

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people?

Sustaining our environment can help us attain all MDGs

Our individual and corporate decisions make the difference

Eighth in a 10-part series

By Phina Borgeson

How often in our congregations have we decided that beginning environmental ministry will just have to wait until we get our new food pantry on a solid footing? How often have we been caught up in the health concerns of members and forgotten about the health of our planet? How often have we chosen short-term savings over an investment that would spare both dollars and environmental damage in the long run?

Taking a deeper look, though, we see a different picture.

Increasing asthma rates are an environmental health problem. Climate change and wetland degradation contribute to harsher and more damaging storms, hitting the poor hardest. Soil degradation, fossil fuel depletion, and tropical forest destruction are a few of the hidden costs of cheap food.

Taking a broader global look, we can see that there will be no lasting attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) without considering environmental sustainability.

Improved health for the world's poor depends on clean, reliable water supplies and better sanitation.

Environmental pollution impacts the health of children, who are still growing, much more than the health of adults.

In many countries women care for the land, plants, and animals which feed their families.

Empowering women and stewarding resources go hand in hand.

Climate change will impact agriculture around the globe, speeding up desertification in some areas.

Global solutions for development depend on learning or recovering local knowledge about the natural world.



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Jonathan Lash of the World Resources Institute says that “environmental income is a stepping stone on the path out of poverty.” The poor need practices that use and steward natural resources, not rigid conservation approaches. The command “to till and to keep” in chapter two of Genesis, perhaps better translated as “to serve and protect,” reminds us of our right relationship with the rest of creation, one of sensitive engagement.

We contribute to the achievement of MDG #7 through giving, advocacy and lifestyle choices. We make sure that our charitable dollars go to organizations, such as Episcopal Relief and Development, which value sustainable solutions to food security as much as food aid. We advocate for U.S. trade and agriculture policies that respect the contexts, needs and resources of other countries, rather than increasing their dependency on us for aid and markets. We make decisions about the consumption patterns of our households, our congregations, and our work places—particularly choices about fossil fuel use and food and drink purchases. When we do these things, we make progress toward global environmental sustainability. ■

Let us pray for an end to the waste and desecration of God's creation, for equal access to its fruits, and for communities and nations to find sustenance in the gifts of earth and water.

- Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations

The Rev. Josephine Borgeson (phinaborgeson@gmail.com) is a deacon and member of the Episcopal Committee on Science, Technology and Faith from the Diocese of Northern California.

Learn more about it

- **ONE Episcopalian**
<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/ONE/>
- **BBC News** — <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/4872550.stm>
(Open the window on income and the environment low on the page.)
- **“The Wealth of the Poor: Managing Ecosystems to Fight Poverty”**
http://www.wri.org/biodiv/pubs_description.cfm?pid=4073
(The full report is massive; you can learn a lot from the introduction and case studies in the slide shows.)
- **Educational resources from Episcopal Relief and Development**
http://er-d.org/programs_36756_ENG_HTML.htm
- **Resources from Episcopal News Service**
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3577_77743_ENG_HTML.htm
- **Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation** — <http://e4gr.org>
- **United Nations Millennium Development Goals** — www.un.org/millenniumgoals/
Produced by Episcopal Life/Episcopal News Service.
Ongoing coverage of the Episcopal Church is available at www.episcopalchurch.org/ens.

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