. Read the following passages and answer the questions on the next page.

Exodus 20:8-11
"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

Exodus 23:10-12
“Six days you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, 11 but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what is left. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove. 12 “Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed.”

Leviticus 25:1-7
The LORD said to Moses at Mount Sinai, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the LORD. 3 For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. 4 But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. 5 Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. 6 Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you—for yourself, your male and female servants, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, 7 as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.”
Responding to God’s Word

1. As you read these passages, what are two thoughts that came to mind?

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2. Why was it important for God’s creation to be given a time of rest?

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3. In Leviticus 25:7 we read that the Sabbath Year was important for, among other things, the care of the “wild animals.” What does this provision say about God’s care for nature?

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4. As a follower of Christ today, what lessons do these passages hold for us today as we consider the subject of creation care?

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There are countless people around the world today who are struggling to find clean water. In many places, human activity has left the available water supply polluted and unfit for human consumption. This lack of potable has a devastating effect on the lives of those with no alternative but to use polluted water.

One of the mission initiatives of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) is providing safe drinking water in Jesus’ name. According to the information provided by the CBF, in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, there are 1.1 billion people who do not have access to safe water. There is another 2.6 billion that do not have access to basic sanitation. Each year in these areas, more than five million people die from water-related diseases and illness. In Africa and Asia, the average distance that women walk to collect water is four miles. The water that they carry weighs about 45 pounds. Unfortunately, it is the poor that is affected most of all by the lack of clean water. Through this clean water initiative, the CBF has eight goals. Here are the goals as they are listed by the CBF:

**Goal 1: Hunger**
Without water, the possibility of eliminating hunger evaporates. Increased economic activity, irrigation for crops and proper hydration assume the presence of good water. Enabling multiple uses of water in a community stimulates economic growth and continuous food supplies.

**Goal 2: Ensure access to primary schooling for all children**
Children under the age of 5 who do not have safe water to drink and experience malnutrition are susceptible to permanent mental debilitation. Older children can miss large amounts of school time due to waterborne diseases and are prevented from reaching their full academic potential.

**Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women**
Women and children are the ones spending a large percentage of their time fetching water. Providing access to closer sources of water, such as a well, frees women and children to spend more productive time at school learning new skills for better jobs.

**Goal 4: Reduce child mortality**
Providing safe water to children under 5 years of age will significantly reduce mortality. An abundant source of water close to home encourages simple hand washing, which can reduce mortality by as much as 50 percent.

**Goal 5: Improve maternal health**
Expectant mothers are at high risk of infections if safe water is not available.
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
Without access to safe water, people afflicted with HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases are at a great disadvantage of fighting the diseases because they are already weakened by being exposed to waterborne diseases. The effectiveness of their medications is undermined because of unsafe water.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
The intention is to provide safe water for people now without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development (trade/aid/debt)
It takes the intentional commitment of groups like CBF to focus vision and work to end the water crisis with partners such as government, businesses, churches, local communities and individuals. Population growth alone calls for courageous commitments.

Return on Investment
According to the World Health Organization, the economic rate of return in saved time, increased productivity and reduced health costs for each $1 invested in safe water initiatives is $8. Therefore, a $1 million investment yields an $8 million return.  

As can be seen through the CBF’s clean water initiative, the care of God’s creation is vital for the quality of human life. When a basic human necessity such as clean water is not available, the adverse effects are devastating. As follower of Christ, we should be leading the way in creation care as a testimony of our love for the Lord and as a commitment to the people He created.
Notes


Bible Study Three

“Creation Care:
“Engaging in Justice”

Matthew 22:36-40
36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 Jesus replied: "‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Just think about it...

As of September 20, 2013, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that there are 7,112,640,000 human beings on the planet. The world’s population grows by approximately 200,000 people each day or 80 million annually. This yearly increase in the world’s population is comparable to the combined populations of California, Texas, and New York. According to Population Reference Bureau, the place that will have the fastest rate of population growth in 2013 is sub-Saharan Africa; one of the poorest places on earth. Unfortunately, the World Bank reports that in sub-Saharan Africa, the soils, forests, wetlands, rangelands, and fish and wildlife populations are deteriorating at an alarming rate.

In sub-Saharan Africa and in many other places around the world, there is an obvious link between the degradation of the environment and human suffering. For example, the United Nations reports that over 800 million people in the world today are suffering from undernourishment. One of the reasons cited by for this widespread hunger is the improper care of the environment.

As Christians, God calls us to minister to our fellow human beings. One of the ways that we can do this is through creation care. As we care for the environment here at home and support environmental stewardship initiatives around the world, we promote a better standard of living for all people of this planet. As the world’s population continues to grow, the care of the environment will become more and more crucial. This Bible study will focus on how Christians can care for other through creation care.
I. Each Person, Made in God's Image, has Value

Of all the living things found in creation, only humanity is created in God’s image. In the creation account found in Genesis 1:26, God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness...” Only to human beings did God instill his own personal characteristics. Like himself, God gave humanity the ability to reason and to love. Every human being from every corner of the world has been created in the image of God himself, and it is this God-given trait that gives worth to each living soul. In fact, it was because of the soul’s worth that the Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, came to redeem humanity. As that iconic Bible verse of the Christian faith states, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Each of the 7.1 billion souls on the earth are made in God's image and are priceless to the Lord.

Group Discussion

1. Read Psalm 139:13-18. From this passage, how do you see God’s love for the human soul?

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2. Read I John 4:7-12. How should we as Christians view the people of the world? Why?

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II. Each Person has Basic Needs: Food, Water, Shelter

Each human being is created with physical needs that must be met in order to sustain life. The three most basic needs are food, water, and shelter. Unfortunately, there are many places in the world today where these basic needs go unmet. According to Habitat for Humanity, there are 827.6 million people around the world who live in urban slums. By 2020, this number is expected to grow to almost one billion. Each year, 1.8 million children die due to illness caused by the lack of clean water and sanitation. Many of the challenges in meeting the basic needs of these people are environmental related. However, the sad truth to these statistics is that the overwhelming majority of those who lack proper food, clean water, and adequate shelter are powerless to change their situation. They do not have the money, education, influence, or resources to make their life better. As Christians, we are called to seek justice for these who are disadvantaged.

Group Discussion

1. Throughout the Bible, the human need for food, water, and shelter shaped many of the biblical stories. Read Genesis 42:1-5. How did the need for food influence the story of Joseph?

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2. Even Jesus experienced hunger. Read Matthew 4:1-4. How did hunger influence the devil’s temptation of Jesus?

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III. Christians are Called to Care for Others

Throughout the gospels, Jesus addressed the physical needs of many people. In Matthew 14:13-21, Jesus fed thousands of hungry people who came to him to be healed. In Luke 5:17-26, Jesus healed a paralyzed man bound to mat. In John 9:1-7, Jesus gave sight to a man blind since birth. Time after time, Jesus showed his compassion toward people by addressing their physical needs. Through his acts of mercy and love, Jesus created doorways through which he was also able to minister to spiritual needs. As the followers of Jesus, we are also called to care for the needs of others. We as modern Christians have been given the opportunity to work “miracles” in the lives of others with our gifts of technology, medicine, and food. And like our Lord, as we care for the physical needs of others, doorways will be opened to meet spiritual needs as well.

Group Discussion

1. Read Matthew 25:31-46. According to the words of Jesus, how important is the care of others to our faith? How were those who cared for others viewed by the Lord? How were those who did not care for others viewed by the Lord?

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2. Read James 2:14-18. What does the Bible say about the faith of the person who does not help others in need?

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IV. We Care for Others by Caring for Creation

When we consider how many people in the world are suffering today as a result of environmental problems, it is easy for us to become overwhelmed. In fact, we can be tempted to do nothing because the problems seem so great. But as people of faith, we should remember that we serve a God of miracles; a God who is at work in his creation. God has provided Christian mission organizations with the resources and the technology needed to address many of the world’s environmental problems. In the name of Christ, Christians are drilling wells to provide clean drinking water, planting trees to combat deforestation, and improving crop yields through sustainable farming practices. As Christians address the creation care issues of the world, we in essence are fulfilling, at least in part, the second greatest commandment of loving our neighbor as ourselves. We are engaging in justice for all people.

Group Discussion

1. Read Matthew 22:34-40. What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself? Regarding the subject of creation care, how do we show our love for our neighbor?

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2. How can creation care open the doors for the gospel?

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Listening to God’s Word

Many of the people who are suffering today as a result of the lack of creation care are the poor of the world. Because they do not have the resources to change their situation, many have no option but to endure their suffering. As the Bible gives testimony, the heart of God is near the poor, the disadvantaged, and the humble. Christians are called to seek justice on behalf of those who cannot help themselves. Consider the following passages...

**Leviticus 23:22**
When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the LORD your God.

**Psalm 140:12**
I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.

**Proverbs 14:31**
Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

**Proverbs 29:7**
The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.

**Proverbs 31:9**
Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

**Jeremiah 22:1-5**
This is what the LORD says: “Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and proclaim this message there: 2 ‘Hear the word of the LORD to you, king of Judah, you who sit on David’s throne—you, your officials and your people who come through these gates. 3 This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place. 4 For if you are careful to carry out these commands, then kings who sit on David’s throne will come through the gates of this palace, riding in chariots and on horses, accompanied by their officials and their people. 5 But if you do not obey these commands, declares the LORD, I swear by myself that this palace will become a ruin.’”

**Ezekiel 16:49**
Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.
Matthew 7:9-12

“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! 12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Luke 4:18-19

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

Romans 13:8-10

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. 9 The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

James 2:1-6a

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor.

Philippians 2:1-4

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

I John 4:7-8

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.
1. What thoughts come to mind as you read the passages on the previous page?

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2. If we are created in the image of God, what characteristics of God do we model as we address the sufferings of the world?

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3. Based on the verses you read, what should be our response as Christians to the environmental problems that are adversely affecting the lives of the world’s poor?

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4. On a scale from 1 to 10 (1=extremely poor, 10=extremely good), how would you rate the Christian response in addressing the issues affecting the poor of the world. Why?

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Today in the World...

There are many Christians, many churches, in the world today who are deciding that they will make a difference in the world. They are choosing to follow God’s leadership in addressing the creation care issues adversely affecting millions of people around the world. One of the churches that is making a difference is First Baptist Church of Austin, Texas. The following is a summation of the story, “Austin Congregation Raises Funds to Build Seven Wells in Ethiopia,” written by Emily Holladay about the church’s clean water project.

For the Christmas season of 2012, First Baptist Church of Austin adopted the Advent theme, “Worship Fully, Spend Less, Give More, and Love All.” As part of its Advent focus, the church undertook a mission project. The church was convicted by the fact that hundreds of millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia do not have access to clean water. As part of their Advent focus, the church set a goal of raising $12,000; enough to dig two wells in Ethiopia. However, as the church’s excitement for the project grew, FBC of Austin was able to raise over $42,000; enough to dig seven wells!

Rev. Joe Bumbulis, Minister to Students and Missions, states, “Truly what made the ‘Water for Hope’ campaign beautiful was the collective power shown in the many small gifts that were given. Yes, there were some large gifts, but the majority of this campaign was carried by many small donations.”

Because of this church’s commitment to addressing a creation care issue, there is hope in parts of Ethiopia today.


According to The Nature Conservancy, there are approximately 2.6 million square miles of rainforest on the earth today. Though rainforests only cover 2% of the earth’s surface, they are home to 50% of the world’s plant and animal life. In four square mile of rainforest, there are approximately 1500 flowering plant species, 750 tree species, 400 bird species, and 150 butterfly species. The rainforest contains a treasure trove of life with benefits for humanity. Seventy percent of the plants identified by the U.S. National Cancer Institute with cancer treatment qualities are found in the rainforest. Unfortunately, each year ~56,000 square miles of rainforest are lost forever.

Regarding such pressing environmental issues such as the degradation of the rainforests, the church has historically had no response. Though there are indications that the church is becoming more environmentally conscience, many Christians still view the environment as disposable, temporary, and lacking spiritual significance. In fact, many Christians believe that since God will one day create a new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1), humans do not need to care for this world. But, the Bible reveals a God who loves and cares deeply for the creation he made. For God, creation is not like a paper container that is thrown away once its purpose has been fulfilled. Instead, God views creation as having redeemable value. One day, God will restore his creation. This Bible study will focus on the how Christians should care for the environment while anticipating the day when creation will be redeemed.
I. Creation has a Place in God’s Ultimate Will

As it has been noted throughout this Bible study, creation has purpose: creation is a revelation of God’s glory, creation points us toward Christ the Creator, and this world provides a home for humankind. All of these attributes of creation and many more are part of God’s ultimate will for the universe. In Ephesians 1:8b-10, the Apostle Paul wrote, “With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment — to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.” All of creation, including the natural world, is part of God’s ultimate will that God is working out on the universe’s stage. The environment is not a removable, non-essential part of creation. It is intricately connected to what God has been, is, and will be doing until his will is accomplished.

Group Discussion

1. Read Psalm 119:90-91. What are the three items mentioned in this passage that have endure the course of time? How are they related?

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2. Read Ephesians 1:1-10. What does this passage say to you about God’s ultimate will? How does creation fit into God’s ultimate will?

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II. Creation is Suffering from the Effects of Sin

The earthly creation made by God is weary. Creation is suffering the effects of sin that humankind daily commits against it. There are too many examples from too many parts of the world of where humanity has all but destroyed portions of God’s good earth. With little concern regarding how it affects the lives of people, the biodiversity of plants, or the habitat of animals, creation is often exploited for the quick profit. The results are decimated forests, eroded soils, polluted drinking water, a loss of animal/plant species, and a devastating toll on the quality of human life. As Romans 8:22 states, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to this present time.” Creation longs for the day when God will liberate it.

Group Discussion

1. In Genesis 3:14-19, we read about the curse that the man and the woman brought upon the world because of their sin against God. How did sin change God’s good creation?

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2. In 1 Kings 8, we read about King Solomon dedicating the temple of the Lord. Read 1 Kings 8:35-36. According to Solomon’s prayer, how would the sins of the Jewish people affect creation? How does our sin affect creation today?

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III. Creation will Ultimately be Redeemed

Though creation is currently suffering because of sin, God has promised that a new day will come. At God’s appointed time, creation will be redeemed from sin’s corruption and influence. God will bring correction to his creative work. In Isaiah 65:17-25, God promised that one day “…the wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like an ox…” In Romans 8:21, we read that “…creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.” Like the human body that does not last forever, creation will also wear out like a garment to be discarded (Psalm 102:25-26). But as II Peter 3:13 tells us, “…in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of the righteous.” God will eventually bring to pass the promise to redeem and renew creation.

Group Discussion

1. In Genesis 9:8-17, we read a portion of God’s covenant with Noah and creation after the flood. What are some key thoughts about God’s covenant as it relates to creation?

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2. Read Revelation 21:1-4. As you read this passage, what hope does it communicate to humanity and the created world?

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IV. Christians Must Seek Creation’s Redemption

As Christians, we are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the Redeemer through whom the sins of the world are forgiven. However, as Christians we often forget that Christ not only came to redeem humanity, but he also came to redeem God’s creation. Humankind is indeed God’s greatest work and the focus of God’s redemptive love through Christ. However, as we have seen throughout this Bible study, God also desires to see his creation redeemed. As those called into partnership with Christ to carry the Good News of redemption to humankind, we should remember that humanity was first called into partnership with God in the care of his world. We should never forget that the fate of creation affects the lives of people. If we are to be effective in carrying the Gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth, then we must seek to redeem those places in creation that are causing human suffering and hindering evangelism. As we promote creation’s redemption, we are also working toward human redemption.

Group Discussion

1. Read Colossians 1:15-20. How is creation redeemed? How are all things reconciled to God? What implications for creation care does this passage have for us as Christians?

2. Read Romans 8:18-22. Understanding that creation is “groaning” in anticipation for the new creation, list four ways that we as Christians can work “redemptively” in caring for God’s creation?

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Listening to God’s Word

Read the following passage from and answer the questions on the next page.

Isaiah 65:17-25

17 “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.
18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.
19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.
20 “Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.
21 They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
22 No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands.
23 They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them.
24 Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.
25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.
Responding to God’s Word

1. From the previous passage, what will be the evidence that God had made a new creation? How will creation’s suffering stop?

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2. How will God’s relationship with humanity and creation be different on the new earth?

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3. How can we proclaim God’s promise of a new earth as we care for creation?

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4. How can the anticipation of creation’s redemption inspire us to be better stewards of God’s creation?

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One of the worst human-made ecological disasters of history is the Aral Sea. Boarding on the regions of Kazakhstan, Karakalpakstan, and Uzbekistan of the old Soviet Union, the Aral Sea was once the fourth largest lake in the world. However, with most of its incoming waters begin diverted for irrigation, the Aral Sea has shrunk to less than 10 percent of its original size. In the 1960’s, the Aral Sea was a vibrant lake filled with fish. According to National Geographic, thousands of fishermen worked on the sea bringing in over 40,000 tons of fish each year. There were nineteen fishing villages around the Aral Sea with thousands of people employed in the fishing industry. From processing, to canning, to the transportation of fish, the Aral Sea provided a livelihood for the people of the area. On a daily basis, train cars full of fish headed to Moscow markets. But all of this was lost in the 1980’s when the salinity levels of the shrinking sea grew too high to support fish life. Though long term plans and efforts are attempting to correct the Aral Sea disaster, the loss of the sea has already had a devastating effect on the surrounding area. According to the United Nations, the loss of the Aral Sea has “raised the salinity of the area’s soil, reducing the amount of arable land, causing irreversible losses in flora and fauna and depriving millions in neighboring countries of critical sources of income.” According to National Geographic, the shrinking sea left behind a “salt flat close to 200 miles wide, infused with the pesticides of decades of agricultural runoff.” The Aral Sea served as a climate buffer for the region. However, with the sea’s loss, winters are colder and summers are hotter.

Abandoned ship in the Arial Sea (public domain)
Beginning in the late 1980’s, virtually ever few weeks, giant dust storms carry “hundreds of tons of salt, sand, and chemicals into the air, and into people’s lungs. Throat cancer and respiratory disease became common, and with no reliable protein source in the absence of fish, thousands became anemic. Infant mortality rose to 60 in 1,000, then the highest in the Soviet Union.”

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited the Aral Sea region in April 2010. While standing on the shores of a vanished sea, the Secretary-General said that the Aral Sea was “a vivid testament to what happens when we waste our common natural resources, when we neglect our environment, when we mismanage our environment.”

Today, vast regions of the Aral Sea are dry and empty.

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is important that we remember the connection between human life and the environment. As we seek the redemption of humanity through the message of Christ, it is imperative that we also address the pressing environmental issues of our world. The Aral Sea disaster is one of many examples of how environmental degradation is causing human suffering.

Abandoned ship in the Arial Sea (public domain)
Below is satellite photo comparing the Aral Sea as it was in 1989 (left) and as it was in 2008 (right).

Aral Sea (NASA: public domain)
Christ is the Redeemer of humanity and all of creation. It is through Christ and Christ alone that creation has its beginning, its purpose, and its ultimate redemption. For over sixteen centuries, the church has looked to the Nicene Creed as a way to confess its beliefs about the Lord Jesus Christ. As you read this creed, reflect on Christ as the Redeemer.

The Nicene Creed

The First Council of Constantinople (381 AD)

We believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnated from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

1. From the Nicene Creed, how has the church viewed Christ as the Redeemer?

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2. As noted in the Nicene Creed, how will God fulfill His ultimate will in creation?

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Notes


APPENDIX C

PROJECT C.A.R.E. SURVEYS

Appendix C contains samples of the project C.A.R.E. surveys for both the congregational group and the Bible study group.
Pre-Project Congregation Survey
Sunday, August 25, 2013

Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents' identities. Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10  10 to 19  20’s  30’s  40’s  50’s  60’s  70’s  80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M  F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

1  2  3  4  5
Strongly Disagree  Disagree  No Opinion  Agree  Strongly Agree

_____ 1. The earth is currently experiencing human-made environmental problems.
_____ 2. People in the world are suffering today as a result of human-made environmental problems.
_____ 3. God cares for his creation.
_____ 5. God is revealed through the natural world.
_____ 6. The care of the environment is biblically based.
_____ 7. Christians have a responsibility to be actively involved in environmental issues.
_____ 8. Caring for the environment is an important component of missions.
_____ 9. Each person bears a personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation.
_____ 10. Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment.
_____ 11. Jesus Christ is seen through creation.
_____ 12. Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness.
_____ 13. Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.

(OVER)
What are your thoughts on creation care?

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Note to Reader: This question appeared on the back of all project C.A.R.E. surveys. Please note that after this page survey will not display this question. ~MTL
SURVEY – 01b
Pre-Project Bible Study Group Survey
Sunday, August 25, 2013

Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents’ identities. Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10  10 to 19  20’s  30’s  40’s  50’s  60’s  70’s  80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M     F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

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_____ 1. The earth is currently experiencing human-made environmental problems.

_____ 2. People in the world are suffering today as a result of human-made environmental problems.

_____ 3. God cares for his creation.


_____ 5. God is revealed through the natural world.

_____ 6. The care of the environment is biblically based.

_____ 7. Christians have a responsibility to be actively involved in environmental issues.

_____ 8. Caring for the environment is an important component of missions.

_____ 9. Each person bears a personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation.

_____ 10. Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment.

_____ 11. Jesus Christ is seen through creation.

_____ 12. Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness.

_____ 13. Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.

(OVER)
SURVEY – 02a
Post Sermon Congregational Survey:
“Seeing God’s Glory”
Sunday, September 8, 2013

Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents’ identities. Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10  10 to 19  20’s  30’s  40’s  50’s  60’s  70’s  80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M        F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

1
2
3
4
5
Strongly Disagree  Disagree  No Opinion  Agree  Strongly Agree

_____ 1. God is revealed in the nature world.

_____ 2. God created the natural world as a witness to his glory.

_____ 3. God created every part of the natural world for a reason.

_____ 4. God cares for his creation.

_____ 5. Jesus Christ is seen through creation.

_____ 6. The care of the environment is biblically based.

_____ 7. Each person bears a personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation.

_____ 8. Since sin corrupted God’s original creation, the present world is of little value.

_____ 9. Christians have a responsibility to be actively involved in environmental issues.

_____ 10. Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.

_____ 11. Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness.

_____ 12. Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment.

_____ 13. We glorify God by caring for his creation.
SURVEY – 02b
Post Bible Study Survey:
“Seeing God’s Glory”
Sunday, September 8, 2013

Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents’ identities. Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10       10 to 19         20’s         30’s       40’s       50’s        60’s        70’s         80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M               F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   No Opinion   Agree   Strongly Agree

_____ 1. God is revealed in the nature world.

_____ 2. God created the natural world as a witness to his glory.

_____ 3. God created every part of the natural world for a reason.

_____ 4. God cares for his creation.

_____ 5. Jesus Christ is seen through creation.

_____ 6. The care of the environment is biblically based.

_____ 7. Each person bears a personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation.

_____ 8. Since sin corrupted God’s original creation, the present world is of little value.

_____ 9. Christians have a responsibility to be actively involved in environmental issues.

_____ 10. Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.

_____ 11. Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness.

_____ 12. Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment.

_____ 13. We glorify God by caring for his creation.
SURVEY – 03a
Post Congregational Discussion One Survey:
“Assuming Our Responsibility”
Sunday, September 15, 2013

Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents’ identities. Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10 10 to 19 20’s 30’s 40’s 50’s 60’s 70’s 80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

1 Strongly Disagree 2 Disagree 3 No Opinion 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree

_____ 1. God created earth to be humanity’s home.
_____ 2. God gave humanity the responsibility to care for the earth.
_____ 3. God would be pleased at how humanity has cared for the earth thus far.
_____ 4. It is of no real consequence if human activity causes various life forms to go extinct since humanity was given dominion over the earth and one day God will usher in a new creation.
_____ 5. Christians have a responsibility to be actively involved in environmental issues.
_____ 6. The care of the environment is biblically based.
_____ 7. God cares for his creation.
_____ 8. God is revealed in the natural world.
_____ 9. Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness.
_____ 10. Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.
_____ 11. Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment.
_____ 12. Each person bears personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation.
_____ 13. Not taking care of the environment is a sin.
SURVEY – 03b
Post Bible Study Survey:
“Assuming Our Responsibility”
Sunday, September 15, 2013

Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents’ identities. Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10       10 to 19         20’s       30’s       40’s       50’s       60’s       70’s       80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M        F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

1
Strongly Disagree
2
Disagree
3
No Opinion
4
Agree
5
Strongly Agree

_____ 1. God created earth to be humanity’s home.

_____ 2. God gave humanity the responsibility to care for the earth.

_____ 3. God would be pleased at how humanity has cared for the earth thus far.

_____ 4. It is of no real consequence if human activity causes various life forms to go extinct since humanity was given dominion over the earth and one day God will usher in a new creation.

_____ 5. Christians have a responsibility to be actively involved in environmental issues.

_____ 6. The care of the environment is biblically based.

_____ 7. God cares for his creation.

_____ 8. God is revealed in the natural world.

_____ 9. Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness.

_____ 10. Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.

_____ 11. Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment.

_____ 12. Each person bears personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation.

_____ 13. Not taking care of the environment is a sin.
Creation Care Work Day Survey
Saturday, September 21, 2013

Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents’ identities. Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10    10 to 19    20’s    30’s    40’s    50’s    60’s    70’s    80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M    F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Agree

_____ 1. As a member of the Cedar Spring community, Cedar Spring Baptist has a responsibility for the care and beautification of the community.

_____ 2. Creation care work days helps the public image of Cedar Spring Baptist.

_____ 3. Creation care work days are helpful in teaching people the importance of creation care.

_____ 4. Creation care work days are helpful in teaching others about the Lord Jesus Christ.

_____ 5. Creation care work days has the potential of attracting people to Cedar Spring Baptist.

_____ 6. Cedar Spring Baptist should host a quarterly creation care cleanup day.

_____ 7. The church’s time could be better spent on projects other than creation care work days.

_____ 8. Today’s work day has encouraged me to personally do more to care for God’s creation.

_____ 9. Christians have a responsibility to care for God’s creation.

_____ 10. I would volunteer for another creation care work day.

_____ 11. Jesus Christ is seen through creation.

_____ 12. Caring for the environment is an important component of missions.

_____ 13. We glorify God by caring for his creation.
Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents’ identities. Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10  10 to 19  20’s  30’s  40’s  50’s  60’s  70’s  80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M    F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

1  2  3  4  5
Strongly Disagree  Disagree  No Opinion  Agree  Strongly Agree

_____ 1. Caring for the environment is an important component of missions.

_____ 2. People in the world are suffering today as a result of human-made environmental problems.

_____ 3. If not addressed, global environmental problems will adversely affect future generations.

_____ 4. Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness.

_____ 5. “Loving our neighbor as ourselves” involves the care of the environment.

_____ 6. Christians have a responsibility to be actively involved in environmental issues.

_____ 7. The care of the environment is biblically based.

_____ 8. God cares for his creation.

_____ 9. God is revealed in the natural world.

_____ 10. Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.

_____ 11. Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment.

_____ 12. Each person bears a personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation.

_____ 13. Improving the standard of living for people should be part of the church’s evangelistic efforts.
Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents’ identities. Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10 10 to 19 20’s 30’s 40’s 50’s 60’s 70’s 80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M  F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Agree

_____ 1. Caring for the environment is an important component of missions.

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_____ 8. God cares for his creation.

_____ 9. God is revealed in the natural world.

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_____ 11. Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment.

_____ 12. Each person bears a personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation.

_____ 13. Improving the standard of living for people should be part of the church’s evangelistic efforts.
SURVEY – 06a
Post Congregational Discussion Two Survey:
“Anticipating Redemption”
Sunday, September 29, 2013

Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be
kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents’ identities.
Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10    10 to 19    20’s    30’s    40’s    50’s    60’s    70’s    80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M       F

Did you attend the first congregational discussion on September 15? Please circle the
appropriate response.  YES  NO

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the
following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

1  2  3  4  5
Strongly Disagree  Disagree  No Opinion  Agree  Strongly Agree

_____ 1. The earth is currently experiencing human-made environmental problems.

_____ 2. People in the world are suffering today as a result of human-made environmental
problems.

_____ 3. If not addressed, global environmental problems will adversely affect future
generations.

_____ 4. Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness.

_____ 5. “Loving our neighbor as ourselves” involves the care of the environment.

_____ 6. Christians have a responsibility to be actively involved in environmental issues.

_____ 7. The care of the environment is biblically based.

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_____ 10. Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.

_____ 11. Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment.

_____ 12. Each person bears a personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation.

_____ 13. Improving the standard of living for people should be part of the church’s
evangelistic efforts.
Post Bible Study Survey:
“Anticipating Redemption”
Sunday, September 29, 2013

Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents’ identities. Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10  10 to 19  20’s  30’s  40’s  50’s  60’s  70’s  80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M  F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

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Please circle your age range.
under 10   10 to 19   20’s   30’s   40’s   50’s   60’s   70’s   80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M       F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree  Disagree  No Opinion  Agree  Strongly Agree

_____ 1. The earth is currently experiencing human-made environmental problems.

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_____ 13. Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.
SURVEY – 8a
Post-Project Congregation Survey
Sunday, November 3, 2013

Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents’ identities. Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10 10 to 19 20’s 30’s 40’s 50’s 60’s 70’s 80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M   F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree No Opinion Agree Strongly Agree

_____ 1. The earth is currently experiencing human-made environmental problems.
_____ 2. People in the world are suffering today as a result of human-made environmental problems.
_____ 3. God cares for his creation.
_____ 5. God is revealed through the natural world.
_____ 6. The care of the environment is biblically based.
_____ 7. Christians have a responsibility to be actively involved in environmental issues.
_____ 8. Caring for the environment is an important component of missions.
_____ 9. Each person bears a personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation.
_____ 10. Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment.
_____ 11. Jesus Christ is seen through creation.
_____ 12. Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness.
_____ 13. Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.
SURVEY – 8b
Post-Project Bible Study Survey
Sunday, November 3, 2013

Please do not identify yourself beyond the following demographics. All surveys will be kept confidential. No effort will be made to discover or disclose respondents’ identities. Please do not write your name on the survey. Please respond honestly to each question.

Please circle your age range.
under 10  10 to 19  20’s  30’s  40’s  50’s  60’s  70’s  80’s

Please circle the appropriate letter to identify your gender.
M  F

In the blank by each of the following statements, please write the number from the following scale which best expresses your current opinion regarding the statement.

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_____ 3. God cares for his creation.


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_____ 11. Jesus Christ is seen through creation.

_____ 12. Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness.

_____ 13. Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church.

Participant’s No: _________
APPENDIX D

SERMONS AND RELATED MATERIALS

Appendix D contains samples of the project C.A.R.E. sermon series, the PowerPoint slides for each sermon, sermon notes, and the “Today in the World” handouts.
Sermon Series: “Creation Care”
Sermon “Creation Care: Seeing God’s Glory”
Scripture: Psalm 19:1-6, John 1:1-3

Date Preached: Sunday, September 8, 2013
Cedar Spring Baptist Church, Spartanburg, SC

[SLIDE 1: CARE] Today we begin a four week sermon series about the biblical call to creation care...environmental stewardship. This sermon series is titled, “C.A.R.E... Christians Assuming Responsibility for the Earth.” Some of you may be thinking that this is a rather strange topic for a sermon series. Why would we be talking about caring for the environment in church? Should we not be focusing instead on missions... evangelism... living a more meaningful life of faith? The reason that I have chosen this topic as a focus for my graduate project at Gardner Webb University and for this sermon series is because of how the care of the environment affects our missions efforts... our evangelism outreaches... and even our life of faith. How we view the environment... how we care for creation... has implications for our faith as Christians.

[SLIDE 2: NATURE] For many Baptist churches, the theology and practice of creation care...environmental stewardship... has historically been ignored. Traditionally, environmental issues has been viewed as irrelevant and disconnected from the church’s call to the Great Commission. But, this perception is beginning to change. In 2008, forty-six influential members of the Southern Baptist Convention, including the convention’s president, Rev. Frank Page, signed a statement criticizing the denomination for being “too timid” in confronting global warming. In 2010, Baptists all along the Gulf Coast saw firsthand the devastating impact of the British Petroleum Deepwater Horizon oil spill on the ecology and economy of the region. As environmental disasters and environmental degradation increasingly affect the lives of people, it is imperative that Baptist churches like Cedar Spring Baptist realize the connection between creation care and God’s redemptive work for humanity. Creation care should be part of the church’s greater ministry to the world.

[SLIDE 3: NATURE 2] Today, as we begin this series, we will be looking at how creation... how the environment... is a revelation of God. One of the ways that God has chosen to reveal himself and his glory to humanity is through creation. Every aspect of creation gives testimony to God’s existence, greatness, and power. As Christians, creation reminds us that it was through Jesus Christ... our Lord and our Savior... that creation was made. Creation points us toward Jesus Christ who made all things. And if God made creation... if Christ is reveal through the natural world... then the environment has intrinsic value and should be cared for by the followers of Christ. [SLIDE 4: TITLE] The title of our sermon today is, “Creation Care: Seeing God’s Glory.”

Psalm 19:1-6 NIV
1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.
3 They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. 4 Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has
pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

John 1:1-3 NIV
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Opening Prayer
Our God in Heaven... Lord of Heaven and Earth...
We humbly come into your presence acknowledging you as the Creator.
You are the Maker of all things...nothing has been made without you.
All of creation... the stars above... the sea creatures of the deep...
All give testimony to your greatness.
God we pray that you would open our hearts... our minds... and our eyes...
To the world around us that proclaims your existence.
May the beautiful trees... the green grass... the birds of the air...
Remind us as Christians that it was through Christ all these things were made.
Our Lord and our Savior created the natural world that is all around us.
Help us to see your glory in the created world.
May we see that the natural world has value...
That it’s worth something simply because you made it.
Help us as church to understand that by caring for your world
We honor You and also care for other people.
Help us to be good stewards of creation.
We pray all these things in the name of the one
Through whom the world was made... the Lord Jesus Christ... Amen.

Opening Story
[SLIDE 5: TELESCOPE] When I was a little boy, I got a telescope for Christmas. It was not a fancy or high-powered telescope, but it was telescope that was great for looking at the moon. I remember on winter evenings... when the air was cold and crispy and the sky was clear... my dad and I would set up the telescope outside and look at the moon. I was always fascinated by the craters that peppered the moon’s landscape.

I believe that it was this first telescope that created a love in me for space and astronomy that has carried over into my adult life. In fact, on my fortieth birthday, my family bought me a very nice telescope that I continue to use today. I love taking my telescope out into the backyard and looking at the moon and the planets. Take for instance, the planet Jupiter. This past spring, Jupiter could be plainly seen each evening in the western sky without a telescope. But with my telescope, I could easily see Jupiter’s four Galilean moons...the four moon discovered by the scientist Galileo.

For me, what is truly amazing about the planet Jupiter is just how far away it is from Earth. According to the books, Jupiter is over 390 million miles from my backyard where I look at it through my telescope. Now that’s a long way away...
miles. But let me break that number down a little bit. Let’s say that there is a road between here and Jupiter. And let’s say that a group from the church would like to take the church bus on a trip to Jupiter... sort of like how church groups go to look at the fall leaves. If the church bus were to leave the parking lot of Cedar Springs Baptist Church and drive 100 miles an hour nonstop until it reached Jupiter, it would take somewhere around 445 years for the bus to get there!

But in the vastness of God’s universe, Jupiter is like a next door neighbor. To reach the nearest star to earth other than our sun, you would have to travel at the speed of light... 186,282 miles per second... for over four years. And then there are trillions and trillions and trillions of other stars scattered throughout the universe...many of them millions... even billions... of light years away. To consider the size and scope of the universe is a staggering to the imagination. But one thing is for certain... the planet Jupiter in its orbit around the sun... the moon that lights the night sky... the countless stars in the heavens...are all the work of God the Creator. Creation points us toward God. As Psalms 147:4 states, “He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.”

In our time together...as we consider this subject of creation care... I want us to hear the testimony of Scripture and the lessons the scriptures teach us about God’s creation.

I. The Glory of God is Revealed Through Creation

[SLIDE 6:THOUGHT 1] As we look at God’s creation... as we consider the vastness of the night sky... as we look at the Bible... we can say that the glory of God is reveal through creation. All of creation, from the tiniest life form to the distance galaxies, reveals God’s glory. Look with me again at Psalm 19:1-3... \(^1\) The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. \(^2\) Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. \(^3\) They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.

The Psalmist states... the heavens declare the glory of God...the skies proclaim the work of his hands. The glory of God is made known in his creation. The glory of creation is like a billboard proclaiming God’s majesty... God’s goodness... God’s infinite power. God is worthy of worship and honor because he is the Creator. Without words, creation proclaims the reality of God for all to know. In communicating the words of the Lord, the prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 45:8, you heavens above, rain down my righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness flourish with it; I, the Lord, have created it.

What is so awesome about this thought of the glory of God being revealed through creation is that it has a personal nature to it. In part, God made creation to proclaim his glory so that we could recognize him. In his desire for humankind to see evidence of his presence, God made a world... God made a universe... that is so incredible that shouts his existence. If you want evidence that there is a God, walk outside this church and look around. The testimony of creation is all around us.
II. The Glory of God Gives Creation Value

[SLIDE 7:THOUGHT 2] And it is this testimony... it is the fact that God made creation... that gives it value. The earth, the environment, the forest, the oceans, the rainforests, the mountains, the animals, and everything else in creation has value simply because God made them and their existence gives God glory. In Psalm 19:4-6... *Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.* 5 It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. 6 It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

The Psalmist in verses 4-6 gives the example of the sun in the sky as proclaiming God’s glory. As we all know, the sun is one of those parts of creation that is an indispensable part of life on the earth. Without the sun, the earth would be a cold, lifeless rock in space. But as the Psalmist says about the sun... *it rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other giving its warmth.* God has put the sun in its place in the heavens...God has pitched a tent for the sun... so that life can exist here on earth. The sun has value.

I think the words of the Psalmist here remind us that all parts of creation have both an intrinsic value and a functional value. For example, water has a functional value in creation. Our bodies are composed of mainly water. Water serves as the home for the sea life of the planet. Water is needed for plant life and animal life to survive. Water has a very functional value. But not only that, water has an intrinsic value. Water is valuable simply because God created it...simply because its existence gives God glory. The same is true for everything in all of creation.

Listen to what the prophet Nehemiah said in Nehemiah 9:5-6...*blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessings and praise. You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.* Because of what God has created, God is worthy of worship. The creation that causes the multitudes of heaven to worship God has value.

III. The Glory of God in Creation Points to Christ

[SLIDE 8:THOUGHT 3] But not only does creation have value because it brings glory to the Lord, it is valuable because it points us Christ. Sometimes as Christians we forget that not only is Jesus our Lord and Savior, he is our Maker. Look with me again at our Scripture from John 1:1-3... *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

To humankind, God has chosen to reveal himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit... the Trinity. God is the triune God...God in three persons. And it was through the Son...the Lord Jesus Christ... that God became human and walked among us. But as the Apostle John wrote, it was through Christ that all of creation was made.
Romans 1:20 tells us, *For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

The writer of Hebrews said this in Hebrews 1:1-3... *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,* \(^2\) *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe.*

In writing about Christ, the Apostle Paul said in Colossians 1:15-16, *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* \(^15\) *For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or ruler or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.* The testimony of Scripture is that Jesus is the Creator.

Not only did Jesus walk on the water, he created the water. Not only did Jesus bring the fish to the nets of his would-be disciples, he made the fish. Not only did Jesus die on a cross for the sins of humanity, he made the tree on which he died. Every plant, animal, mountain, river, sea, planet, star, or galaxy was made by the one we call Lord... Savior... Friend of Sinners. And all of creation praises the name of the Lord Jesus Christ through whom all was made.

**IV. The Glory of God leads Us to Creation Care**

[SLIDE 9:THOUGHT 4] I believe that as we look at creation... as we acknowledge that it gives God glory... as we understand that creation has value because God made it... and that creation is the work of Jesus himself... I truly believe that the followers of Christ are called to care for the environment. For far too long, we as Christians have looked at environmental issue through political eyes instead of theological eyes. Too often Baptist Christians have shied away from environmental issues because they felt that such issues belong to those of certain political persuasions.

But as the testimony of Scripture has shown us, the care of God’s creation...good stewardship of the environment... should be a concern for the followers of Christ the Creator. If creation truly displays God’s glory, if everything in creation has a God-derived value, and if the glory of creation points us toward the Lord Jesus Christ, then creation care should be an important part of a believer’s life. May we always remember that humankind itself is a valuable part of God’s glorious work. Humanity is the pinnacle of God’s creation. And as we read beginning in Genesis 1:28, God has entrusted the care of his created world to humanity. God has given humankind the privilege of caring for natural world that testifies to his very existence. In essences, humanity has been given the responsibility to care for the elements of creation that glorifies Christ our Savior as the Creator. Creation is a blessed sanctuary from which the praises of God imamate. God’s mandate to care for his creation has never been removed. Humankind is still responsible for the care of God’s creation.
We have a world today that is struggling with many environmental issues. There is a growing concern around the world that human activity is adversely affecting the environment. And unfortunately, many of the environmental problems we are now encountering are adversely impacting the lives of millions of people. Each year, we as Christians give millions and millions of dollars to help people who are the victims of environmental disasters...think about how many church mission trips... how many Christian disaster relief teams... how many mission offerings... went to the Gulf Coast after the BP oil spill. As followers of Christ, we are called to care for the creation for the glory of God. And when we do that, we not only honor God, we care for our fellow human beings.

Closing Thoughts

My challenge for you today is to reflect on God’s creation. I encourage you to take a walk this afternoon and enjoy the world that God has made. Think about how each aspect of the world you see gives God glory... praises his name. Consider the worth of the created world. Think about how Christ himself made this world. And also consider what you can do to care for his good creation. Let us pray.

Notes:
Sermon PowerPoint Slides
Sermon Series: “Creation Care”
Sermon: “Creation Care: Seeing God’s Glory”
Scripture: Psalm 19:1-6, John 1:1-3

Date Preached: Sunday, September 8, 2013
Cedar Spring Baptist Church, Spartanburg, SC

[SLIDE 1: CARE]

[SLIDE 2: NATURE]
(Photo obtained for Office.com Clip Art)
[SLIDE 3: NATURE 2]
(Photo obtained for Office.com Clip Art)

[SLIDE 4: TITLE]
(Photo obtained for Office.com Clip Art)

Creation
Care: Seeing
God’s Glory

Psalm 19:1-6
John 1:1-3
[SLIDE 5: TELESCOPE]
(Picture obtained for Office.com Clip Art)

[SLIDE 6: THOUGHT 1]

I. The Glory of God is Revealed Through Creation
II. The Glory of God Gives Creation Value

III. The Glory of God in Creation Points to Christ
IV. The Glory of God Leads Us to Creation Care
Psalm 19:1-6 NIV
1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. 3 They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. 4 Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. 5 It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. 6 It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

John 1:1-3 NIV
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.
I. The Glory of God is Revealed Through Creation (Psalm 19:1-3)

II. The Glory of God Gives Creation Value (Psalm 19:4-6)

III. The Glory of God in Creation Points to Christ (John 1:1-3)

IV. The Glory of God leads Us to Creation Care
Check out the Creation Care Information Center located by the sink in the educational hallway.
### Creation Care Calendar

**Sunday, September 8, 2013**
- 11:00 a.m.  First Creation Care Sermon:
  - “Creation Care: Seeing God’s Glory”
- 2:00 p.m.  First Creation Care Bible Study

**Sunday, September 15, 2013**
- 11:00 a.m.  Second Creation Care Sermon:
  - “Creation Care: Assuming Our Responsibility”
- 12:00 p.m.  Congregation Discussion
  - FREE BBQ luncheon
  - Menu: BBQ sandwich, baked beans, coleslaw, chips, and banana pudding.
- 2:00 p.m.  Second Creation Care Bible Study

**Saturday, September 21, 2013**
- 8:00 a.m.  Creation Care Clean Up Day
  - We will be cleaning up Carolina Country Club Road and the grounds around the spring/church. A FREE breakfast will be provided.

**Sunday, September 22, 2013**
- 11:00 a.m.  Third Creation Care Sermon:
  - “Creation Care: Engaging Justice.”
- 2:00 p.m.  Third Creation Care Bible Study

**Sunday, September 29, 2013**
- 11:00 a.m.  “Fourth Creation Care Sermon:
  - “Creation Care: Anticipating Redemption”
- 12:00 p.m.  Congregation Discussion
  - FREE luncheon
  - Menu: To be announced.
- 2:00 p.m.  Fourth Creation Care Bible Study
There are many places in the world that are suffering as a result of a lack of environmental stewardship. One such place is the country of Haiti. Haiti is slightly smaller than the state of Maryland but has a population of 9.9 million people. Eighty percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Fifty-four percent lives in abject poverty. One of the most devastating human-made environmental problems facing Haiti is deforestation.¹

In 1492 when Christopher Columbus landed on the northwestern shores of the island of Hispaniola, Haiti was heavily forested. Today, 98% of the Haitian forests are gone. From crop production to timber exports to making cooking charcoal, Haiti’s forests are now virtually gone.² Unfortunately, the deforestation of Haiti has had a devastating effect on the Haitian people. With no trees covering the land, much of the already shallow tropical topsoil has washed away. There is little soil to absorb the torrential rains that frequent Haiti. This has led to regular flash-flooding. In 2004, Tropical storm Jeanne caused a
flood that killed approximately 3,000 in the town of Gonaïves.³ The eroded soil leaves very little behind for farmers to raise crops. Many of the farmers of Haiti are subsistence farmers whose families rely on the food they can produce. According to a recent study, Haiti is the nation most at risk of rising sea levels, floods, and climate change.⁴ Much of Haiti today lives in misery because of the unsustainable pressures placed on the environment.

But even in a desperate place like Haiti, God’s glory is still evident in creation. The breathtaking sunsets, the tropical beaches, and the rolling mountains all praise the name of the Lord. But creation is suffering and thus is causing suffering among the Haitian people. As Christians seek to minister to the needs of Haiti, efforts must be made to address the environmental problems that cause so much suffering. Only through a commitment to creation care can Haiti begin to emerge from its environmental disaster. When we take care of God’s glorious creation, we take care of ourselves and our fellow human beings.

Notes


Sermon Series: “Creation Care”  
Sermon: “Creation Care: Assuming Our Responsibility”  
Scripture: Genesis 1:27-31, I Corinthians 8:4b-6  

Date Preached: Sunday, September 15, 2013  
Cedar Spring Baptist Church, Spartanburg, SC

[SLIDE 1:CARE] Today we continue with our four week sermon series about the biblical call to creation care...also known as environmental stewardship. This series is titled, “C.A.R.E... Christians Assuming Responsibility for the Earth.” For many Baptist churches, the theology and practice of creation care has historically been ignored. Traditionally, environmental issues have been seen as irrelevant...even disconnected...from the church’s call to the Great Commission. However, as we examine God’s Word, I believe we can make a biblical case that the care of the environment affects our missions efforts... our evangelism outreaches... and even our life of faith. How we care for God’s creation has implications for our walk of faith.

In the world today, millions of people are suffering as a result of the mismanagement...even the exploitation...of the natural resources of creation. Today, in the country of Haiti, countless women and children are walking miles to polluted streams to draw water for drinking and cooking. Today in the country of Russia, thousands of people are struggling with multiple forms of cancer as a result of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster. If you remember, large quantities of radioactive material were released into the environment when Chernobyl’s nuclear reactor melted down. In many parts of Africa and Asia, subsistence farmers...farmer who survive on what they can grow...are attempting to farm soils that are extremely eroded as a result of deforestation. Tens of millions are suffering around the world this day...Sunday, September 14, 2013...as a result of the lack of creation care. And unfortunately, the number of those suffering will be more tomorrow than today. This is a problem that is not going away.

As Christians, we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things. We believe that he is our Lord and our Savior. We believe that Christ has commanded us to carry his redemptive message to the whole world. However, how can those who are suffering from hunger accept spiritual food? How can those who are thirsty for clean water drink from the truth of the scriptures? Of all people in this world, we as Christians should be leading the way in caring for God’s creation because of how the lack of creation care is devastating lives around the world. It is time for God’s people...the followings of the Lord Jesus Christ...to step forward and assuming responsibility for the care of the earth.  

[SLIDE 2:TITLE] The title of our sermon today is, “Creation Care: Assuming Our Responsibility.”

**Genesis 1:27-31 (NIV)**  
26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”  
27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them: male and female he
created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” 29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

I Corinthians 8:4b-6 (NIV)

...We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Opening Prayer
Our God and Creator... Giver and Sustainer of all life...
We your children humbly enter into your presence in this time of worship.
As those who are called by your name, we ask for your forgiveness.
Collectively, we have not cared for your good creation.
We have chosen convenience over sustainability.
And as a result of humanity’s abuse of your world, countless millions are suffering.
As follower of Christ, help us to lead the way in alleviating this suffering
By caring for your creation. Help us to see that it is our responsibility...
Our collective calling... to care for the world in which you saw fit to place us.
Help us to see that as we care for your world, we honor you and care for others.
May we never forget our responsibility to the rest of humanity.
We pray in the name of the Creator and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Opening Story
[SLIDE 3:BLANK] Occasionally we will hear in the news a story about a construction project being halted because of a rare species of life being found in the construction zone.
Take for instance discovery of the rare spider...the Braken Bat Cave Meshweaver...found last year on a $15.1 million dollar highway construction project northwest of San Antonio, Texas. Biologist monitoring the construction site discovered the eyeless spider which had been placed on the endangered species list in 2000. The discovery of this tiny, dime size, spider brought the highway project to a complete halt. No construction was allowed until biologist and state officials determined how to preserve this endangered spider. 1

In fact, the discovery of this tiny spider was one reason cited in a bankruptcy filed by one of the construction project’s contractors in June this year. CEO Joe Ballenger Sr. stated in court records, “The increased costs in oil and fuel over and above the fuel costs allocated to the project bids made jobs far more expensive than originally bid.
Additionally, an endangered spider was discovered at one of the construction projects, and that project had to be shut down."

Now, I can almost read your minds. Some of you are thinking, “Really? Shutting down a $15 million dollar project...putting men and women out of work... all to save an itsy-bitsy spider? Is a spider worth all that trouble?” Now, I have never been a spider fan. I don’t like spider...never have, never will. There just something about all those legs...and eyes... and webs... that just gives me the creeps. But I will say that we should be very careful in how we deal with the seemingly insignificant parts of creation.

**[SLIDE 4:WORLD]** The world that God created is filled with many different forms of life. According to scientist, there are ~8.7 million different species living on earth. A species represents a plant or animal that has traits and characteristics that sets it apart from other forms of life. On this planet there are millions of different types of fish, birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and plants. All of these are part of the creation’s biological treasure.

The importance of each and every species of life cannot be underestimated. Consider medical research. From wild species, humankind has developed medicines. For example, the penicillin used treat infections was originally derived from a fungus. The aspirin you take for headaches and to keep your blood thinned originally came from willow bark. The Taxol used in cancer chemotherapy comes from a fungus that lives in the Pacific Yew Tree. And the Quinine that has been used for generations to prevent malaria comes from the Cinchona tree found in Peru. Forty percent of humanity’s medicines originate from plant and animal species. Scientist are only beginning to unlock the potential medical use of the world’s plant and animal life. However, when we allow a species to go extinction, we forever lose the potential benefit that species could have held for humanity. Who knows, the Braken Bat Cave Meshweaver spider could hold a possible cure or treatment for a human disease.

**[SLIDE 5:NATURE]** God created this world, and He put each species here for a reason. And God gave the responsibility for the care of this world’s species to humankind. The Psalmist in Psalm 115:16 wrote, “The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth He has given to mankind.” When humanity does not properly care for God’s creation, not only does creation suffer, humankind suffers. The species that appears unimportant may hold the biggest blessings for humanity. That is just one of the many reasons we as Christians must assume our responsibility for caring for God’s earth.

In our time together today, I want us to grow in our understanding of our biblical responsibility in creation care.

I. Humanity is Part of God’s Created World

**[SLIDE 6:THOUGHT 1]** One of the first thoughts we can draw from our Scripture today is that humanity is part of God’s created world. In the Genesis narrative, we read how the creation of humanity took place within the context of God’s greater creative work. Listen again to a portion of the Day Six account found in Genesis 1:26-27... *Then*
God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

As day six of God’s creative work gives testimony, we as human beings are just as much a part of God’s created world as the birds of the air or the fishes of the ocean. On the last day of creation, God made his greatest creation... humankind. In the way that a final piece of a puzzle completes a picture, God’s creation of humanity completed God’s creative work for the earth. When humanity was made, creation became whole... it was complete. God had fulfilled what he had willed to accomplish. However, as modern Christians, I believe that somehow we do not grasp this thought very well. Very rarely do you ever hear Christians acknowledging their God-created connection with creation.

Perhaps it is related to the urbanization of our society. Did you know that almost 81% of the United State’s population lives in an urban setting? A little over 100 years ago in 1910, only about 46% of the U.S. lived in an urban setting. As we have migrated away from our agrarian roots, I believe we have lost touch with our connection to creation. In our climate controlled homes and cars... with access to the world’s goods in our supermarkets and stores... we have forgotten that whatever affects creation, also affects us. Through God’s design, humanity is part of God’s created world. We care connected to it.

II. God’s World Is Humanity’s Home

We can never forget that this world that God created is our home. This is the place...this is the world...that God has made for us. In Genesis 1:28-29 we read... God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” 29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.

Our Scripture gives testimony that the earth is the home for humanity. It is the place that God made for us. No other planet in our solar system or in the known universe can sustain life. So far, astronomers have discovered 942 planets orbiting other stars. However not one of these planets is believed to be able to sustain human life. But even if one of these distant planets were a “second Earth,” the great distance separating the two worlds would be impossible to cross. You may have heard the news this week... just three days ago, NASA confirmed that the space probe Voyager I that was launched in September 1977...36 years ago...has just left our solar system. At that rate, it would take tens of thousands of years to reach even our closest neighbors in the galaxy.

In Isaiah 45:18, the prophet Isaiah wrote, “…he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited…” It was God’s will in the beginning that planet Earth would be humanity’s home. According to Genesis, God spent five days tailor-making a home
for the first human beings. God sought to create a world that would provide for all the needs of the man and woman. This world will be our home until God brings time to a conclusion.

Not only did God make the earth to be home for humanity, but he made the world to be a home for the other life form he created. In Genesis 1:30, we read...and to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” This planet is home to all the life that God made.

III. The God/Humanity Creation Care Partnership

[SLIDE 8:THOUGHT 3] But unfortunately, we have misunderstood God’s instructions to us regarding our home. In the same passage from Genesis 1 in which we view this world as our home, God gives us a directive to care for our home. In Genesis 1:28, I believe we see God creating a partnership with humanity to care for His creation. God told the first humans to "fill the earth... subdue it... rule over every living creation... I give you every seed-bearing plant.” God, the One who created all life, gave humanity the job to care for that life. Unfortunately, we as humanity have often viewed this mandate from God as a license to abuse creation. Instead of caring for God’s world, we have often misused it.

God has given humanity the opportunity and responsibility of helping him care for the earth. For example, in the law, God gave the Jewish people various creation care instructions. Regarding the working of animals, God said in Leviticus 23:12, “Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest…” Though this passage is set in the context of the Sabbath observance of the Jewish people, it reminds us that God has set limits on the durability and renewability of creation. Over time, animals become weary from too much work, soils become depleted from too much farming, fish populations drop from overfishing, and forests disappear from over harvesting, and the list goes on and one. But, as the scriptures give testimony, God has given humanity the responsibility of managing earth’s resources. As God sustains life in his creation, humanity is charged with its care. That is the partnership we have with our God.

IV. Creation Care is for Christ’s Followers

[SLIDE 9:THOUGHT 4] As Christians...as followers of Christ... we are called to honor that partnership. As we have previously noted in this sermon series, Jesus is the Creator of the world. Jesus is the human revelation of God through whom all things were made. In the Apostle Paul’s words of instruction to the Corinthian Church about food sacrificed to idols, Paul wrote in I Corinthians 8:4b-6...We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.
From Paul’s words, we are reminded that as Christ followers, Jesus is the Creator. Through Christ all things came into being. And it is with the Lord Jesus Christ that we share this creation care partnership. As Christians today, we still shoulder the responsibility of creation care that was given to humankind in the beginning. This truth should lead us as Christians to a deeper commitment to the care of the created world. Jesus made us to be part of this world. He fashioned this awe inspiring planet to be our home. And as the Bible give testimony, God entered into a holy partnership with humankind in the beginning to care for his world. It is our responsibility to care for it.

Yes, as Christians, Jesus is our Savior through whom our sins are forgiven. Yes, Jesus is our Lord, and it is his will that we seek to follow in our lives. But as followers of Christ, it is also important that we acknowledge him as Creator. And what Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, has created and blessed, we should care for as part of our commitment to Him and our commitment to others.

Closing Thoughts
[SLIDE 10:BLANK] When we consider our commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ... when we consider that Jesus is the Creator of the world... when we consider our call as humanity to caring for God’s creation... when we consider how people around the world are hurting as a result of a lack of creation care... I believe we can see our responsibility to God’s world. But seeing our responsibility is not enough. We must assume that responsibility. But as we assume our responsibility, we become more in tuned with the God who made us, the creation we are a part of, and our fellow human beings. May God help us to take up our responsibility to his world. Let us pray.

Notes:
Sermon PowerPoint Slides
Sermon Series: “Creation Care”
Sermon: “Creation Care: Assuming Our Responsibility”
Scripture: Genesis 1:27-31, I Corinthians 8:4b-6

Date Preached: Sunday, September 15, 2013
Cedar Spring Baptist Church, Spartanburg, SC

[SLIDE 1: CARE]

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I. Humanity is Part of God’s Created World
II. God’s World is Humanity’s Home

III. The God/Humanity Creation Care Partnership
IV. Creation Care is for Christ’s Followers
Sermon Notes
Sermon: “Creation Care: Assuming Our Responsibility”
Sunday, September 15, 2013
Page 1

Sermon Series: “Creation Care”
Sermon Topic: “Creation Care: Assuming Our Responsibility”
Scripture: Genesis 1:27-31, I Corinthians 8:4b-6

Genesis 1:27-31 (NIV)
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I Corinthians 8:4b-6 (NIV)
...We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

I. Humanity is Part of God’s Create World
(Genesis 1:26-27)

II. God’s World Is Humanity’s Home
(Genesis 1:28-29, 30)

III. The God/Humanity Creation Care Partnership (Genesis 1:28)

IV. Creation Care is for Christ’s Followers
(I Corinthians 8:4b-6)
Additional Notes

Check out the Creation Care Information Center located by the sink in the educational hallway.

New Recycling Opportunity:
Please place your old and used Sunday School books, devotional books, Bibles, music, and related materials in the box at the entrance of the choir room. These materials will be send to a company that will use them in various English speaking ministries around the world.
### Creation Care Calendar

**Sunday, September 15, 2013**
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- 12:00 p.m. Congregation Discussion
  - FREE BBQ luncheon
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Today in the World...

There are countless people around the world today who are struggling to find clean water. In many places, human activity has left the available water supply polluted and unfit for human consumption. This lack of potable has a devastating effect on the lives of those with no alternative but to use the polluted water.

One of the mission initiatives of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) is providing safe drinking water in Jesus' name. According to the information provided by the CBF, in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, there are 1.1 billion people who do not have access to safe water. There is another 2.6 billion that do not have access to basic sanitation. Each year in these areas, more than five million people die from water-related diseases and illness. In Africa and Asia, the average distance that women walk to collect water is four miles. The water that they carry weighs about 45 pounds. Unfortunately, it is the poor that is affected most of all by the lack of clean water. Through this clean water initiative, the CBF has eight goals. Here are the goals as they are listed by the CBF:

**Goal 1: Hunger**
Without water, the possibility of eliminating hunger evaporates. Increased economic activity, irrigation for crops and proper hydration assume the presence of good water. Enabling multiple uses of water in a community stimulates economic growth and continuous food supplies.
Goal 2: Ensure access to primary schooling for all children
Children under the age of 5 who do not have safe water to drink and experience malnutrition are susceptible to permanent mental debilitation. Older children can miss large amounts of school time due to waterborne diseases and are prevented from reaching their full academic potential.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
Women and children are the ones spending a large percentage of their time fetching water. Providing access to closer sources of water, such as a well, frees women and children to spend more productive time at school learning new skills for better jobs.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
Providing safe water to children under 5 years of age will significantly reduce mortality. An abundant source of water close to home encourages simple hand washing, which can reduce mortality by as much as 50 percent.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health
Expectant mothers are at high risk of infections if safe water is not available.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
Without access to safe water, people afflicted with HIV/ AIDS, malaria and other diseases are at a great disadvantage of fighting the diseases because they are already weakened by being exposed to waterborne diseases. The effectiveness of their medications is undermined because of unsafe water.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
The intention is to provide safe water for people now without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development (trade/aid/debt)
It takes the intentional commitment of groups like CBF to focus vision and work to end the water crisis with partners such as government, businesses, churches, local communities and individuals. Population growth alone calls for courageous commitments.

Return on Investment
According to the World Health Organization, the economic rate of return in saved time, increased productivity and reduced health costs for each $1 invested in safe water initiatives is $8. Therefore, a $1 million investment yields an $8 million return.

As can be seen through the CBF’s clean water initiative, the care of God’s creation is vital for the quality of human life. When a basic human necessity such as clean water is not available, the adverse effects are devastating. As follower of Christ, we should be leading the way in creation care as a testimony of our love for the Lord and as a commitment to the people He created.
Return on Investment
According to the World Health Organization, the economic rate of return in saved time, increased productivity and reduced health costs for each $1 invested in safe water initiatives is $8. Therefore, a $1 million investment yields an $8 million return.

Sample Water Well Budget
Gifts will be pooled into increments of $6,000 per well.

Places of engagement
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Malawi
- Southeast Asia
- Thailand
- Uganda
- Zambia

Help solve the world’s water crisis. Get involved today.

To participate in a short term missions engagement related to water, call toll free 1-800-352-8741 or e-mail engage@thefellowship.info.

To give, send a check made out to “CBF” with “Water for Hope” in the memo line to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, P.O. Box 101699, Atlanta, GA 30392, call toll free 1-800-352-8741 or go to www.thefellowship.info/give.

Sermon Series: “Creation Care”
Sermon: “Creation Care: Engaging in Justice”
Scripture: Psalm 139:13-18, Matthew 22:34-40

Date Preached: Sunday, September 22, 2013
Cedar Spring Baptist Church, Spartanburg, SC

[SLIDE 1: CARE] Today we continue with our four week sermon series about the biblical call to creation care...or the care for God’s world. This series is titled, “C.A.R.E... Christians Assuming Responsibility for the Earth.” As I have noted numerous times over the last two Sunday, this subject of creation care has historically been ignored in most Baptist church. Environmental issues have not traditionally been a part of Baptist life. However, I believe that as we take a closer look at the Scripture, we can make a biblical case that the care of the environment has implications to almost every aspect of our walk of faith. It affects how we view the Lord Jesus Christ... the Great Commission... the value of human life... even the importance of the human soul.

[SLIDE 2: POPULATION] Did you know that as of today, there are approximately 7,112,871,000 people living on this planet? Of course, this number is ever growing. By this time tomorrow, there will be an extra 200,000 people on the planet. By this time next year, there will be approximately 80 million more people on the planet than there was today. Do you realize that this yearly increase in the world’s population is comparable to the combined populations of California, Texas, and New York?  

[SLIDE 3: AFRICA] According to Population Reference Bureau, the place that has the fastest rate of population growth in 2013 will be sub-Saharan Africa; also one of the poorest places on earth. Unfortunately, the World Bank reports that in sub-Saharan Africa, the soils, forests, wetlands, rangelands, and fish and wildlife populations are deteriorating at an alarming rate. And this environmental degradation is increasing human suffering. In sub-Saharan Africa and in many other places around the world, there is an obvious link between the degradation of the environment and human suffering. The United Nations reports that 870 million people in the world today are suffering from undernourishment. Let me put that number into perspective for you. Williams-Brice Stadium in Columbia and the Death Valley Stadium in Clemson each hold approximately 85,000. The number of people who are hungry in the world today could fill Williams-Brice or Death Valley to capacity over 10,235 times.

As Christians, God calls us to minister to all the people of the world...to care for the suffering, the sick, the hungry, the poor, the homeless, and the sorrowful. One of the ways that we can care for these people is by caring for God’s creation. As the world’s population grows by 200,000 each day, our pursuit of environmental justices will become more and more important. [SLIDE 4: TITLE] And so the title of our sermon today is, “Creation Care: Engaging in Justice.”
Psalm 139:13-18 (NIV)
For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you.

Matthew 22:34-40 (NIV)
34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” 37 Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Opening Prayer
Our God in Heaven...how great is your name in all the earth.
You are the Maker of all creation. You made the stars and the planets.
You fashioned the mountains and the forests.
You created the birds of the sky, the fish of the sea,
And all the animals that roam the earth.
But your greatest creation was humankind.
You made humanity and breathe your life into your creation.
God, we pray that through your holy Bible,
We would better understand our connection to the creation world
And our connection to our fellow human being.
Help us to be people who seek justice for all.
We pray that as we open your Holy Word, you would speak to us.
Make us more like you. In the name of Christ we pray, Amen.

Opening Story
[SLIDE 5:BLANK] Anyone here remember the television show from the 1970’s, “The Six Million Dollar Man?” As a kid, I used to love watching that show every Sunday night. It was one of my all time favor programs. In fact, I still have four Six Million Dollar Man Bubble Gum cards.

If you remember the series, the main character, Steve Austin, was played by Lee Majors. Steve Austin was an astronaut. However, one day as he was testing an experimental aircraft, the plane crashed leaving Steve Austin terribly injured. In fact, Steve Austin lost both legs, his right arm, and his left eye. If you remember the story line, Steven Austin is given the opportunity to have his missing limbs and eye replaced with bionic replacements. I can still remember that catch line that was always played as the television show was starting... “We can rebuild him... we have the technology...” Back in 1973, the cost of the operation as well as the bionic parts to make a bionic man cost 6
million dollars. Now, I know that was a lot of money back then. But have you been to the doctor lately? Forty years later, you could not buy a bionic big toe for that price. But remember back in the day what that 6 million dollars got you? Two bionic legs that allowed you to run 60 miles an hour...a cool bionic eye that had zoom and infrared capabilities... and a bionic arm that could crush boulders and stop cars. Remember that cool bionic man sound whenever he would jump or use his bionic arm? Of course the government did not let Steve Austin just walk away with six million dollars worth of bionics. He had to go to work for the Office of Scientific Intelligence as a secret agent. I guess that was price to be paid for a six million dollar operation.

As I was working on today’s sermon, the Six Million Dollar Man television show kept coming to mind as I was considering the worth of one human soul from the perspective of God. I guarantee you, each of us is worth infinitely more than six million dollars to the Lord. If you think about it, from God’s point of view, each of the 7.1 billion souls on this planet is a priceless, one-of-a-kind, work of art. The value of each person is beyond calculation. In fact, from God’s perspective, each individual soul was worth dying for so that it might be redeemed.

In our time together today, I want us to consider from the scriptures how the church...how the average Christian...should be engaging in creation care as a way to care for God’s greatest creation...humankind.

I. Each Person, Created in God’s Imagine, Has Value

I believe that if we are to understand the value of the human soul, we first need to go back to the beginning...back to the creation narrative. Of all the living things found in creation, only humanity was created in God’s image. In the creation account found in Genesis 1:26-27, God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Only to human beings did God instill his own personal characteristics. Like himself, God gave humanity the ability to reason and the ability to experience deep emotional love.

Every human being from every corner of the world has been created in the image of God himself, and it is this God-given trait that gives worth to each living soul. In fact, it was because of the soul’s worth that the Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, came to redeem humanity. As that iconic Bible verse of the Christian faith states, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Each of the 7.1 billion souls on the earth is made in God’s image and are priceless to the Lord.

I want you to listen again to our Scripture from Psalm 139:13-18. Listen to the care by which the Psalmist describes how God made each of us. *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.* *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.* My frame was
not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body: all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you. Each person here today... each soul on this earth... is equally loved...equally care for... by God. And if we are truly followers of the Lord, then what the Lord values, we should also value.

II. Each Person has Basic Needs: Food, Water, Shelter

But as we all know, human beings have basic needs. All of us have basic human needs that must be met if we are to stay alive for any length of time...if we are to have any quality of life. This is the way it has been since the beginning. In Genesis 1:29, God told the man and the woman, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.” The three basic needs for sustainable human are food, water, and shelter. Unfortunately, there are many places in the world today where these basic needs go unmet.

According to Habitat for Humanity, there are 827.6 million people around the world who live in urban slums. By 2020, this number is expected to grow to almost one billion. Each year, 1.8 million children die due to illness caused by the lack of clean water and sanitation.

Many of the challenges in meeting the basic needs of these people are environmentally related. However, the sad truth to these statistics is that the overwhelming majority of those who lack proper food, clean water, and adequate shelter are powerless to change their situation. They do not have the money, education, influence, or resources to make their life better. They are in a mess and there is absolutely nothing they can do about it. They are trapped. As Christians, we are called to seek justice for these who are disadvantaged.

The Bible tells us in Proverbs 29:7, the righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.

In Psalm 140:12, we hear these words from the Psalmist... I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.

As Christians, God expects us to seek justice for the poor...to uphold the cause of the needy. God expects us to care for the needs of the helpless...to address the sufferings of the hungry. My friends, there is no reason that the needs of the world cannot be met. There is enough food to feed the world...there is enough money to provide clean water for the world... there is enough knowledge to reclaim the degraded lands. But what there is not enough of is the will to do what is right.

III. Christians are Called to Care for Others

As Christians, we are called to care for others. Want evidence of this? Look at the Lord. Throughout the gospels, Jesus addressed the
physical needs of many people. In Matthew 14:13-21, Jesus fed thousands of hungry people who came to Him to be healed. In Luke 5:17-26, Jesus healed a paralyzed man bound to mat. In John 9:1-7, Jesus gave sight to a man blind since birth. Time after time, Jesus showed His compassion toward people by addressing their physical needs.

Listen again to the words of our New Testament scripture today from Matthew 22:34-40. I believe the words of the Lord sum up our calling as Christians... Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Love your neighbor as yourself. Now what does that mean? Let me put it this way... would you provide clean water to your family...your children... your grandchildren... or would you make them all drink from a polluted river? I would dare say that each of us would do our very best to make sure our family had safe drinking water. Well, that is what we are expected to do for our neighbor.

But something wonderful happens as we seek justice for our neighbor. As we address the physical needs of people, spiritual doorways are created. Opportunities come available to share the Gospel. Think about Jesus. Through his acts of mercy and love, Jesus created doorways through which he was also able to minister to spiritual needs. As the followers of Jesus, we are also called to care for the needs of others. We as modern Christians have been given the opportunity to work “miracles” in the lives of others with our gifts of technology, medicine, and food. And like our Lord, as we care for the physical needs of others, doorways will be opened to meet spiritual needs as well. I can think of nothing more pleasing than to see a hungry person fed both physically and spiritually.

IV. We Care for Others by Caring for Creation

I believe that as we consider the worth of each human being to God... as we consider the needs of each person... as we consider our call as Christians to minister to those in need... I believe we see our calling to care for the creation on which so many rely. If we as Christians do not address the creation care problems of the world, then the number of those hurting will only climb higher and higher.

When we consider how many people in the world are suffering today as a result of environmental problems, it is easy for us to become overwhelmed. In fact, we can be tempted to do nothing because the problems seem so great. But as people of faith, we should remember that we serve a God of miracles; a God who is at work in his creation. God has provided Christian mission organizations with the resources and the technology needed to address many of the world’s environmental problems. In the name of Christ, Christians are drilling wells to provide clean drinking water, planting trees to combat deforestation, and improving crop yields through sustainable farming practices. As Christians address the creation care issues of the world, we are engaging in justice for all.
Closing Thoughts

In your bulletin today is an example of how the congregation of First Baptist Church of Austin, Texas, decided they would address a creation care issue that was affecting people in poorest part of Ethiopia...the issue of clean water. For the Christmas season of 2012, First Baptist Church of Austin adopted the Advent theme, “Worship Fully, Spend Less, Give More, and Love All.” As part of its Advent focus, the church undertook a mission project. The church was convicted by the fact that hundreds of millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia do not have access to clean water.

As part of their Advent focus, the church set a goal of raising $12,000; enough to dig two well in Ethiopia. However, as the church’s excitement grew over the project, FBC of Austin was able to raise over $42,000; enough to dig seven wells! Rev. Joe Bumbulis, Minister to Students and Missions, states, “Truly what made the ‘Water for Hope’ campaign beautiful was the collective power shown in the many small gifts that were given. Yes, there were some large gifts, but the majority of this campaign was carried by many small donations.” Because of this church’s commitment to addressing a creation care issue, there is hope in parts of Ethiopia today.

I believe that this is the type of action... the type of help...that the Lord expects us to undertake as a people and as a church. God has called us to engage in justice for all people. Now we must decide if we have the will to do it. Let us pray.

Notes:


Sermon PowerPoint Slides
Sermon Series: “Creation Care”
Sermon: “Creation Care: Engaging in Justice”
Scripture: Psalm 139:13-18, Matthew 22:34-40

Date Preached: Sunday, September 22, 2013
Cedar Spring Baptist Church, Spartanburg, SC

[SLIDE 1: CARE] 

![Image of CARE logo: Christians Assuming Responsibility for the Earth]

[SLIDE 2: POPULATION] 

Earth’s Population: 7,112,871,000
I. Each Person, Created in God’s Image, has Value
II. Each Person has Basic Needs: Food, Water, Shelter

The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.

Proverbs 29:7
I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.

Psalm 140:12

III. Christians are Called to Care for Others
IV. We Care for Others by Caring for Creation
Psalm 139:13-18 (NIV)
For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you.
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34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:

36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” 37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

I. Each Person, Created in God’s Imagine, has Value
(Genesis 1:26-27, John 3:16, Psalm 139:13-18)

II. Each Person has Basic Needs: Food, Water, Shelter
(Genesis 1:29, Proverbs 29:7, Psalm 140:12)

III. Christians are Called to Care for Others

IV. We Care for Others by Caring for Creation
Additional Notes

Check out the Creation Care Information Center located by the sink in the educational hallway.

**Recycling Opportunity:**
Please place your old and used Sunday School books, devotional books, Bibles, music, and related materials in the box at the entrance of the choir room. These materials will be send to a company that will use them in various English speaking ministries around the world.
# Creation Care Calendar

**Sunday, September 22, 2013**

11:00 a.m.  Third Creation Care Sermon:  
“Creation Care: Engaging Justice.”

2:00 p.m.  Third Creation Care Bible Study

**Sunday, September 29, 2013**

11:00 a.m.  “Fourth Creation Care Sermon:  
“Creation Care: Anticipating Redemption”

12:00 p.m.  Congregation Discussion  
FREE luncheon  
Menu: Homemade chili, loaded baked potato, and dessert.

2:00 p.m.  Fourth Creation Care Bible Study
Today in the World...

There are many Christians, many churches, in the world today who are deciding that they will make a difference in the world. They are choosing to follow God’s leadership in addressing the creation care issues adversely affecting millions of people around the world. One of the churches that is making a difference is First Baptist Church of Austin, Texas. The following is a summation of the story, “Austin Congregation Raises Funds to Build Seven Wells in Ethiopia,” written by Emily Holladay about the church’s clean water project.¹

For the Christmas season of 2012, First Baptist Church of Austin adopted the Advent theme, “Worship Fully, Spend Less, Give More, and Love All.” As part of its Advent focus, the church undertook a mission project. The church was convicted by the fact that hundreds of millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia do not have access to clean water. As part of their Advent focus, the church set a goal of raising $12,000; enough to dig two wells in Ethiopia. However, as the church’s excitement for the project grew, FBC of Austin was able to raise over $42,000; enough to dig seven wells!

Rev. Joe Bumbulis, Minister to Students and Missions, states, “Truly what made the ‘Water for Hope’ campaign beautiful was the collective power shown in the many small gifts that were given. Yes, there were some large gifts, but the majority of this campaign was carried by many small donations. Because of this church’s commitment to addressing a creation care issue, there is hope in parts of Ethiopia today.

Sermon Series: “Creation Care”
Sermon: “Creation Care: Anticipating Redemption”
Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25, Roman 8:18-21

Date Preached: Sunday, September 29, 2013
Cedar Spring Baptist Church, Spartanburg, SC

[SLIDE 1: CARE] Today we conclude our four week sermon series on the biblical call to creation care...or the Christian call to environmental stewardship. This series has been titled, “C.A.R.E... Christians Assuming Responsibility for the Earth.” As we have noted in this series, environmental issues have not been a notable part of Baptist life. However, as the Scriptures give testimony, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator and is actively engaged in the world that he made. As we carry Christ’s message of grace and forgiveness into the world, we should be caring for the earth he made that so many rely upon to sustain their lives.

[SLIDE 2: EARTH] For many Christians, the environment is seen as a passing, disposable, part of what God has made. Some think, “If God will one day make a new heaven and a new earth, why care for this world?” However, this view of a disposable creation is not part of the testimony of Scripture. Throughout the Bible, we read about God’s redemption: the redemption of the human soul through the mercy and forgiveness of Christ, the redemption of the human body that will one day be transformed into an eternal body, the redemption of creation that will one day be transformed into an eternal paradise. Not only did Christ’s sacrifice redeem humanity, Christ’s death and resurrection redeemed all of God’s fallen world.

As believers, part of the message we carry into the world...part of the message that we embody... is hope. It is the anticipation that one day all things will be made new. We minister in Jesus’ name because of this hope. It is this hope that leads us to give to mission offerings, participate in mission trips, help our neighbor, share the Good News with a loved one. And I believe that it is this same hope that should inspire us to care for the world that God made...to anticipate creation’s redemption. [SLIDE 3: TITLE] And so the title of our sermon today is, “Creation Care: Anticipating Redemption.”

Isaiah 65:17-25 (NIV)
17 “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. 19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. 20 “Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. 21 They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. 23 They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to
misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. 24 Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.

Roman 8:18-21 (NIV)
18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

Opening Prayer
Our Father in Heaven... Great is your name in all the earth. You are the Creator. You are the sustainer of all life. We your children bow humbly before you. God, we give thanks for the world you have made for us. It is perfect. As you designed it, it meets all of our needs. But God, we recognize that we have not cared for your world as you intended. We know that because of humanity’s carelessness toward your world, countless millions are suffering this day. So many are hurting, so many are struggling, so many are hopeless this day because of the world in which they are forced to endure. God, we pray that you would inspire us as the followers of Christ to care for your world in anticipation of its ultimate redemption. Help us to remember that your sacrifice on the cross not only deliver fallen humanity, it delivered fallen creation as well. Help us to make this world a better place for all to live as a testimony of the hope we professes. It is in the name of Christ the Creator we pray, Amen.

Opening Story
[SLIDE 4:ARAL SEA] One of the greatest environmental disasters of all times is one you may not have heard about. It’s the story of the Aral Sea located in the old Soviet Union. Over fifty years ago, the Aral Sea was the fourth largest lake in the world covering over 26,000 square miles. It was a beautiful lake...a lake full of life. According to National Geographic, in the Aral Sea’s hay-day, thousands of fishermen worked on the sea bringing in over 40,000 tons of fish each year. There were nineteen fishing villages around the sea with thousands of people employed in the fishing industry. From processing, to canning, to the transportation of fish, the Aral Sea provided a livelihood for the people of the area. On a daily basis, train cars full of fish left the Aral Sea headed to the markets of Moscow.

But beginning in the 1960’s, things began to change. Water going into the sea was diverted to irrigation projects. As the years past, more and more water was diverted...less and less water reached the lake. The Aral Sea began to shrink smaller and smaller. By the 1980’s, the growing salinity levels of the shrinking sea grew too high to support fish life. [SLIDE 5:SHIP] The fishing industry collapsed. Giant ships became grounded on the lake bottom never to float again. Today, the Aral Sea is only a tenth of its original size.
The loss of the Aral Sea had a devastating effect on the surrounding area. According to the United Nations, the loss of the Aral Sea raised the salinity of the soils in the surrounding area, reduced the amount of farmable land, caused irreversible losses in plant and animal life, and deprived millions of people a source of food and income.\[SLIDE 6:SHIP 2\] According to National Geographic, the shrinking sea left behind a salt flat 200 miles wide that was filled with the pesticides from decades of agricultural runoff. Beginning in the late 1980’s, giant dust storms carry hundreds of tons of salt, sand, and chemicals into the air plagued the area. People breathed the contaminants into their lungs. Throat cancer and respiratory disease became common. The loss of the fish industry meant that thousands lost a reliable protein source and became anemic. Infant mortality rose to 60 in 1,000, the highest in the Soviet Union in the late 1980’s.¹

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited the Aral Sea region in April 2010. While standing on the shores of a vanished sea, the Secretary-General said that the Aral Sea was “a vivid testament to what happens when we waste our common natural resources, when we neglect our environment, when we mismanage our environment.”⁴ Today, the Aral Sea remains dry and empty. And the people continue to suffer.

[SLIDE 7:BLANK] Unfortunately, there are many other human-made environmental disasters that are devastating the lives of millions around the world today. And we as follower of Christ must decide what we will do. Will we continue to ignore the problems? Will we shake our heads and say that it’s someone else’s responsibility? Will we allow ourselves to experience a token amount of pity and then go about our lives without thinking about the suffering again? Or will we do something to care for the suffering? ...do something to care for the environmental problem causing the problem? Creation is not disposable. It is redeemable. Creation is not some type of galactic Styrofoam box that is discarded when it is used up. On the contrary, creation is loved by God and creation will ultimately be redeemed by God. In the same way the redeemed of humanity will be transformed from the perishable to the imperishable, so will creation be transformed. In our time together, let us look to the scriptures to guide as we anticipate creation’s redemption.

I. Creation has a Place in God’s Ultimate Will
[SLIDE 8:THOUGHT 1] As we have noted in this sermon series, creation has purpose. God made creation to reveal his glory, to point us toward Christ, and to give humankind a home. All of these attributes of creation...and many more...were made as part of God’s ultimate will for the universe. God made all things to serve what he wants to do....want he wants to accomplish. God had a plan.

My first pastorate was a church in Milledgeville, GA, called Evergreen Baptist Church. Over time, the church grew to the point where it wanted to build new church building. Now, when we realize what we wanted to do, we did not just go out and start building a church. First, we put together a plan. We decided the type of land we needed for a church. Then we consulted an architect who drew out a detailed plan of a new church. Over time, we meet with contractors who would be doing the work. We spent time
picking out carpet colors, paint colors, furniture styles, and the list went on and on. To be honest, there were times when I wondered why we needed certain things in the church. For example, the building inspector told us that we needed hurricane clips on the roof trusses to secure them to the rest of the building. A hurricane clip is a little piece of curved metal about 3 inches long. It seemed so insignificant to me. But as I later learned, tests have shown that in high winds, hurricane clips on a structure are often the difference between keeping a roof or losing a roof in a high wind. All details were important to the larger plan of building a church.

In a similar way, sometimes we look at creation the way I looked at those hurricane clips...of little value and significance. But all things, great and small, in creation serve the will of God. All are part of what God is accomplishing through His universe. As the Apostle Paul stated in Ephesians 1:10, through Christ, God will “…bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth…” Somehow in Christ, it all fits together. God is busy working his will… his plan… his purpose… through every aspect of his good creation.

II. Creation is Suffering from the Effects of Sin

But it is obvious as we look at God’s creation, creation is not as it should be…that creation is suffering from the effects of sin. From our passage in Romans 8:19-21, we read...

19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

As stated in Romans, creation is suffering from the bondage of decay. Creation is suffering the effects of the sin that humankind brought into creation in the beginning. Creation itself did not sin, but it was brought down by humanity’s sin. When humankind fell, creation, by default, fell. Because of the sins of humankind, creation was cursed. In Genesis 3:17, God said to Adam, “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.”

Each day, creation suffers from the results of our sins. There are many examples from many parts of the world where humanity has all but destroyed portions of God’s good earth. With little concern about the lives of people, the biodiversity of plants, or the habitat of animals, creation has been exploited for the quick profit. The results are decimated forests, eroded soils, polluted drinking water, a loss of animal/plant species, and a devastating toll on human life. Millions suffer today because of the sin we commit against God’s creation. And yes, I believe it is a sin to misuse the earth. God gave us creation to care for and to use….not to abuse and exploit. Creation is suffering because of sin. As Romans 8:22 states, we know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to this present time.

But as we read in Romans 8, creation also longs in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. Notice this passage says the children of God to be reveal. Could it be that creation is waiting for the children of God… those called by the name of Christ...
to address the problems of creation? Though God will bring ultimate redemption, could it be that the followers of Christ have the power to correct some of the wrongs in creation? Could it be that we have the power to fix some of the problems causing human suffering? I believe we do.

III. Creation will Ultimately be Redeemed

[SLIDE 10: THOUGHT 3] But not only do we have hope of what we can do, we have the hope that God will one day redeem creation. One day, all things will be made right. In Isaiah 65, God gave hope to the people of Israel. But this passage also offers us hope today. From Isaiah 65:17 we read,17 “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. A new day is coming. At God’s appointed time, creation will be redeemed from sin’s corruption and influence. God will bring correction to his creative work.

As I was reading Isaiah 65 in preparation of today’s sermon, I could not help but think about the millions suffering today because the environment has been abused to the point that they lack proper water, food, and shelter. I believe the hope offer to the children of Israel so long ago can also offer hope to the children of humanity today. For example, in Isaiah 65:20... Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. It is the weak, young, and vulnerable who suffer most when pollution contaminates a basic need such as drinking water. But as Christians, we have the power to dramatically reduce infant mortality and human illness caused by poor water quality.

In Isaiah 65:21-22 we read...they will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. Often those who suffer from a degraded environment are forced to relocate. They leave behind homes and businesses trying to escape their situation. Just think about all those villages displaced when the Aral Sea dried up. Through creation care, Christians can help redeem lives and make God’s creation a better place for all people.

In Isaiah 23 we read...They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. Again, this passage was originally spoken to the people of Israel. But I believe it has lessons for us today. Those who are suffering as a result of deforestation...eroded soils...polluted waters...are often the poorest people in the world. They have no means by which to relocate...to start over again. For many, their children will be born to the same doom...the same misfortune...that they faced. But with God’s help, Christians can break the cycle of suffering.

But though we as followers of Christ can do a lot in correcting the problems of the world, it will only be through God’s intervention that creation will truly be redeemed. In Isaiah 65:25, God promised that one day “…the wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like an ox…” One day, God will do what only God can do... undo the
impact of sin on the world. One day, God will be the one who will ultimately redeem creation.

IV. Christians Must Seek Creation’s Redemption

But until that day when Christ makes all things new, we as Christians should be working toward creation’s redemption. As Christians, we should not forget that Christ not only came to redeem humanity, but he also came to redeem God’s creation. Humankind is indeed God’s greatest work and the focus of God’s redemptive love through Christ. However, as we have seen throughout this sermon series, God also desires to see his creation redeemed. As those called into partnership with Christ to carry the Good News of redemption to humankind, we should remember that humanity was first called into partnership with God in the care of his world.

We should never forget that the fate of creation affects the lives of people. If we are to be effective in carrying the Gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth, then we must seek to redeem those places in creation that are causing human suffering and hindering the spread of the Gospel. As we promote and work toward creation’s redemption, we are also working toward human redemption. We care for others when we care for the environment that serves as their home.

Closing Prayer

As we close out this sermon series, I would like to offer this closing prayer...

God, as we look at creation...may the stars of the universe remind us of your glory.
May the trees of the forest and the birds of the air remind us that what you have made has value.
May the creatures that moves along the ground or swim in the sea remind us that through Christ all were made.
May the ground we walk upon remind us that we are made from the very dust itself.
May the water we drink and the air we breathe remind us that creation is the home you fashioned for us.
May the rising sun in the morning and setting sun in the evening remind us of creation’s story and the partnership we share with you in caring for this world.
May the difficulties and struggles of the world’s people remind us that each person has value...that all people are created in your image.
May our comfortable homes remind us that people around the world are struggling to find the basic needs of food, water, and shelter.
May the sounds of mountain streams and ocean surfs remind us that all parts of creation serve your ultimate purpose.
May the garbage that litters the roadways remind us that creation is suffering.
May the rainbow after the storm remind us that one day creation will be fully redeemed.
May we as the followers of Christ be reminded of our responsibility to care for our neighbor by caring for where our neighbor lives.
May we never forget that creation belongs to you.
It is in the name of Christ the Creator we pray, Amen.
Notes:


Sermon PowerPoint Slides
Sermon Series: “Creation Care”
Sermon: “Creation Care: Anticipating Redemption”
Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25, Romans 8:18-21

Date Preached: Sunday, September 29, 2013
Cedar Spring Baptist Church, Spartanburg, SC

[SLIDE 1: CARE]

[SLIDE 2:EARTH]
(Photo obtained for Office.com Clip Art)
[SLIDE 3: TITLE]

Creation Care: Anticipating Redemption

[SLIDE 4: ARAL SEA]
(Photo obtained from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kos-aral.jpg)
(Public Domain)
[SLIDE 5:SHIP]
(Photo obtained from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aralship2.jpg)
/Public Domain)

[SLIDE 6:SHIP 2]
/Public Domain)
I. Creation has a Place in God’s Ultimate Will
II. Creation is Suffering from the Effects of Sin

III. Creation will Ultimately be Redeemed
IV. Christians Must Seek Creation’s Redemption
Isaiah 65:17-25 (NIV)

17 “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. 19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. 20 “Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. 21 They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. 23 They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. 24 Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb will feed
together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.

Roman 8:18-21 (NIV)

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

I. Creation has a Place in God’s Ultimate Will

II. Creation is Suffering from the Effects of Sin

III. Creation Will Ultimately be Redeemed

IV. Christians Must Seek Creation’s Redemption
Check out the Creation Care Information Center located by the sink in the educational hallway.

**Recycling Opportunities**

**Used Church Literature**

Please place your outdated and used Sunday School books, devotional books, Bibles, music, and related materials in the box at the entrance of the choir room. These materials will be sent to a company that will use them in various English speaking ministries around the world.

**Used Bulletins**

Please deposit your unwanted bulletins in the bins located in the vestibule or in education hallway beside the sink.
Creation Care Calendar

**Sunday, September 29, 2013**

11:00 a.m.  “Fourth Creation Care Sermon: “Creation Care: Anticipating Redemption”

12:00 p.m.  Congregation Discussion
FREE luncheon
**Menu:** Homemade chili, loaded baked potato, and brownies/ice cream.

2:00 p.m.  Fourth Creation Care Bible Study
Today in the World...

One of the worst human-made ecological disasters of history is the Aral Sea. Boarding on the regions of Kazakhstan, Karakalpakstan, and Uzbekistan of the old Soviet Union, the Aral Sea was once the fourth largest lake in the world. However, with most of its incoming waters begin diverted for irrigation, the Aral Sea has shrunk to less than 10 percent of its original size.¹

In the 1960’s, the Aral Sea was a vibrant lake filled with fish. According to National Geographic, thousands of fishermen worked on the sea bringing in over 40,000 tons of fish each year. There were nineteen fishing villages around the Aral Sea with thousands of people employed in the fishing industry. From processing, to canning, to the transportation of fish, the Aral Sea provided a livelihood for the people of the area. On a daily basis, train cars full of fish headed to Moscow markets. But all of this was lost in the 1980’s when the salinity levels of the shrinking sea grew too high to support fish life.²

Abandoned ship in the Aral Sea (public domain)³
Though long term plans and efforts are attempting to correct the Aral Sea disaster, the loss of the sea has already had a devastating effect on the surrounding area. According to the United Nations, the loss of the Aral Sea has "raised the salinity of the area’s soil, reducing the amount of arable land, causing irreversible losses in flora and fauna and depriving millions in neighboring countries of critical sources of income."² According to National Geographic, the shrinking sea left behind a "salt flat close to 200 miles wide, infused with the pesticides of decades of agricultural runoff."² The Aral Sea served as a climate buffer for the region. However, with the sea’s loss, winters are colder and summers are hotter.

Beginning in the late 1980’s, virtually every few weeks, giant dust storms carry "hundreds of tons of salt, sand, and chemicals into the air, and into people’s lungs. Throat cancer and respiratory disease became common, and with no reliable protein source in the absence of fish, thousands became anemic. Infant mortality rose to 60 in 1,000, then the highest in the Soviet Union."²
U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited the Aral Sea region in April 2010. While standing on the shores of a vanished sea, the Secretary-General said that the Aral Sea was “a vivid testament to what happens when we waste our common natural resources, when we neglect our environment, when we mismanage our environment.”

Today, vast regions of the Aral Sea are dry and empty. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is important that we remember the connection between human life and the environment. As we seek the redemption of humanity through the message of Christ, it is imperative that we also address the pressing environmental issues of our world. The Aral Sea disaster is one of many examples of how environmental degradation is causing human suffering.
Below is satellite photo comparing the Aral Sea as it was in 1989 (left) and as it was in 2008 (right).


APPENDIX E

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Appendix E contains samples of the Cedar Spring Baptist Church community garden plan, community garden cost considerations, and results from the Cedar Spring Baptist Church energy usage survey.
Cedar Spring Baptist Church
Community Garden Basic Plan
24 – 4’x12’x36” plots = 1344 ft² of growing space
(not to scale)
Cedar Spring Baptist Church
Community Garden
Basic Cost Considerations

1. **Plot construction**
Each plot will need 6 – 2”x6”x16’ treated boards @ ~$30.00/board
For 24 plots = 144 boards for a cost of $4320.00. Note: This estimate does not take into consider the cost of lumber needed for bracing, the wood screws, soil, or any other materials needed to construct and secure the plots.

2. **Installation of Water line**
The community garden site does not have readily available water. A water line will need to be install by Spartanburg County from the road to the garden.

3. **Ongoing Water Usage**
The water usage for the garden will be an additional monthly cost for the church. This cost will be especially noticeable during the growing season.

4. **Tool shed construction**
The community garden site will need a secure location to store tools and gardening equipment.

5. **Tools**
The community garden will need hand tools, garden hoses, wheel barrows, gloves, etc.

6. **Operational expenses**
There will be cost for seeds, transplants, mulch, etc.

It is my opinion that the start-up cost for a community garden, without donated materials or labor, will be approximately $10,000.
At their September 11, 2013 meeting, the Properties Committee of Cedar Spring Baptist Church discussed potential ways to reduce the church’s energy usage. Two main energy saving items were identified in the meeting.

1. **Installation of a Central Heating/Air Control Panel**
   Over the last couple years, Cedar Spring Baptist Church has replaced the majority of its heating and air condition units. The replacement of these old units with more energy efficient units has helped the church to reduce its energy usage. However, the heating and air units are still control by a variety of thermostats scattered throughout the church. Some of these thermostats are difficult to locate if an individual is not familiar with the layout of the church. This also means that in order to turn on and off the units, someone has to visit each thermostat. This can be a time consuming process and often means that units remain on longer than needed. To help solve this problem, the Properties Committee considered the installation of a central panel located near the church office which could control all the church’s heating/air units. However, it was noted that the cost of the central panel installation would be several thousand dollars. This energy reduction project was considered too expensive when evaluating the other church maintenance issues which need to be addressed at Cedar Spring Baptist.

2. **Installation of more energy efficient lighting.**
   The interior of Cedar Spring Baptist Church is lit by dozens and dozens of florescent fixtures. All of these fixtures utilize the T12 florescent bulb. Newer and more energy efficient florescent fixtures use the T8 florescent bulb. Cedar Spring Baptist could reduce its energy usage by replacing the T12 fixtures with T8 fixtures and T8 bulbs. However, it was noted that upgrading the church’s lighting would cost substantially. Any savings received from the lighting upgrade would take years to observe. As with the central heating/air control panel, this energy reduction project was considered too expensive when considering other church maintenance issues.

The Properties Committee decided that the best way the church could reduce its energy usage was to do a better job of turning off heating/air units when they were not in use and closing the church’s front doors at the end of the worship services instead of propping them open.

The Properties Committee was very open to considering energy saving changes. However, limited resources at this time made these changes highly unlikely.
APPENDIX F

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Appendix F contains samples of the project C.A.R.E. survey summaries for the congregation and the Bible study groups, a summary of the congregational attendance during the project, and survey results for the Creation Care Clean-Up Day.
Project C.A.R.E. Survey Summary

I. Summary of Tier One Statements

**Survey Statement One:** Cedar Spring Baptist should be actively involved in caring for the environment. (R=number of survey respondents).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Cong. Males</th>
<th>Cong. Females</th>
<th>Bible Study</th>
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5 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = No Opinion; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

**T-test (α=.05)**

August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data

- Congregation: p=.30 Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (male): p=.06 Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (female): p=.94 Conclusion: No significant change
- Bible Study: p=.09 Conclusion: No significant change
**Survey Statement Two:** Environmental issues are too political and should be avoided by the church. (R=number of survey respondents).

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**T-test (α=.05)**
August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data

- Congregation: p=.78  Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (male): p=.44  Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (female): p=.27  Conclusion: No significant change
- Bible Study: p=.22  Conclusion: No significant change
Survey Statement Three: Christians caring for the environment is an evangelistic witness. (R=number of survey respondents).

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T-test (α=.05)
August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data

- Congregation: p=.48 Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (male): p=.18 Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (female): p=.81 Conclusion: No significant change
- Bible Study: p=.12 Conclusion: No significant change

Survey Statement Three
**Survey Statement Four:** The care of the environment is biblically based.  
(R=number of survey respondents).

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T-test (α=.05)  
August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data

- Congregation: p=.58  
  Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (male): p=.18  
  Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (female): p=.68  
  Conclusion: No significant change
- Bible Study: p=.42  
  Conclusion: No significant change
**Survey Statement Five:** God is revealed through/in the natural world. (R=number of survey respondents).

<table>
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5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= No Opinion; 2= Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

T-test (α=.05)

**August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data**

- Congregation: p=.70 Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (males): p=.52 Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (females): p=.73 Conclusion: No significant change
- Bible Study: p=.17 Conclusion: No significant change
**Survey Statement Six:** Christians have a responsibility to be actively involved in environmental issues. (R=number of survey respondents).

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5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= No Opinion; 2= Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

**T-test (α=.05)**

August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data

- Congregation: p=.86
- Congregation (male): p=1
- Congregation (female): p=.80
- Bible Study: p=.21

Conclusion: No significant change

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[Graph showing the survey statement six results over different dates]
Survey Statement Seven: God cares for his creation.  
(R=number of survey respondents).

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T-test (α=.05)  
August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data

Congregation: p=.78  
Conclusion: No significant change

Congregation (males): p=.17  
Conclusion: No significant change

Congregation (females): p=.55  
Conclusion: No significant change

Bible Study: p=.36  
Conclusion: No significant change
Survey Statement Eight: Each person bears a personal responsibility in caring for God’s creation. (R=number of survey respondents).

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T-test (α=.05)
August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data

Congregation: p=.57 Conclusion: No significant change
Congregation (male): p=.86 Conclusion: No significant change
Congregation (female): p=.20 Conclusion: No significant change
Bible Study: p=.26 Conclusion: No significant change
II. Summary of Tier Two Statements

**Survey Statement Nine**: The earth is currently experiencing human-made environmental problems. (R=number of survey respondents).

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5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= No Opinion; 2= Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

T-test (α=.05)
August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data

- Congregation: p=.63 Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (males): p=.54 Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (females): p=.31 Conclusion: No significant change
- Bible Study: p=.60 Conclusion: No significant change
**Survey Statement Ten:** People in the world are suffering today as a result of human-made environmental problems. (R=number of survey respondents).

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**T-test (α=.05)**

August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data

- Congregation: p=.12  Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (males): p=.27  Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (females): p=.21  Conclusion: No significant change
- Bible Study: p=.09  Conclusion: No significant change
**Survey Statement Eleven:** If not addressed, global environmental problems will adversely affect future generations. (R=number of survey respondents).

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**Survey Statement Twelve:** Global environmental problems personally impact my life. (R=number of survey respondents).

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5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= No Opinion; 2= Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

T-test (α=.05)

**August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data**

- Congregation: p=.61  Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (males): p=.51  Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (females): p=.68  Conclusion: No significant change
- Bible Study: p=.48  Conclusion: No significant change
**Survey Statement Thirteen:** Caring for the environment is an important component of missions. (R=number of survey respondents).

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**T-test (α=.05)**

**August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data**

- Congregation: p=.85 Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (male): p=.47 Conclusion: No significant change
- Congregation (female): p=.72 Conclusion: No significant change
- Bible Study: p=.09 Conclusion: No significant change
Survey Statement Fourteen: Jesus Christ is seen through creation.
(R=number of survey respondents).

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T-test (α=.05)
August 25 Pre-Project Data & November 3 Post-Project Data

Congregation: p=.19  Conclusion: No significant change
Congregation (male): p=.27 Conclusion: No significant change
Congregation (female): p=.47 Conclusion: No significant change
Bible Study: p=.36  Conclusion: No significant change
Survey Statement Fifteen: “Loving our neighbor as ourselves” involves the care of the environment. (R=number of survey respondents).

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**Survey Statement Sixteen**: Improving the standard of living for people should be a part of the church’s evangelistic efforts. (R=number of survey respondents).

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Survey Statement Seventeen: We glorify God by caring for his creation. (R=number of survey respondents).

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5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= No Opinion; 2= Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree
III. Tier Three Survey Statements

**Survey Statement Eighteen:** God created the natural world as a witness to his glory.  
(R=number of survey respondents).

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Survey Statement Nineteen: God created every part of the natural world for a reason. (R=number of survey respondents).

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**Survey Statement Twenty**: Since sin corrupted God’s original creation, the present world is of little value. (R=number of survey respondents).

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</table>

5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= No Opinion; 2= Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree
**Survey Statement Twenty-One:** God created earth to be humanity’s home. (R=number of survey respondents).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Congregation</th>
<th>Cong. Males</th>
<th>Cong. Females</th>
<th>Bible Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 15, 2013</td>
<td>4.9          (R=38)</td>
<td>5.0         (R=16)</td>
<td>4.9         (R=21)</td>
<td>4.8         (R=6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= No Opinion; 2= Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree
**Survey Statement Twenty-Two:** God gave humanity the responsibility to care for the earth.  (R=number of survey respondents).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Cong. Males</th>
<th>Cong. Females</th>
<th>Bible Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 15, 2013</td>
<td>4.8 (R=38)</td>
<td>4.8 (R=16)</td>
<td>4.8 (R=21)</td>
<td>4.7 (R=6)</td>
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</table>

5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= No Opinion; 2= Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

![Survey Question Twenty-Two](image_url)
Survey Statement Twenty-Three: God would be please at how humanity has cared for the earth thus far. (R=number of survey respondents).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Cong. Females</th>
<th>Bible Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1.7 (R=21)</td>
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5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= No Opinion; 2= Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree
**Survey Statement Twenty-Four:** It is of no real consequence if human activity causes various life forms to go extinct since humanity was given dominion over the earth and one day God will usher in a new creation. (R=number of survey respondents).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Congregation</th>
<th>Cong. Males</th>
<th>Cong. Females</th>
<th>Bible Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1.6 (R=21)</td>
<td>2.3 (R=6)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= No Opinion; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly Disagree
**Survey Statement Twenty-Five:** Not taking care of the environment is a sin. 
(R=number of survey respondents).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Congregation (R=37)</th>
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<th>Cong. Females (R=20)</th>
<th>Bible Study (R=6)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
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</table>

5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= No Opinion; 2= Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree
**Cedar Spring Baptist Church**  
**Project C.A.R.E. Congregational Attendance**  
**August 25-November 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 25, 2013 (Morning Worship)</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 8, 2013 (Morning Worship)</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 15, 2013 (Morning Worship)</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 15, 2013 (Post-Sermon Discussion/Luncheon)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 22, 2013 (Morning Worship)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 29, 2013 (Morning Worship)</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 29, 2013 (Post-Sermon Discussion/Luncheon)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 6, 2013 (Morning Worship)</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 3, 2013 (Morning Worship)</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creation Care Clean-Up Day
Survey Results
September 21, 2013

Attendance: 7
(5= Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= No Opinion; 2= Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree)

Clean-up day survey statement one: “As a member of Cedar Spring community, Cedar Spring Baptist has a responsibility for the care and beautification of the community.” Statement rating: 4.9.

Clean-up day survey statement two: “Creation care work days help the public image of Cedar Spring Baptist.” Statement rating: 4.6.

Clean-up day survey statement three: “Creation care work days are helpful in teaching people the importance of creation care.” Statement rating: 4.4.

Clean-up day survey statement four: “Creation care work days are helpful in teaching others about the Lord Jesus Christ.” Statement rating: 4.7.

Clean-up day survey statement five: “Creation care work days have the potential of attracting people to Cedar Spring Baptist.” Statement rating: 4.4.

Clean-up day survey statement six: “Cedar Spring Baptist should host a quarterly creation care cleanup day.” Statement rating: 4.6.

Clean-up day survey statement seven: “The church’s time could be better spent on projects other than creation care work days.” Statement rating: 1.9.

Clean-up day survey statement eight: “Today’s work day has encouraged me to personally do more to care for God’s creation.” Statement rating: 4.4.

Clean-up day survey statement nine: “Christians have a responsibility to care for God’s creation.” Statement rating: 4.7.

Clean-up day survey statement ten: “I would volunteer for another creation care work day.” Statement rating: 4.6.

Clean-up day survey statement eleven: “Jesus Christ is seen through creation.” Statement rating: 5.0.

Clean-up day survey statement twelve: “Caring for the environment is an important component of missions.” Statement rating: 4.9.

Clean-up day survey statement thirteen: “We glorify God by caring for his creation.” Statement rating: 4.7.
APPENDIX G

QUALITATIVE DATA

Appendix G contains samples of the qualitative data obtained from the congregational and Bible study group surveys and reflections on the two post sermon discussions.
Note to Reader: The following are quotes that congregational and Bible study participants wrote on their surveys. I have tried to stay true to what the respondents wrote by including their errors, run on sentences, etc., just as they appeared on the surveys. Corrections that I felt were necessary to understanding the quotes, I placed in brackets [ ]. It should be noted that my corrections may or may not reflect what the person was originally trying to communicate. ~MTL

August 25, 2013
“What are your thoughts on creation care?”

“We are to be good stewards and care for that which God has provided for us. We should be responsible for God’s creation. I believe that the environmentalist are weakening our country and have made it a political issue, thus hurting business, and our economy.”
Senior adult, male

“As God is our creator, he is made us in His image. He has left us (humans) to be like Adam and pursue and care for all living things, animals, trees, plants, water creatures, and plant life. God was emphatic when he said the work of creation is finished and perfect. We are fearfully and wonderfully made! We are his servants and should be doing all we can to look after or care for his world that he created!”
Senior adult, female

“Creation care is the responsibility for everyone. Jesus Christ is seen through creation.”
Senior adult, female

“I totally agree that it is our responsibility to help take care of creation. I do however feel people go overboard concerning global warming. I believe many things happen at God’s hands. We make a big deal over some things and then don’t do something as simple as recycle.”
Adult, female

“‘The earth is the Lords and the fullness thereof,’ reminds us that the earth belongs to God and not to mankind. Therefore, we are merely stewards of what is his, and should take good care of it. I think the politicalization of the issue has caused Christians to stay away from creation care.”
Adult, female

“That we [as] Christians should take care of what God has created and given to us.”
Adult, female
“We have been called to be stewards of the earth in all aspects.”
Adult, female

“We could do with a lot less. Manufacturing of high end, luxury items and enjoy more of natural features that God provides in nature. Less manufacturing promotes cleaner living. But that presents loss of jobs, so?”
Adult, female

“Save the world as Christians. God gave his Son to die for us. We should obey his word by serving his people. We should live in the world but live apart [from] the world.”
Senior adult, female

“Yes, taking care of God’s creation is part of what we were made to do, but that is a personal responsibility. The responsibility of the church is to minister, so if the church ministers to people through taking care of the environment that is useful, but if the church isn’t actively involved in a ministry, it is not necessary or useful for the church to spend its time doing what people already should.”
Adult, male

“We should care for anything he has blessed us with, this includes nature. He provides everything we need through nature.”
Adult, female

“God created the earth and all living things. We should be good stewards of God’s creation so we can pass on to the next generation a better place.”
Senior adult, male

“God created the earth and entrusted its stewardship to Adam and his progeny. Caring for the earth, including the oceans and all wildlife, are our responsibility. Failing in this responsibility will seriously impact our children and grandchildren.”
Senior adult, male

“We should beware of all the God love for the creatures he has given us[.] All you need to do is look outside and see the wonders sky, sun, moon, stars[.] We were blessed by God[’s] love[.] We should show respect for everything he has given us.”
Adult, female

“African proverb about us being the caretakers of our grandchildren’s world. If God put so much time, power, and thought into creation, why do we treat our responsibility as stewards so lightly?”
Adult, female

“It is essential to care for the earth. Some problems we are witnessing may already be difficult or impossible to reverse. Our body should be a temple – so should all the earth.”
Adult
“We could all do a better job.”
Senior adult, male

“Plant trees. Recycle. Take care of all God has give[n] to us.”
Senior adult, female

“When God gave man dominion over the earth and animals, he was appointing responsibility and accountability to go with that appointment. I believe God gave us many gifts on the earth that are ignored and, worse yet, abused by man. God can be seen throughout creation if man will just ‘be still and know’ in this frantic stricken world.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

“To do our best to keep our environment clean.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

“As Christians we have a moral, physical, and spiritual responsibility in caring for God’s creation.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

God made this world perfect. We were put here to care for his earth like a gardener cares for his crops. We have all but destroyed so much of God’s earth due to neglect and irresponsibility. It was here for us to enjoy and be proud that God gave us such a great place to live, but we just let it go to pot.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

“I believe that it is up to me to do as much as I can to preserve as much of the earth as possible. I try to use as little water and electricity as I can. I feel the more we use the more they do things to the earth in the name of progress.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

**September 8, 2013**

“What are your thoughts on creation care?”

“It is important.”
Adult, female

“The creation was created and solely designed by God. God had a plan from [that] day to make a beautiful place for us to live. We as God’s children should hold a high concern as how we his children are caring for it! I believe it will help [us] to care for each other as we walk this temporary homes! This is not our home but heaven is!”
Adult

“We have [an] obligation as Christians to take care of God’s creation. We [as] a church should be more involved as far as cleaning up the environment.”
Adult, male
“A very important part of my life and should be to every Christian.”
Senior adult, female

“Important lesson to pass on generationally.”
Adult, male

“We should be stewards of the earth. We should do all we can to conserve, prevent pollution, beautify, and clean up what has been destroyed.”
Adult, female

“I believe nature is a testament to God’s glory and power and has given us the task of being stewards of the earth.”
Adult, male

“We all need to be better stewards of God’s creation.”
Senior adult, male

“It is essential for our continued life on this earth.”
Senior adult, male

“I truly believe that God has entrusted us to care for the world we live in. In doing so, we honor him and can aid in spreading the gospel.”
Adult, female

“God created the world as a gift to us. We need to do everything we can to care for it.”
Adult, female

“Common sense is not look at enough in environmental issues. [Too] many rules and laws made.”
Senior adult, male

“God created a beautiful world for us to enjoy. We should preserve and treasure it every day!”
Adult, female

“God created the earth and we as Christians should care for what God has created for us.”
Adult, female

“Each of us as Christians and non-Christians are responsible for keeping our Lord’s earth beautiful. It should be an honor and not a job. We are the recipients of God’s love for all of us and should return this love by our pride in his creations.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant
September 15, 2013
“What are your thoughts on creation care?”

“We are called to take care of creation and the inhabitants.”
Senior adult, female

“God’s creation is revealed by the miracle of life each day. We each should be able to see the Creator each day and see how he cares for each of us. Nature reveals God’s majesty.”
Senior adult, male

“I agree.”
Adult, female

“God created the earth for us and we should take care of what God has given us.”
Adult, female

“I believe that God wants us to help take care of all the things he created.”
Adult, female

“I am so amazed by the wonderful world and creation God has created! All that is good comes from him and we should treasure and care for it daily!”
Adult, female

“I think it is great I have learned a lot, am more aware of my surroundings that God has created for us.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

“I don’t think that we need to be harsh on others about caring for creation. I do believe that all humans have a responsibility to do their part. I think we are commanded to do our part and will be held accountable for what we haven’t and have done.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

“I have become so aware of what God has created in this last week. I feel like I should try everything to take care of our environment. I will certainly do my part.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

“That God created all things for our good and then charged us to take care of it. We accepted the things he made for us, but we forgot our part of the deal.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant
September 22, 2013
“What are your thoughts on creation care?”

“As each individual looks at creation, they can’t help but strongly agree if we as humans, and that includes Christians, we need to pull together and CARE for the earth. It is everyone’s responsibility and job! We need to take a lesson from the American Indians if you ‘live’ or ‘pass through’ any portion of mother earth, leave it better than when you came and traveled on it. Take care of the earth and it will take care of us!”
Senior adult, female

“God created this world for us but gave us the charge to ‘rule’ over it. A good ruler does not devastate his people or claims more from them than they can give. A good ruler cares for his people and the land that supports all of them.”
Adult, male

“Community gardens! Each church should have one!”
Adult, female

“Important but overwhelming.”
Adult, female

“God created the earth. God created each of us. Therefore it is our responsibility as Christians to go and take care of what God gave us.”
Adult, female

“It is very important to take care of our creation. Pick up litter, plant trees, feed hungry, etc. It is our duty.”
Adult, female

“It is difficult for the average church to find a ‘start’ point and envision a mission that would address environment issues at home and abroad. Where do we go/do with this?”
Senior adult, male

“God created the world for us to live here and we as God’s people have a responsibility to care for his creation.”
Adult, female

“Would love to see us participate in a recycling program.”
Adult, female

“This is a critical area that has too long been avoided by our denomination.”
Senior adult, male

“It is hard to teach a hungry, sick person about God and Jesus. We have a responsibility to meet their most basic needs before we can meet their spiritual needs.
Adult, female, Bible study participant
“I think God made His world so he could enjoy watching the flowers, trees, and animals grow and multiply as to his will, then he created man so he could have someone to enjoy being with and watching us grow in our love for him. Then along came Satan and all changed.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

**September 29, 2013**
**What are your thoughts on creation care?**

“We as Christians have a responsibility to take care of God’s creation. We as humans are destroying the earth due to political reasons and the earth is being destroyed because of sin.”
Adult, male

“A thought: one has to have a dedication buried deep with them! There in your heart a seed transform into action! The desire to care for something (earth) takes time to cultivate into reality. Humans today don’t show dedication because they feel it is someone else’s job! They can’t cultivate reality because there isn’t a seed within their heart. God loved and still cares for his earth. He was very creative in how the world appears. We, as God’s example of one part of creation should have a seed of care and dedication buried deep within our soul and show a desire to care and protect the earth!”
Senior adult, female

“I think we should take care of the environment on a more commonsense environment and keep politics out of it. We are suffering now because of the political arena surrounding the publicity involved.”
Senior adult, male

“God created the world for us to live in. I think that we should take care of what God has given us.”
Adult, female

“We really need to take care of our environment or there won’t be much left for future generations, help others to do the same.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

“It should be part of every curriculum in all ministry programs both at the undergraduate and graduate levels.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

“We really dropped the ball when it comes to our caring for our God’s creation. He so lovingly created the most perfect world…”
Adult, female, Bible study participant
“It frightens me for future generations because resources are becoming increasingly depleted in an exploding population growth. Humans abusing the environment causes other humans to suffer; therefore, humans are destroying creation and mankind.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

**October 6, 2013**
**What are your thoughts on creation care?**

“I have learned so much about God creation that I didn’t realize before.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

“That God made us a beautiful world to live on and we should do our very best for him by keeping it perfect.”
Senior adult, female

“We as the body of Christ could and ought to be doing more for creation care.”
Adult, female

“I feel we have the responsibility of keeping our environment clean better than we do by making better discussions before we do something rather than trying to correct it later.”
Senior adult, male

**November 3, 2013**
**What are your thoughts on creation care?**

“That we as God’s chosen are responsible for God’s world and we have been charged by God to do his command.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

“Same as previously…Christians are commanded to care for their bodies, others, and the earth. To abuse and neglect the earth is a disrespect for God’s creation/God’s gift to us.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant

“Everything and everyone is God[’s] creation… we all should take care of each other and our environment.”
Adult, female, Bible study participant
Project C.A.R.E.
Reflections on Two Post Sermon Discussions
September 15 and 29, 2013

One of my project goals was to host two post-sermon discussion times. I scheduled these two discussion times on September 15 and September 29 following the Sunday morning worship service. To help increase the attendance for these two events, my family provided free luncheons in the church fellowship hall of Cedar Spring Baptist Church. For the September 15 luncheon, the menu was BBQ sandwiches, chips, baked beans, coleslaw, and cookies. For the September 29 luncheon, the menu was homemade chili, baked potatoes, brownies and ice cream. All who attended the September 15 and 29 morning worship services were invited to the luncheon and discussion time regarding the morning’s sermon. These luncheon/discussion times provided a great opportunity to hear feedback from the congregation on creation care. I believe these luncheons were important for several reasons:

1. The discussion times showed me the newness of the topic to the congregation. In both discussion sessions, I heard numerous people comment that they did not realize that environmental stewardship was a biblical calling. In fact, I would say that the congregation as a whole had never heard a pastor preach on environmental stewardship. Even though the topic was new to the congregation, the overwhelming response in the two discussions times was positive. One attendee commented that her eyes had been opened to the subject of creation care. Another person commented that the series had showed her and the congregation their responsibility to God’s creation. Even though the subject of creation care was new, I believe that most of the discussion attendees felt the subject was theologically logical. In other words, God’s call to creation care seemed to make sense. Several commented that the creation care focus had helped them to see the presence of God in nature. Many in the discussions expressed surprise that so many people were daily suffering because of poor environmental stewardship. Concerns for future generations were expressed.

2. The discussion times showed me that I need to proceed with care regarding the topic of creation care. Personally, creation care has been an important theological issue for me for years. Having worked in Haiti, a country suffering greatly from the effects of environmental degradation, I am very committed to this subject. However, the September 15 and 29 discussion times reminded me that while I have been committed to this issue for a very long time, the congregation has not. From the discussion times, I realized that I need to proceed with extreme care regarding this topic. Whereas I have had many years to consider the biblical rationale for creation care and personally experience the effects of poor environmental stewardship, the congregation of Cedar Spring Baptist Church had had only a few weeks to consider the subject. It reminded me that I should not be easily frustrated when the creation care concepts I deeply believe in are not quickly accepted or adopted. I remember one person saying to me after the discussion time that he never considered that caring for the environment was his God-given responsibility. If Cedar Spring Baptist is to proceed with additional creation care post-project C.A.R.E., additional time will be needed in preparing the congregation.
3. The discussion times revealed to me that I need to be diligent in providing a sound theological foundation for the creation care topic. The discussion time provided an opportunity for those opposed to church based environmental stewardship to voice their thought. Though this group was not a very big part of the congregation, several of the discussion attendees felt that environmental issues were too connected to one political party. It was also commented that environmental problems could be the result of God’s wrath. From the discussions, I felt that several were having a difficult time making a theological and political distinction regarding creation care issues. Though I believe the discussion times helped to address some of the concerns of creation care, there is more work that needs to be done. The discussion time reminded me of the importance of presenting a solid theological foundation for environmental stewardship. If Christians from both sides of the political aisle are going to address this issue together, then the reasoning must transcend politics. Creation care must be solidly based on biblically principles if it is to be effective. Though the congregation was very positive to the subject of creation care, I believe a poorly establish theological base could jeopardize that support.

4. The discussion times showed me that the Cedar Spring Baptist congregation could be open to additional creation care initiatives. I believe that the discussion times showed that if a strong theologically and evangelistic foundation were established, Cedar Spring Baptist would support mission efforts that also addressed environmental issues. The discussion times reinforce what was noted in the congregational and Bible study surveys. Cedar Spring Baptist as a whole has a positive view of creation care. Though there are some who oppose the church’s involvement in environmental issues, the overwhelming majority of those participating in the September 15 and 29 discussion times appeared to be supportive of biblically based environmental stewardship. I believe the congregation of Cedar Spring Baptist would be willing to adopt more environmentally friendly practices at the church. It was encouraging to hear those attending the discussion times verbally voicing their support for creation care. From the discussion times, I believe that project C.A.R.E. has helped to establish a foundation for Cedar Spring Baptist to engage in creation care project beyond project C.A.R.E.

5. The discussion times helped to connect the congregation as a whole to the subject of creation care. The discussion times helped me to realize that the congregation as a whole did not have access to the survey data as I did. The congregation could not see that the majority of those responding to the surveys had an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward creation care. But when the congregation gathered together to discuss the topic, it was clear to all that creation care had broad support at Cedar Spring Baptist. I believe the discussion times could help embolden those who emerge from project C.A.R.E. with a strong conviction towards environmental stewardship. I would not be surprised to see in the future certain individuals coming forward with creation care ideas for Cedar Spring Baptist. One of those attending the discussion times asked me what we were going to do next about this topic. It was apparent that this person was ready to do something to help with creation care.
6. The discussion times helped to remind the congregation of God’s promise to redeem creation. I was surprised at how many of the discussion times comments were related to how one day God would restore creation to the way it was in the beginning. Several mentioned how they were looking forward to the day when God would make all things news. Creation’s restoration was closely linked to the Messianic rule of Christ.

7. The discussion times were beneficial to be as a pastor. The discussion times showed me that I could use the basic framework of project C.A.R.E. to address a vast number of other biblical subjects. It was encouraging to see the congregation coalesce around the creation care topic in the discussion times. As the participants were discussing the topic, it was encouraging to see people nodding their heads as if the subject had clicked in their minds. As I move beyond project C.A.R.E., I believe that there are other issues that I can address in a similar fashion.

I am very confident that the congregational discussion times were a success for project C.A.R.E. These discussion opportunities provided vital feedback for the project as well as for my ministry. I feel that I successfully met this project goal.
SOURCES CONSULTED

Books and Commentaries


**Articles**


Photos


