

PRESBYTERY OF THE INLAND N.W.
OPEN SPACE 2/25/16
DAVID HICKS: THE PLANET OUR GRANDCHILDREN WILL INHERIT

David began his conversation by posing the question: *"How do Christians think about the future?"*

He then noted that we might be in a crisis situation regarding the planet. Adding that the Church has a role and purpose to steward our planet, citing Genesis 1 and 2.

The earth is in jeopardy of collapse due to:

Overpopulation – which is not sustainable

At an alarming rate we are losing forests, marine fisheries, grasslands, farmland, glacial ice etc.

Pollution and degradation of the earth

Human disregard of the earth and all other living creatures

David talked about the earth human population since creation, and what has happened in the different eras of humankind.

Hunter/Gatherers –

Low human impact on earth – sustainable population

Agricultural Revolution –

Increase human impact on the earth – still sustainable population

Industrial Revolution –

Discovery and use of fossil fuels

Increase human impact on the earth – rapid population growth

Resulting in:

Pollution, global commerce, mining damage

More cities = increase in disease and mortality rates

Another Agricultural Revolution – with the discovery and use of fixed nitrogen products for fertilizer

Population increase exponential – approaching 8 billion – no longer sustainable

Soil, water, plant nutrients are fully utilized – depletion of nutrients

Pollution

David spoke of the earth's *carrying capacity* – the capacity or ability of the earth (or living system) to support a population indefinitely, which he suggests that we have exceeded.

He spoke of Capitalism vs. Stewardship

David **CHALLENGED** the room to choose 5 despoiled places to visit on vacation, rather than the beautiful places. (Suggestions: Hanford, mining areas, etc.)
His point was that as humans we don't want to look at what is happening. Rather we go around blissfully unaware of what is going on around us.

Satellite maps reveal

Areas of deforestation

Reveal that the topsoil in Africa is blowing to South America

Rivers drying up.

Etc.

David described the 3 principles of ecology

1. Energy flow – comes from the sun
 - a. There is only one biological capture – photosynthesis, which occurs in chlorophyll in trees and plants
2. Nutrient Cycling
 - a. He noted that every atom of our bodies is approximately 14 million years old
 - b. Approximately 20 elements in nature – used over and over – they never wear out (Like Oxygen – “You could say they are ‘eternal’.”)
3. Succession
 - a. Nature utilizes energy and nutrients to create ecosystems
 - i. Every member is involved
 - ii. Adaptation occurs in time

Summary:

We began as a world of abundance – which seems to suggest there are no limits, but there are. Though we have been entrusted with the care of the earth, we have arrived quickly and unknowingly to an over-utilized globe. When we live so comfortably it becomes difficult to see, and to make the choice to do something about it. However, it's our problem. The Church needs to engage and address the questions of the planet. **“What can we do?”**

The session ended with brief questions and comments from around the room.

THE PLANET OUR GRANDCHILDREN WILL INHERIT

David L Hicks, PhD, Emeritus Professor of Biology, Whitworth University, 1967-96

Domanoski, Dianne, 2009, **The End of the Long Summer: Why We Must Remake Our Civilization to Survive on a Volatile Earth.** *'Now, in the immediate years ahead, our children and grandchildren and their grandchildren must make a dangerous passage through a storm of our own making. The door to the comfortable and familiar world we depend on has already slammed shut behind us. It is already too late to 'prevent' global warming, or to 'solve' the climate crisis, too late to prevent incredibly powerful natural forces from significantly altering the imminent trajectory of human history.'*

SOME REFERENCES TO OUR PLANETARY DILEMMA FOR YOUR PERUSAL

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* Worldwatch Institute, annual editions 1984 through 2015, i.e., State of the World 2014: Governing for Sustainability, Island Press, Washington DC, ISBN 978-1-61091-541-0

QUOTATIONS

Whatever else is in jeopardy, climate change is foremost a crisis for humans and our current civilization. Moreover, what confronts us now is not a vague prospective danger to an abstract posterity in some future time. The threat is to a child born today. – Dumanoski, p1

The inherited assumptions we bring to the situation impair our assessment of the dangers. In this new historical landscape, we not only continue to intensify the physical crises through exponential growth. Perhaps more important, we also struggle to understand and resolve our dilemma using ideas about the world that are now obsolete and dangerous. – Domanoski, p4

If a society's implicit goals are to exploit Nature, enrich the elites, and ignore the long term, then that society will develop technologies and markets that destroy the environment, widen the gap between the rich and the poor, and optimize for short term gain. In short, that society develops technologies and markets that hasten a collapse instead of preventing it. – Dumanoski, p9

*American 'consumerism' is unprecedented, highly fragile, and unsustainable.
-- Richard Heinberg, Afterburn: Society Beyond Fossil Fuels.*

I am pessimistic about the human race, because it is too ingenuous for its own good. Our approach to Nature is to beat it into submission. We would stand a better chance of survival if we accommodated ourselves to this planet and viewed it appreciatively, instead of skeptically and dictatorially. -- EB White

*Man has lost the capacity to foresee and to forestall. He will end by destroying the earth.
-- Albert Schweitzer*

Christianity is America's civil religion. -- anon