

Demonstrating an Understanding and Commitment to Care of the Earth

Selected Statements from the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective (1995)

The *Confession of Faith* makes a very compelling case for caring for creation. The statements that follow show the linkage between Christ, creation, peacemaking, stewardship, and earth care. This framework--built on the scriptures--names our responsibility to be faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to us. These statements sound to call to action on the theme of creation care.

An outline of core beliefs on creation care -structured around the peace concept found in Article 22--might look like this:

Peace is the will of God (see Article 22) - which is intended for:

I. Humanity (there are many statements in the Confession that could be listed, but that is not the focus of this outline)

II. Creation

A. The creation care responsibility originates in our understanding of:

1. Creation and Divine Providence (Article 5)
2. The Creation and Calling of Human Beings (Article 6)

B. Our action framework for earth care is found in:

1. Christian Stewardship (Article 21)
2. The Reign of God (Article 24)

Article 5. Creation and Divine Providence

- We believe that God has created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and that God preserves and renews what has been made.
- We believe that the universe has been called into being as an expression of God's love and sovereign freedom alone.
- We acknowledge that God sustains creation in both continuity and change.
- We therefore are called to respect the natural order of creation and to entrust ourselves to God's care and keeping, whether in adversity or plenty.

Article 6. The Creation and Calling of Human Beings

- God formed them from the dust of the earth and gave them a special dignity among all the works of creation. Human beings have been made for relationship with God, to live in peace with eaCh other, and to take care of the rest of creation.
- As creatures according to the divine likeness, we have been made stewards to subdue and to care for creation out of reverence and honor for the Creator. As creatures made in the divine image, we have been blessed with the abilities to respond faithfully to God, to live in harmony with other human beings, and to engage in meaningful work and rest.

- God has made provision for the salvation of humanity and the redemption of creation.

(Commentary 4. We believe that God intends human work to be a way of caring for and ordering rather than exploiting the world, which has been created. Work is necessary to sustain and enhance human life. It can also be a way to serve and witness to others in the spirit of Jesus Christ. According to God's design, we are to balance work and rest, for our own good and for the good of the rest of creation.)

Article 21. Christian Stewardship

- We believe that everything belongs to God, who calls us as the church to live as faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to us.
- As stewards of God's earth, we are called to care for the earth and to bring rest and renewal to the land and everything that lives on it.

(Commentary 5. The theology of stewardship makes us aware not only of care for human beings, but of care for the rest of creation. Animals and fields benefited from the Sabbath and the sabbatical year. An observance of Sabbath-Jubilee calls us to take care of and preserve the earth. We are to commit ourselves to right use of the earth's resources as a way of living now according to the model of the new heaven and the new earth.)

Article 22. Peace, Justice, and Nonresistance

- We believe that peace is the will of God. God created the world in peace, and God's peace is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our peace and the peace of the whole world.
- The peace God intends for humanity and creation was revealed most fully in Jesus Christ.
- As followers of Jesus, we participate in his ministry of peace and justice. He has called us to find our blessing in making peace and seeking justice.

(Commentary 1. The biblical concept of peace embraces personal peace with God, peace in human relations, peace among nations, and peace with God's creation.)

(Commentary 3. Ministries of mediation, conciliation, and nonviolent resolution of everyday conflict can express our commitment to Christ's way of peace.)

Article 24. The Reign of God

- We believe that the church is called to live now according to the model of the future reign of God. Thus, we are given a foretaste of the kingdom that God will one day establish in full. The church is to be a spiritual, social, and economic reality, demonstrating now the justice, righteousness, love, and peace of the age to come.

(Commentary 1. The church is called to live now under the rule of God as a witness to the reign of God. Our life together now is to be patterned after our life together in the age to come. This means that the reign of God is relevant to this world, and the ethics of God's rule should not be postponed to some future time.)