

MtnKeeping Column for Dec. 20, 2007

“Creation Care” and Contemporary Christianity

By J.A. Jones

Among the more controversial developments in the “green” movement is the “ecological awakening” among many mainstream and fundamentalist Christians.

Representative of that movement is Rev. Robert Walker Jr. at Peachtree Baptist Church in Atlanta. On a recent Sunday, Rev. Walker told his congregation, “We can embrace God and Scripture and science together. And it’s enough to say that when they agree – and sometimes they do – we should embrace it. And they agree that our Earth cannot last forever. And that we are charged with the responsibility of taking care of it.”

The Interfaith Power and Light (IPL) movement is but one group trying to organize green congregations nationwide. There are local chapters of IPL in Georgia, Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Rev. Walker’s Peachtree Baptist Church is one of 130 members of a local Georgia chapter of IPL. Virginia’s chapter has focused on developing a three-hour training program for congregations to help their members calculate their carbon footprints and pledge a 10 percent reduction, all though the context of Christian belief.

A movement called “Cool Congregations” is afoot in Tennessee, where members of different congregations meet to discuss the connection between faith and environment and then take the lessons back to their individual congregations.

The North Carolina IPL chapter has developed a workshop that tackles global warming and energy efficiency. Interested congregations can join North Carolina Interfaith Power and Light by contacting Alice Loyd at info@theregenerationproject.org.

Other than joining up your church as a member congregation in an IPL chapter, you can personally take a number of other positive steps to meld your Christianity with your concern for the environment. The IPL leadership lays out the most important action you can take: “Write, call, or email your elected officials. Tell them global warming is a religious issue, that the U.S. must participate in strong and fair international agreements and adopt strong national policy. This is the most important thing you can do right now!”

“The greatest social movements of our time, from abolition to civil rights, didn’t seem to take off until the religious community got involved,” says Mark Ginsberg, the Virginia IPL’s outreach coordinator.

Rev. Pat Watkins, the Virginia IPL’s director agrees: When the faith community gets on board, it’s going to make a difference with how we treat the environment.”

Rev. Jim Deming, who leads “Cool Congregations” in Tennessee, added: “A lot of people are catching on with this in a big way. At some point, we’re going to be overwhelmed by demand. In many ways the Southeast has been behind, but we really can’t wait. This is an immediate crisis.”

For more information, visit the IPL website: www.theregenerationproject.org for suggestions, helpful links, and a national guide to local chapters.

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