

## SACRED GIFT OF WATER

A Christian Consideration of God's Sacred Gift of Water

### Section I. Creation

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1: 1, 31).

Our Christian faith teaches that God created all that is: the universe, including the earth and all its creatures, as an overflowing expression of divine love. All creation, then, shares in elemental being with God. And, all creatures are therefore united and inter-connected through their essential created origins in our Creator God.

While believing that all creation is God’s, we find that God has given humanity a particular role as creation’s stewards and caretakers of God’s “household.”

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” (Genesis 2: 15).

As such, we are responsible to care for all aspects of God’s created order to the best of our ability. This is the primary and fundamental principle of our stewardship. Therefore, our care for the environment and our actions with regard to our climate is a matter of ethics – the need for us to respond appropriately to God’s entrustment to us. And, as globalization and interconnections increase, we are developing a greater understanding of our essential relationships within this created world.

### Section II. Water

Scripture indicates “water” is a basic substance in creation.

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. (Genesis I: 1-2)

Scripture relates that God looked upon what God had created and saw that it was “good.” It was “good” because the effect mirrored the infinite goodness of God. Water is an essential element in the created order, pointing to our origins, both physical and spiritual.

We have learned how essential water is. Most of our world is water and all earthly life requires water. Human civilizations rise and fall with the availability of water and in many parts of our world, animals and plants live by the annual cycles of available water. However, beyond what it supplies physically, water serves also as a continued reminder of the blessing love of our Creator God. The current environmental crisis is the result of our forgetting that water is more than a physical substance to be used and valued only as a commodity. Water is a fundamental element of survival – both physical and spiritual.

*We are a diverse network of Christians in Vermont working together to serve the common good through public worship and prayer; acts of mercy and care; and loving prophetic witness for peace, justice and the integrity of creation.*



PO Box 764  
Richmond VT  
05477

(802) 434-3397 - info@vecncc.org - www.vecncc.org

Frank Griswold (Cf. Bibliography) writes, “The Bible, the story of our creation and recreation, is engulfed in water...” The symbolic richness of water includes “cleanliness, healing, blessing, welcome and hospitality, initiation, repentance, liberation, refreshment, hope, fruitfulness, ministry, grandeur.” Scripture is full of the use of such symbols. So, while our physical bodies cannot exist without water, water is also integral to our life of faith as disciples of Jesus Christ. Our spiritual lives are a redeemed gift, an outpouring of divine love, birthed in the waters of baptism. We are called to remember our baptism and be thankful.

Given these understandings, we find that Christians have a vital role in today’s environmental movement. While we may be coming late to the table, we offer the key understanding that God is essential to the right ordering of this created world, and that humanity is entrusted to care for that divinely ordained order. To do otherwise is to fail in our calling as followers of Christ.

Accordingly, we call all Christians to live in this world as responsible caretakers for this creation in which we have been placed because this is God’s will for us. We affirm our member denominations’ calls to responsible stewardship of creation, remembering that God loves all that God has created and wills that each and every part of this complex web of life continue in its marvelous and divinely appointed complexity.

Specifically we

- Will share this document with our member denominations and congregations.
- Encourage all to examine their own lifestyle to determine what choices they can make to live more lightly on this earth.
- Recognize that this statement of belief calls us, individually and as communities of faith, to take specific, concrete actions to conserve, protect, and honor God's sacred gift of water.
- Urge greater support of our leaders and legislators in their work of enacting necessary reforms.

Finally we call each person of faith to a renewed life of prayer, using the power that God has given each of us through the Holy Spirit who moves over and in the waters to show us what we must know and to empower us to do those things that are necessary to ensure a continuing life of blessing for all.

This statement was prepared in the course of the year 2009 by the Peace, Justice, and the Integrity of Creation Committee of the Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society. Many voices have contributed to it. We give special thanks for the editorial contributions of The Reverend Donavee Copenhaver. The VECBS Board of Trustees contributed to this statement and approved it. It is available on the website: [www.vecbs.org](http://www.vecbs.org). We now offer it to our member denominations. We beg God’s blessing on our work and the results of our efforts.

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### Section III.

A Short Bibliography Materials utilized by Committee Members in developing this paper

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