

April 24, 2011, Easter Day

Dear Friends in Christ:

Last night at the Easter Vigil we read from the book of Genesis the account of creation. In that passage is the constant refrain "and God saw that it was good..." Indeed, the whole of God's creation is good. The Celtic tradition held that God could be found in all aspects of creation and they deeply revered the sacredness of God's good earth. Even their crosses were decorated with symbols from creation, tying all of God's marvelous works on our behalf together. By knowing and interacting with all aspects of creation, they believed that they grew closer to God, for they considered God to be with us in the world about us.

This past Friday, Good Friday, was also Earth Day, a wonderful coincidence that has profound meaning. As Mike Schut, economic and environmental affairs officer for the Episcopal Church, noted: "To fully honor Earth Day, we need to reclaim the theology that knows earth is 'very good,' is holy. When we fully recognize that, our actions just may begin to create a more sustainable, compassionate economy and way of life."

"And on Good Friday, the day we mark the crucifixion of Christ, God in the flesh, might we suggest that when earth is degraded, when species go extinct, that another part of God's body experiences yet another sort of crucifixion -- that another way of seeing and experiencing God is diminished."

With those thoughts in mind, I am pleased to announce to you on this glorious Easter Day, a project that St. Mary's Vestry has decided to endorse. As you know, last year we installed solar panels on our church and rectory as a result of the generosity of a number of people who chose to invest in this "green" project for our church. What a wonderful sign those panels are to those who pass by, many who are excited that we made this choice to invest in a renewable energy resource. In order to highlight that project and to take our environmental leadership as a faith community to the next level, your Vestry has decided to pursue Green Faith certification.

Green Faith began in Parsippany, NJ and is a two year, very structured program that will raise our awareness of ways in which we can be better stewards of God's creation and help us to be a "green" congregation and inspire others in our community to consider their care for God's earth. Green Faith provides us with multiple resources to make this program happen. What is exciting is that it will involve our entire church, young and old alike, in shared activities, educational forums and worship events centered around three core values: Spirit, Stewardship, and Justice. This will be our focus for the next two years.

We have formed a Green Team and the members include: Jim Armstrong, Lillian Armstrong, Brian Reynolds, Julie McNulty, Sharie Milio, Dina Ziemba, Ellen Epple, Katie Campbell, Paul Larson and Larry Schmidt. These folks will be leading us forward in a plan for our church to be carried out over the next two years. They would welcome anyone else from our congregation who has a passion for environmental stewardship to join them. You will be hearing more from them in the near future.

Our application for acceptance into the program will be finalized this week. We are anticipating acceptance and will be ready to embark on this effort next month. In the meantime, it would be good for our entire congregation to acquaint themselves with Green Faith by going to their website at [www.greenfaith.org](http://www.greenfaith.org). This can be a wonderful time for our congregation to grow in our relationship with the God of all creation. I think that the words of Fyodor Dostoevsky (the author of *Brothers Karamotzof*) also speak well about the adventure of discovery upon which we are about to embark: “Love all God’s creation, the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God’s light! Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will comprehend it ceaselessly, more and more every day. And you will at last come to love the whole world with an abiding, universal love.” As your Rector, I strongly endorse this certification for our church and look forward to working together with you to take our environmental stewardship to the next level.

What a wonderful gift to proclaim on this Easter Day! What a great way to spread the life and love and hope of our Easter proclamation: Alleluia! Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Sincerely,

The Rev. John W. Sosnowski  
Rector

