

Evangelical Organizations Caring for Creation:

Evangelicals for Social Action (1973) (The Sider Center at Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University)

(See "Good Stewards" Membership)

<http://www.esa-online.org/>

ESA began with the "Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern," written at a Thanksgiving gathering of forty evangelical leaders that the Chicago Sun-Times described as the most significant church-related event of 1973. ESA has become a national membership organization, publishes a national magazine (PRISM) and a weekly ePistle electronic communiqué, and leads a national network (Word & Deed Network) helping local churches combine evangelism and social action. ESA has promoted international economic sanctions against apartheid, supported a multilateral rather than unilateral U.S. foreign policy, and endorsed many efforts to reduce poverty, promote racial justice and care for creation. The writings of ESA founder and president, Ron Sider -- especially *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics*, and *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience* -- have articulated ESA's vision.



Arocha.org (1983)

<http://www.arocha.org/int-en/index.html>

A Rocha is an international Christian organization which, inspired by God's love, engages in scientific research, environmental education and community-based conservation projects.

The first A Rocha project began in Portugal in 1983. A field study centre and bird observatory was established near the Alvor estuary and it has now been visited by thousands of people from many countries. All over the world, Christians are realising that important habitats and their wildlife urgently need protection and so, since 1994, new A Rocha projects have started in other parts of Europe, the Middle East, Africa, North America and Australasia. The international cross-cultural strength of the Christian community has been making a unique contribution, not least as communities struggle to reconcile the need to protect biodiversity with their hopes for sustainable development.

A Rocha projects have a community emphasis, bringing together people from widely differing backgrounds to work towards common goals.

A Rocha's Five Commitments (<http://www.arocha.org/int-en/who/commitments/amplified.html>)

In all the countries where we work, A Rocha is identified by five core commitments and to a practical outworking of each:

- **CHRISTIAN** - Underlying all we do is our biblical faith in the living God, who made the world, loves it and entrusts it to the care of human society.
- **CONSERVATION** - We carry out research for the conservation and restoration of the natural world and run environmental education programmes for people of all ages.
- **COMMUNITY** - Through our commitment to God, each other and the wider creation, we aim to develop good relationships both within the A Rocha family and in our local communities.
- **CROSS-CULTURAL** - We draw on the insights and skills of people from diverse cultures, both locally and around the world.
- **COOPERATION** - We work in partnership with a wide variety of organisations and individuals who share our concerns for a sustainable world.

Restoring Eden (2001) (orig. Christians for Environmental Stewardship (early 1990s, Peter Illyn)

Mission Statement: "Make your heart bigger, your hands dirtier, your voice stronger for God's creation."

<http://restoringeden.org/resources/Ohlman/21Reasons>

The history of Restoring Eden

In the beginning...



Restoring Eden, officially Christians for Environmental Stewardship, was formed in the early 1990s by Peter Illyn, an **evangelical pastor** from the Pacific Northwest. Peter, an **avid wilderness hiker**, a few summers earlier had taken two llamas – Frank and Jesse – on a record-setting thousand-mile llama trek up the spine of the Cascade Mountains. According to Peter, "**I went into the mountains a minister, but I came out an environmental activist.**" After he returned from this four-month trek, Peter started a wilderness outfitting ministry, taking families and small groups

onto the wilderness areas surrounding the Cascade volcanoes.

A Skewed Perspective

During that time (the early 90's), federal judges ruled that the relentless logging of the Douglas Fir forest ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest was driving to extinction the elusive spotted owl who lives only in those ancient trees. This federal ruling curtailed logging of the old growth forests and caused lumber mills that could only process the large logs to cease operations. Unfortunately, these lumber mills were major employers in many of these small towns. **Tensions grew high and environmentalists were vilified** - even though timber barons had been warned for 30 years that they were logging the remaining forests at an unsustainable rate.

In response, some private property-rights groups (the "Wise Use" movement) attempted to dismantle the Endangered Species Act, believing instead that private property rights should allow a property owner to do anything to their land, no matter what the consequences are or what the impacts may be.



A Renewed Perspective

Instead, Peter saw that the need to protect species was **a wise choice, worthy of the challenge and costs involved**. His views were based on the idea that the earth is the only place in the known universe that supports life and that the fruitfulness of the earth is a function of the diversity, interconnectedness and cycling of the web of life. According to Peter, "How can we be pro-life and yet cavalier with the very systems that create life? **If we love the Creator, we must take care of creation.**" This thinking was summed up in one of his favorite verses, "In wisdom you made them all, the earth is filled with all of your creatures." (*Psalms 104:24*)



Raising a Voice

Peter created a sermon built around the ideas that God created the different species and called them good; God blessed the different species and told them to fill the earth; God protected them by calling them to the ark of Noah; and lastly, God made an eternal covenant with them. Peter believed that **to destroy what God created, blessed, protected and covenanted with is the opposite of faithful and wise stewardship** - it is foolish and hard-hearted.

Peter joined with other religious leaders and was able to convince Congress to not dismantle the Endangered Species Act. His meeting with a key Republican congresswoman was filmed for a segment on the PBS news show, McNeil-Lehrer Report, launching Christians for Environmental Stewardship into the national limelight.

Birth and Growth

From these efforts emerged Christians for Environmental Stewardship, which became Restoring Eden in 2001, dedicated to helping Christians rediscover the biblical call to environmental stewardship. **Ten years later, we have increased in staff and reach, and grown into a national ministry that empowers Christians from many denominations and backgrounds to love, serve, and protect God's creation.**

Evangelical Environmental Network (founded 1993) and *Creation Care Magazine*

Mission Statement: "Worshipping God. Loving His People. Caring for His Creation."

<http://www.creationcare.org/>

Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) ... a ministry that seeks to educate, equip, inspire, and mobilize Christians in their effort to care for God's creation, to be faithful stewards of God's provision, and to advocate for actions and policies that honor God and protect the environment.

Founded in 1993, EEN's work is grounded in the Bible's teaching on the responsibility of God's people to "tend the garden" and in a desire to be faithful to Jesus Christ and to follow Him. EEN publishes materials to equip and inspire individuals, families, and churches; and seeks to educate and mobilize people to make a difference in their churches and communities, and to speak out on national and international policies that affect our ability to preach the Gospel, protect life, and care for God's Creation.

This organization initiated and publicized the 1994 *Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation*.

Care of Creation (2005)

Mission Statement: "Pursuing a God-centered response to the environmental crisis. We think that the people who believe God made the world, should be passionate about taking care of it."

<http://www.careofcreation.net/>

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*In August of 1992, at the prompting of Dr. Cal DeWitt, ecology professor from the University of Wisconsin and director of the Au Sable Institute for Environmental Studies, a meeting the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship was held at Au Sable’s campus in Northern Michigan. It was chiefly for the purpose of examining the issue of evangelical Christianity and the environment, with the desire that some direction be given to the Church on what its role and responsibility should be regarding the care of God’s creation. In 1994, with the help of the staff of the newly formed Evangelical Environmental Network, an “Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation” was drafted, signatures were solicited, and the statement was broadcast in a number of venues. Hundreds of evangelicals eventually signed it. [You can read the names of its early signers here.] Dean Ohlman: <http://www.sustainlane.com/reviews/the-evangelical-creation-care-movement-a-brief-history/887W7JSIP8K8YO4Y91TRPAT1PB3N>

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B. THE WORLD OF GOD’S CREATION

1. “*The earth is the Lord’s*” (Ps. 24:1). To the *non-Christian world* we bear witness that “the earth is *the Lord’s*”. The earth is neither ours to do with what we like because we are the most dominant species, nor does it belong to nobody because we are only one species among others. In *Christian* circles we need to proclaim strongly that “*The earth* is the Lord’s” – and not just the people on it: that *all creation is God’s property*. We care for the earth, quite simply, because it belongs to the one whom we call Lord.
2. The Bible begins with creation (Gen. 1-2), ends with a new creation (Rev. 21-22), and presents Jesus as the one through whom God has reconciled all things in heaven and earth to himself through the blood of his cross (Col. 1:15-23). The gospel is good news for all creation, for the reason that the gospel is the good news of what God has done in Christ to undo *all* the effects of human sin and satanic evil and to redeem his whole creation.
3. In Christian mission the combined proclamation of the kingdom of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ constitutes sufficient foundation for the urgently needed integration of the care of creation into our missional thinking. If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our submission to his Lordship from how we act in relation to the earth, for Christ’s Lordship embraces all creation. To proclaim the gospel that says Jesus is Lord is to proclaim the gospel that includes the earth. Creation care is a gospel issue.

4. The biggest threat to creation in our world today is the idolatry of consumerism and materialism. The gospel lays an axe at the root of consumerism. Confronting this dominant idolatry, including through creation care and environmental advocacy, is to engage in spiritual warfare in which only the power of prayer and the gospel are decisive.
5. Cape Town 2010 must call evangelicals to recognise afresh the biblical affirmation of God's redemptive purpose for *creation* itself. Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out, the biblical truth that the gospel is God's good news, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for persons, *and* for society *and* for creation. All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God's people.
6. Christians who are working in environmental biology and creation care have a valid missional calling which needs to be recognised, encouraged and resourced by the church, for they model how to integrate the care of creation into what it means to proclaim Jesus as Lord. Caring for creation is an act of fidelity to the whole biblical gospel and the mission that flows from it. It is noteworthy that those who engage in such creation care as their personal missional vocation joyfully bear witness to its evangelistic fruitfulness as well. This is not seen as a prior motivation or a hidden intention of their work, but as a natural and unsurprising result of fidelity to God's will.

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Videos

Creation Calls

http://www.thebranch.org/videos/Creation_Calls.mov

with the words (and not HD):

<http://www.andiesisle.com/creation/magnificent.html>

Egypt's recycling community:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fr3ackX82Po&feature=related> National Geographic on

Global Warming:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJAbATJCugs>

Lausanne: Online in Capetown 2010

http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/home/video/907/most_recent

Dr. John Houghton, "The Environmental Crisis – Presentation 1"

Dr. Denise Thompson, "The Environmental Crisis – Jamaica"

David Kidma, "The Environmental Crisis – The Role of the Church"

Panel, "Full Session: The Environmental Crisis Multiplex"

Pacific Garbage Patch:

<http://current.com/1jplm4c>

Story of Stuff/Bottled Water (8 min.)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Se12y9hSOM0>

When Heaven Meets Earth

<http://whenheavenmeetsearth.org/trailer/>

World population

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