



Rocky Mountain

Synod supplement

Let us joyfully live here in the West

We are grateful for the beauty of creation
and concerned about justice

We are blessed to live in a synod where the mountainous spine of the continent runs majestically from northern Wyoming to El Paso, Texas. The great Colorado River flows from alpine meadows west through the deserts of Utah and joins the Green River in its march to the sea. The Rio Grande and the North Platte water the lowlands.

The great high plains slowly and gently rise to greet the mountains. The high deserts of Utah and New Mexico harbor an enduring and often harsh beauty. All these places are full of life. We are blessed to live in this wonderful geography and are called to be stewards of these great gifts.

But even this geography, these lands, can be abused and used up. Our ecological footprint can be heavy. People of faith in many places are reclaiming a ministry of creation care based out of the biblical idea that the Earth is the Lord's, not ours, and that we are stewards, not only for ourselves but for our great-grandchildren and for all that God has made.

Why care? Why act? There are three foci to our creation care: the world is a gift to be received, not a possession. Two, we are part of the web of all life, i.e., our appropriate response to this beautiful world is humility. Humility is simply the admission that we have been made from the earth and to the earth we shall return. Three, we are called to have compassion for all that is, even as we have been shown compassion. The fate of the earth and its creatures and its people is our fate. We are bound together.

So let us joyfully live here in the West—from the windswept plains of Wyoming to the deserts and arroyos of Texas and New Mexico, from the top of Colorado fourteeners to the Great Salt Lake—as baptized people, grateful for the world's beauty and concerned about justice for all of God's creation.

Jeffrey Loudon
Creation Care chair for the Rocky Mountain Synod.

JEFFREY LOUDEN



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PHOTOS BY DALE HONKEY

A cross-shaped frame holds coils of geothermal piping for the new heating and cooling system at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Wheat Ridge, Colo.

Going and growing green

Congregations take steps—some large some small—to care for God’s creation

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Wheat Ridge, Colo.

Passers-by and guests are intrigued and curious. Why are there two drilling rigs in the parking lot of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Wheat Ridge, Colo.? And why are they drilling 28 holes each 400 feet deep?

When the Rev. Arlyn Tolzman explains they are building a geothermal heating and air-conditioning system, people are excited about the congregation’s desire to “go green” and be more environmentally conscious.

“I didn’t expect the numerous witnessing opportunities I’ve had to talk about what the Spirit has moved us to do,” Tolzmann said. “We felt this would benefit those of future generations who would face rising electric, heating and air-conditioning costs. And there is a limit to our natural resources.”

Along with the geothermal system,

the congregation is adding insulation in ceilings, replacing inefficient lighting, and installing sensors to turn off lights in empty rooms.

The congregation started talking about better stewardship of creation several years ago. Last January they had three Sunday forums on geothermal heat, photovoltaic technology, and upgrading insulation and lighting to more energy-efficient systems. The congregation is fortunate to have a number of members who have expertise in these areas.

The ideas snowballed as congregation members rallied behind the vision and a capital fund drive invited commitments. But the project couldn’t have gotten off the ground without a loan from the ELCA Mission Investment Fund.

“It shows real foresight on the part of the fund’s leaders to approve such a nontraditional project,” Tolzmann said. He is thankful for members who



The Rev. Arlyn Tolzmann and Jack Major, general contractor for the new geothermal heating and cooling system at Holy Cross, converse by one of two drilling rigs.

have been patient and flexible with the inconvenience of it all. During the construction, they had no parking lot, and the educational wing, library and lounge were unavailable.

“We believe this is what God is calling us to do,” he said.

St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, Buffalo, Wyo.

The congregation supports Habitat for Humanity by collecting used items that would otherwise be discarded. Items are distributed to ReStore in Sheridan, Wyo.; sold in an annual

garage sale and Kids Shoppe at the church; given to the needy who move into the community; or sent to St. LaBre Indian reservation in Montana. Very little goes to the dump.

Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Denver

The congregation has replaced all lights and ballasts with energy-efficient instruments, and the boiler was replaced, raising efficiency from 50 percent to 95 percent. They have sponsored educational events, made cloth shopping bags available in the community, replaced all toilets with low flow units, and acquired two recycling dumpsters for the church and community. They also stopped using disposable plates and glasses.

Grace Lutheran Church, Bountiful, Utah

When a paper recycling company inquired about placing a recycling bin in their parking lot, they jumped at the



JOHN ORWIG

Nancy Orwig sorts discarded items in her carport. She and her husband, John Orwig, pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Buffalo, Wyo., have donated the space for collecting items for reuse.



Lauren Abromski (left), Kristen Baltrium and Gene Tesdahl, members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Longmont, Colo., pick up trash and talk about God's command to care for the earth.

opportunity. The congregation and neighbors now recycle more than 2 tons of paper each month.

First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Longmont, Colo.

The congregation has fully developed a recycling program by placing more blue recycling containers throughout the building than trash bins. They hope to eventually have one dumpster emptied weekly instead of two bins emptied twice a week. They are half-way to their goal.

They have also been intentional about replacing old air conditioners with high-efficiency models and have changed out light bulbs with more efficient ones.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Logan, Utah

In the Cache Valley of Utah, the bowl sometimes collects air pollution that doesn't clear. In the winter, low tem-

peratures and stagnant high-pressure systems result in dense fog and strong temperature inversions.

Since vehicle emissions are a primary source of the problem, congregation members are not only driving less, they also sell covers that drivers place over their windshields to keep snow and ice from forming. Now people don't have to run their cars to defrost their windshields. The congregation hopes to improve the air quality so all can breathe easier.

Peace Lutheran Church, El Paso, Texas

Like most churches and preschools, the congregation generates a lot of paper. All of it is either reused when there is a blank side or recycled. All of their cardboard, metal and plastics that are accepted in El Paso's recycling program are recycled. Several members who regularly walk for exercise and prayer carry a bag to pick up recy-

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clables and trash from city streets.

New efficient lighting and automatic timers that adjust to sundown have been installed. The preschool, 3 years old, was built to meet water and energy conservation standards.

Additionally, the congregation is a member of Border Interfaith, a broad-based community organizing group that works on providing potable water to 100 families who have been without it for 15 years.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Longmont, Colo.

Youth and adults headed out to a playground to pick up trash as part of the Lutheran Youth Organization *Kleanapalooza* effort. They had a great time, found interesting garbage and sang Oscar the Grouch's *I Love Trash* song.

They even found a check that was still valid, which provided the opportunity to discuss "What is the right thing to do with someone else's money?"

Afterward, they ate popsicles and talked about God's command to care for the earth as early as Genesis 1. They reflected on the things that keep us from caring today. □



CORRINE THUL

A windshield cover is put in place by Joan Mahoney, a member of Prince of Peace, Logan, Utah. The covers may be purchased at www.peacefortheearth.org to benefit green initiatives in the congregation.

Bishop's reflection

Shrinking our vast distances with technology

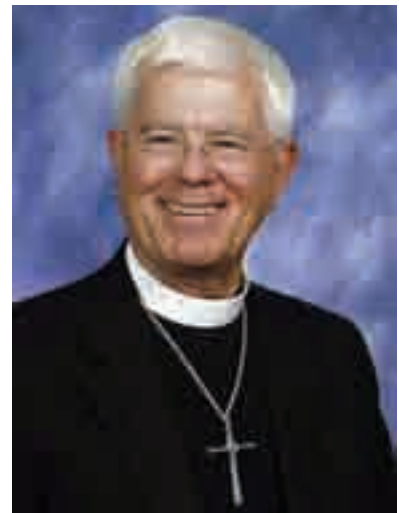
I was visiting with the faithful, energetic members of one of our small-town congregations. This congregation is located, let us simply say, a few hours flying time from most of us in the Rocky Mountain Synod.

One member said, "Sometimes we feel a bit isolated here." Thankfully they all chuckled when I replied, "Actually, you *are* isolated here."

It's one of the realities of our life together. We are a vast synod, 18 driving hours from north to south, and 14 hours east to west. Only the Alaska Synod is larger. To gather our synod council or our committees and task forces together means factoring in airfares, motels and catering. In recent years we've creatively used e-mail and conference calling to shrink the distances. Moreover, electronic newsletters and a highly effective Web site have allowed us to dramatically reduce the use of paper and the cost of postage.

Recently, with the expenditure of some designated funds and special gifts, we began using interactive video technology that allows sharing live presentations in one part of the synod with those gathering in other distant locations. When all of the equipment is in place, six locations will be linked together. Those who "are isolated" will be able to connect through a Web site video-stream when additional funds are available for phase two.

Like all things church, we still find



being together in the same place to be the best possible interaction. But new technology allows us to increase our effectiveness while decreasing costs and saving energy. It will allow mem-

In the future, video conferencing equipment will be installed in six Rocky Mountain Synod locations, making it possible for about 90 percent of our congregations to be within an hour or two of an interactive video link. Those in more remote areas will be able to participate via an Internet video-stream.

bers of committees or task forces to gather in sites near their homes and enjoy face-to-face interaction. We are only beginning to envision all of the ways this technology will enhance our ministry together.

I'm excited about the congregations described in these pages that are

going green. From church councils to youth groups to preschoolers, we are recapturing a broader and deeper reality of stewardship. And that is a profound gift to us and to God's good earth. I look forward to hearing about the green discoveries your congregation is making.

Bishop Allan Bjornberg