



Grain

“They’ve paved paradise and put up a parking lot.” –Joni Mitchell

Field

¹How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! ²My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. ³Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God. ⁴Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Selah. ⁵Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. ⁶As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. ⁷They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion. Psalm 84

Thoughts by William Mattson, LOPPW Council Member, Rhinelander

Our blue planet has always been in continuous change, even before humans arose from harmless obscurity. However, as our populations and technologies exploded over the last forty millennia, so did our impact. Today, the consensus is that we have driven the world to a precipice of disaster. Decades of science have warned that we humans are triggering a snowballing catastrophe of mayhem and death. It’s now especially acute in nature where there have been alarming losses of life-supporting organisms like bees, birds, trees, and ocean fish. Already, millions of displaced humans are desperately seeking refuge because of the unprecedented flooding from melting glaciers, ocean thermal expansion, and storms, as well as from record-breaking droughts and forest fires.

Lutherans strive to live by the mantra of God’s Work, Our Hands, dedicating our church body to care for others. But, humanity’s recklessness reveals that too many hands are desecrating creation, not caring for it. Will it come down to the last sparrow in the last forest before we can discern our grave mistakes? A many decade’s old popular song summarized our predicament in its lyrics, “they paved paradise and put up a parking lot.”

Rector Ragan Sutterfield in the Christian Century magazine (Sept 2021) asserts that fixing the planetary crisis requires that we must first reconcile human life with all of creation. This demands radical transformations in life styles and governance from top to bottom. Big money and technology alone will not rescue us. Rector Sutterfield urges that the Church step forward to become a leader of the rescue. Planetary healing, he argues, can arise from a united effort by all communities of faith, where green, healing ripples will emanate from hundreds of thousands of green parishes. Ripples can become healing waves spreading into communities, and beyond. At least five, step-wise changes are recommended at each and every parish (abbreviated here):

Withdrawal to stillness, contemplation, discussion, and then to prayerful action. Cast aside business as usual. Think deep transformation. **Ecological Neighborhood Awareness** is the establishment of a parish’s ecological footprints, **Sanctuary** is the idea of every parish, every parish member creating sanctuary, sacred refuges for God’s creation in private and public spaces. **Skill and Tool Sharing** means that congregants share their essential knowledge, skills, and tools so that all consume less and create life’s essentials locally. **Mercy and Grace** are generously offered balms badly needed in the midst of coming social and ecological upheavals. All of us must engage and offer our gifts. Let us pray that all communities of faith will unite. God help us. There is work to be done. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

William Mattson