

THE GREEN CORNER by Gordon Bates

This GC is a carryover from the last one on Waynesburg University's (in PA) approach to being a Green Campus. Although that school is making much headway, it was also clear that there are many different degrees of motivation. It concerns me, with all the evidence available, that more people are not more highly motivated. Here are some further observations:

- We can sometimes be motivated by what's right in front of us.
- We can be motivated if it's dramatic and huge.
- We can be motivated if we're related to whoever is affected.
- We can be motivated if we feel really threatened directly or indirectly.
- We can be motivated by the amount of good we believe we can do, how much we can affect the outcome.
- We can be motivated by our religious convictions, which include our sense of morality, compassion and obligation to do something.



Relative to the environment, each of those can pose difficulties for becoming motivated to do something. Climate change is all around us, but largely in small increments and not obvious. It's only huge in the Arctic or Antarctic or in mountain glaciers, all far away from us. We may know someone affected but usually not many and most of us are not directly threatened. We may not be convinced that the recommended changes are all that important; or will make a real difference. As for the Bible or religious convictions, much within our Christian traditions has taught or justified exploitation of the earth, not its preservation.

I was no exception. Motivation came slowly. Although I went to seminary, it was only recently that I learned to love the earth as God's first self-revelation. Although I majored in geology in college, it was only a few years ago that it became shockingly apparent to me that the primary sources of fuel which have powered our industrial revolution will only be available in the amounts we need for another few decades, not centuries but decades. I also learned that critical resources, like precious metals, can never be naturally replaced, though some may be duplicated by human ingenuity; and that water, once aquifers and rivers and lakes dry up, can be gone in many regions for the indefinite future. At some point, I began not just to "know about" those facts. I began to internalize them as part of my source of motivation. I moved from loving to caring.

Now that I have both children and grandchildren, I have become acutely, even painfully, aware that the world I inherited is changing drastically and rapidly, and much that I took for granted will probably not be available for those that I leave behind. Most of all I hear certain truths with different ears, and one of the most important is "The earth is the Lord's, and all that dwells within it; the world, and all that lives on it." (Psalm 24.1) I began to move from caring to action.

As Kate reminded us in her wonderful sermon on September 21, I now hear God calling me, night and day, to care about the earth, with all its kindred forms of life, especially those species that are being wiped out unnecessarily by human greed. I hear God calling me to care about the multitudes of people who are already suffering from the major signs of global warming and excessive consumption; some from lack of clean water or rising ocean levels; others because they are cutting down the forests they need to preserve their land so that I can have affordable furniture. I hear God calling to love in a new way, the world for which Jesus gave his life.

The UCC has a wonderful motto that states: "To love is to care; to care is to do." Do you hear that call the way I do: to love, to care, to do?

Gordon