

Everyday Reality

Rev. Peter Sawtell
Executive Director of Eco-Justice Ministries
Denver, Colorado
<http://www.eco-justice.org> – 303-715-3873

Eco-justice Notes: July 22, 2005

Excerpts:

And when we encourage our neighbors and friends to live more justly and sustainably on this earth, we need to be aware that we're asking them to do more than make personal choices. We're asking them to undertake a shift in the very reality of their daily lives.

. . . I often critique the tradition of an annual Earth Day worship service, if those ecological concerns don't also turn up on a more regular basis in worship. If there is only one extraordinary service that serves as the environmental event for the whole year, then it is disconnected from the everyday reality of church life. Instead, I often challenge pastors to put some small expression of about caring for all of God's creation into three services a month -- in the prayers of the people, a sermon illustration, the call to worship, or a hymn. When church members find those environmental perspectives expressed in 75% of the church services, they'll begin to understand that it really is a central theme of their faith. When ideas of environmental stewardship are an everyday reality in church, then they can start to change beliefs and behaviors.

As we encourage people to change their behaviors, it is essential that we provide settings and communities where those new and different realities are affirmed and nurtured. Eco-Justice Ministries is a church-based project because of our belief that congregations are one of the most important and effective places to define new identities and different values. In our churches, we have the ability to model an alternative reality. Within the ongoing, "everyday" context of church life, we can speak a language of creation care, we can affirm just and sustainable behaviors, we can frame our choices in a global and long-term context, and we can encourage each other to carry those values, perspectives and behaviors into other parts of our lives, and into other communities.