

Bethel College Mennonite Church Creation Care Committee Creation Stewardship Notes # 1

At the Wednesday evening meeting on February 26, Vernon King suggested nine actions that individuals can take to be more environmentally responsible. Some of you asked for copies of these suggestions. The nine actions were from a program of the Center for a New American Dream called *Turn the Tide*.

Turn the Tide is a program of nine actions each of us can take to have a measurable positive impact on the environment. It is based on the assumption that widespread cultural change is most likely to occur when many people take small steps to improve the environment that then may inspire us to make broader changes in our lifestyles.

The Center for a New American Dream asked leading scientists and experts in the field of conservation what first steps they would ask Americans to take to reduce global warming, conserve water and energy, and save wildlife and forest habitats. From their list of suggestions Center personnel chose:

- ❖ Actions that matter and can be measured accurately.
- ❖ Actions that are realistically achievable for most people.
- ❖ Just nine actions, for a clear and manageable program.

When these actions are taken together by many persons it will have a significant impact on the environment. For every thousand participants, 48 million gallons of water, 170 trees, and 12,250 pounds of sea life will be saved and 4 million pounds of carbon dioxide emissions will be prevented per year.

The actions in the *Turn the Tide* program are not necessarily the “biggies” - actions that have the largest environmental impact but which require considerable planning and commitment. This program focuses on steps that most people can actually take in the short term. The nine actions in the *Turn the Tide* program are:

- 1. Skip a car trip each week.** The average American drives over 250 miles each week. Replace a weekly 20 mile car trip by telecommuting, biking or combining errands and you'll reduce your annual emissions of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide by nearly a thousand pounds.
- 2. Replace one beef meal each week.** Meat production is extremely resource-intensive. Livestock currently consume 70 percent of America's grain production. Feedlot beef is particularly wasteful. For every 1,000 of us who take this action, we save over 70,000 pounds of grain, 70,000 pounds of topsoil and 40 million gallons of water per year. Alternatively, free-range beef can be substituted for feedlot beef if it is available.
- 3. Shift your shrimp consumption.** Today, nearly 70 percent of the world's fisheries are fully fished or overfished, and about 60 billion pounds of fish,

sharks, and seabirds die each year as “bycatch”, sea life caught accidentally as a result of wasteful fishing techniques. Shrimp fishing ranks the highest in this regard: for every pound of shrimp caught between four and ten pounds of other sea life are “bycatch”. There are more ecologically sensitive harvesting methods, but, at present, they are not much used.

- 4. Declare your independence from junk mail.** Get your name off junk mail lists. The Center for a New American Dream has an online form that will do this. For every 1,000 of us who succeed in halving our personal bulk mail, we will save 170 trees, nearly 46,000 pounds of carbon dioxide, and 70,000 gallons of water each year.
- 5. Replace four standard light bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent light.** This will prevent the emission of five thousand pounds of carbon dioxide and reduce your electricity bills.
- 6. Move the thermostat 3° F.** Heating and cooling represents the biggest chunk of our home energy consumption. Just by turning the thermostat down three degrees in the winter and up three degrees in the summer, you prevent the emission of nearly 1,100 pounds of carbon dioxide annually.
- 7. Eliminate lawn and garden pesticides.** There are 20 million acres of lawns in the U.S., an area roughly the size of New England. Americans apply 70 million pounds of pesticides to home lawns and gardens each year and in so doing pollute the environment.
- 8. Install an efficient showerhead and low flow faucet aerators.** Available water supply is diminishing as human populations swell and inefficiently drain precious aquifers. For every 1,000 of us who take this action, we can save nearly 8 million gallons of water and prevent over 450,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions each year.
- 9. Inspire two friends to take these actions.** This will triple the positive impact you are making.

If you want to participate in the *Turn the Tide* program, you can visit the web page at www.newdream.org/turnthetide/. Here you can register your commitment to some or all of these actions, monitor your actions and calculate your positive environmental impact which will be added into the impact for all those in the program. If you don't have access to the Internet, you can request a *Turn the Tide* program workbook by writing to: Center for a New American Dream, attn: Turn the Tide, 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 900, Takoma Park, MD 20912 or by calling toll-free 877-68-DREAM.

Of course, these actions can be taken without registering with the program. And if these actions are not for you, there are many other actions that would help environmental improvement. Each of us should consider some additional actions that we can take to improve our stewardship of the environment.