

A Quote from the Earth Ministry Organization:

God has given human beings a special responsibility to care for creation. “God took the human creatures and put them in the garden to till it and to keep it.” The Bible is wonderfully ambiguous at this point. Did God make the garden because humans needed a place to live? Or did God create humanity because the garden needed someone to care for it? The Hebrew verb to keep, “shamar,” is the same word in the Aaronic blessing with which we sometimes conclude our worship services: “May the Lord bless and keep you.” We are to nurture, sustain, and care for creation the way God nurtures, sustains, and cares for us.
<https://earthministry.org/worship/scripture/>

Reflection - To Live With Respect in Creation

offered by Debbie and Mike Stockdale, April 28, 2019

As I sit down to write the sun is rising as it has since the earth settled into her orbit of the sun billions of years ago. There is great comfort in seeing the sun rise and set each day. We are on a unique planet, the only one we know of that supports life. And what life there is - a huge variety of landscapes, plants, animals, insects, bacteria. All life depends of the amazing gifts that Mother Earth has to offer. Clean air, clean water, rich soil, space to grow and live. Each species adds to the amazing diversity that makes the earth so special. Every species is designed to thrive in the particular climate where they live, whether it is high on a mountain top or deep in a desert, in fresh water or salt water. Each has tolerances for warm and cold, for moist or dry. Each species a precious gift of God, our creator. Each a mystery. Each a miracle.

We too are a species living on our Mother Earth. We too need the gifts Mother Earth offers us - gifts of air and water, food grown from the nutrients hidden in the soil. We as human beings have gone even farther. We have used our ingenuity and the gifts of a brain that can design tools and hands that can build them to use the minerals and plants of the earth to build homes and factories. We created millions inventions that make our lives easier.

We have also assumed that there is no end to Mother Earth's resources. We have assumed that we are the most important species and that our needs are more important than those of any of the other inhabitants of Mother Earth. In our arrogance and greed, we have created a huge problem. We have tampered with the natural balance of the Earth. We have tampered with the very atmosphere that surrounds the earth to protect it and insulate it from the sun's heat. We now are at a tipping point. The Earth as we know it is disappearing and a new and harsher world is emerging.

As Mike and I were making plans for our summer, for the first time ever, I wondered if we should plan to go to the Okanagan in July rather than August. I grew up in Kelowna and I know that the lake is better for swimming in August after it has had a chance to warm up. When planning a summer visit we have always gone in August. This year though, instead of choosing August, my first thought was to go in July when there is less risk of fires. Forest fires have always happened in BC but never before have massive fires become a certainty, with major fire activity every year except one since 2013. Never before have the fires altered the air quality for the whole province as they did last summer. My Uncle, who lives in Kelowna, was confined to his house for 6 weeks, as the air was too smoky for his lungs to tolerate. He couldn't see the huge tree just down the block from his house because the smoke was too thick. My niece couldn't ride her horse as the air was too polluted for her horse and for Hannah.

We were impacted here in Calgary too. My grandsons couldn't go outside to play for a couple of weeks last summer. What an awful thing! Children in Calgary unable to play outside due to bad air quality. Vulnerable

adults not able to go outside either. Imagine being homeless during that time with limited options to escape the smoke. Even strong healthy adults were unable to run or bike or play sports outside.

The climate has changed gradually and now has reached a tipping point. Massive fires are now part of our new normal. It is the Earth's way of telling us we have to change our ways voluntarily and have a degree of control or our lives will be changed by the Earth. The Earth is saying, more loudly every year, 'Pay attention! Be careful! Help me!'

What can we do? How can we help our earth and ourselves? How can we make a difference for future generations, for my grandchildren and yours? My husband Mike has done a lot of reading and researching about climate change and is pretty passionate about it. I asked him to help me with this reflection. Today he is going to share with you what he has learned about a very special teenager with a lot to teach us.

Normally, I take every opportunity to talk about my grandsons, but today I'm going to talk about a girl named Greta. Greta is a bright girl. When she was 11 and first heard of the ecological and climate crises that we face, she didn't believe it. If these problems were real, why weren't the adults doing everything they could to solve them? How could they just sit and watch as her future was increasingly put at risk? By the time she was fifteen, she decided that she had to do something. But what could a child do to make a difference? She decided to skip school every Friday and sit in protest by the Swedish parliament. Her parents were not in favour of this! Greta is neuro-atypical - on the autism spectrum. She finds it difficult to speak to groups of people. She says she doesn't care for the social game that the rest of us seem to enjoy. When she began her school strike, she was all alone.

It's hard to imagine how a solitary act can have any impact, how a small group can start a change. But research shows that most of the major shifts in society have occurred when only 3% of the population begins to act. That momentum eventually carries everyone else with it.

Children in Stockholm heard of Greta's protest and joined her. Children in other Swedish cities heard of Greta's protest and joined her. Children in other countries heard of Greta and started protesting. On March 15 of this year, over one and a half million children in a hundred countries joined in school strikes for the climate, including a group here in Calgary.

When we talk about protecting the earth, we often say we are doing it for our children and grandchildren. Perhaps once in a while we should stop talking and listen. Listen to what our children are saying. Every year, the world's financial elites gather in Davos at the World Economic Forum. This past January, Greta was a rather unlikely invited speaker. Let's listen.

"Our house is on fire. I am here to say: our house is on fire. According to the IPCC, we are less than 12 years away from not being able to undo our mistakes.

At places like Davos, people like to tell success stories. But their financial success has come with an unthinkable price tag, and on climate change, we have to acknowledge that we have failed. All political movements in their present form have done so, and the media has failed to create broad public awareness. But Homo sapiens have not yet failed. Yes, we are failing, but there is still time to turn everything around. We can still fix this. We still have everything in our own hands.

Now is the time to speak clearly. Solving the climate crisis is the greatest and most complex challenge that Homo sapiens have ever faced. The main solution, however, is so simple that even a small child can understand it. We have to stop the emission of greenhouse gases. And either we do that or we don't. You say nothing is life is black or white. But that is a lie, a very dangerous lie. Either we prevent a 1.5 degree of warming, or we don't. Either we avoid setting off that irreversible chain reaction, beyond human control, or we don't. Either we chose to go on as our civilization, or we don't. That is as black or white as it gets.

We must change almost everything in our current societies. The bigger your carbon footprint is, the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform, the bigger your responsibility. Adults keep saying: we owe it to the young people to give them hope. But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you

to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house was on fire. Because it is."

Greta tells us that countries and companies have failed but homo sapiens have not yet failed. This is the time to act. She is asking us to stand up and change the world, to stand up for the Earth, our home now. The need is urgent! Our children here in Calgary are asking us to put away our doubts, to set down our fear of failure, to leave behind our rationalizations and stubborn persistence in believing it is ok to do nothing. They are asking us to look after our home, the Earth, because our home is in grave danger. It is a big ask and requires big commitment and great big faith. It requires the passion of youth and the wisdom of age. It requires each and every one of us.

Where can we find the inspiration and strength to believe that our small and insignificant voices and actions matter enough to make a difference? Well, this is the week after Easter Sunday. Last week we celebrated that, against all odds, Christ is alive among us. We sang the Hallelujah Chorus together with joy. The cross did not have the last word. The tomb was empty come Easter Sunday and we know that Jesus as Christ is with us always, urging us to live as he taught through his words and his actions. We can find our strength and commitment in Christ.

As resurrection people, as people called to live with respect in creation and as followers of Christ, we are called to stand beside Greta and our young people, to take action to limit warming to 1.5 degrees over the next 10 years. Jesus, in the prayer he taught, instructed us to pray that 'God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven'. I'm pretty sure in heaven animals are not becoming extinct at alarming rates! The youth of our world are looking to the future with despair because governments, corporations and individuals refuse to act. Let us be strong and courageous as we call for a new and better way to live with respect in creation, a way that leads to abundant life for all.

The future of Mother Earth is in our hands. The future of the creatures and the plants and the people is in our hands. The future of the air and the water and the land is in our hands. We are all one under God, our Creator. Our children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren are looking to us to do our part. They are hoping beyond hope that we will stand up and be part of the 3% who take action. 3% is doable. 3% will be enough to start a chain reaction to set ourselves on a new course that will bring new and healthier future for all. It will bring new life and resurrection hope to replace sorrow and fear.

Can we reach beyond doubt and act to be Christ's hands alive in our world? Can we stand tall for climate justice and bring new life to dead places? If you would like more information or if you would like to sit with a group to talk about this, there is a sign-up sheet at the back. Mike and I will host a gathering where we can all share our thoughts, ask our questions and support one another in bringing change.

Learn more, act more, speak more, pray more. Live as if you believe new life is possible. Help the kingdom come here on Earth in our time and in our place.