

7th Principle Service Presentation, 7 October 2007

Don Mallinson

I want to begin with an editorial written by Mary Grady, editor of the Natural News Network which is electronic newsletter. Her title is

"Humans on Earth

Maybe you were caught today, like I was, by a bright sparkle in the corner of your eye, just after sunset, and looked up to see the wide gleaming face of a waxing moon looking down upon you. Or maybe you heard an odd croaky sound, and looked up to catch a quartet of honking geese, flapping in formation, flashing by through a gap in the trees. Or maybe an enticing aroma wafted past you, like happened to me, faintly bearing a whiff of salt air, a little wood smoke, a hint of rotting leaves, a certainty that Fall is upon us, warm as it is.

In each instant when our lives intersect the wild world around us, for a second we drop all our thoughts, our cares, our encumbrances, and become a human on earth, like the millions before and after us, who step out each morning onto a spinning planet that carries us across an unknowable void.

These encounters only happen, though, when we abandon our warm houses, our carpeted cubicles, our racing vehicles, and hear that most joyous sound of all — the sharp slap of doors slamming shut behind us."

What Beth and I want to talk about is how we go about protecting such vignettes as noted by Mary Grady.

I believe in the concept of space ship earth. We are on a vessel, part of a solar system, hurtling through space. Only within the past few generations have we become aware that we have to start respecting the earth.

That resources are limited. For example, take cod, a fish so plentiful 300 hundred years ago that, according to historic observations, you could walk across the ocean on the vast schools of this fish. Fortunes were made and empires expanded on the nutritional value of dried cod. Now villages around the North Atlantic are dying due to depletion of cod. Whales were so plentiful Native Americans use to catch them in their canoes. Now it is rare to sight this endangered species. I could go on about the demise of birds and animals and whole forests. The Colorado River, the second largest river in the US, so mighty it carved the Grand Canyon, now so drained that it does not have enough water to reach the ocean.

That mother nature can't keep being polluted without consequences. Our space ship is not an infinite sponge able to absorb any amount and any type of

pollutants we humans generate. The consequences demand action. Now! As the old Fram oil filter commercial said, "you can pay me now or pay up later."

Each day more and more individuals and organization are heeding the consequences of global warming. Beth Milham is leading the charge so this congregation will earn the respect of our peers by being proclaimed officially a green congregation. You will hear more about her efforts in a few moments.

As I only have a few minutes before you this morning I want to briefly sketch a picture of what is happening today around the world, the nation, in Rhode Island and even on Aquidneck Island.

I hasten to point out that there is momentum growing. What is happening today to control climate change is a 1,000 time more than what was happening a year ago. And today's global warming activities will be a 1,000 times less than what will be happening a year from now.

Non-polluting energy takes many forms around the world. Iceland's energy source is geothermal, France relies on nuclear power plants, Japan, too. Denmark has several off shore wind farms and has plans for more. Germany lines its autobahns with solar panels. In Canada, the Province of Prince Edward Island has a goal of using wind power to supply the entire Province's energy needs. Part of the motivation for these efforts is to reduce dependence on foreign oil, part is a desire to reduce global warming's impact.

In the US there is not a concerted federal effort at good environmental stewardship. A platitude here, a feeble effort there. Some states are undertaking efforts on their own to implement restrictions on environmental polluting. Some businesses here and there are implementing their own environmental friendly efforts. But we still have the Brayton Points of this world, resisting every effort to reduce its negative impact on the Mount Hope Bay's and the air we breath.

National and local organizations such as the Sierra Club and Save the Bay are providing education and action at all levels to be good stewards.

There is a new organization, new since January of this year, that is bringing together faith based organizations here in Rhode Island together to address global warming. Rhode Island Interfaith Power and Light is a chapter of the nationwide Interfaith Power and Light. Channing's Social Justice Committee is a member of the RI chapter. It was IPL that provided the material that enabled us to have a hot topic a year ago when we showed the Al Gore film, "An Inconvenient Truth." Later this month I will be attending a half day seminar in West Hartford sponsored by the Connecticut chapter of IPL looking for ideas for such a seminar in January for our own state.

Towns such as Bristol, Barrington, East Providence, Westerly, even the state itself is looking into wind energy. Here on Aquidneck Island, the Portsmouth Abbey has done something about wind energy

You have all seen the wind energy generator at Portsmouth Abbey. Do you know that according to historical records there was a windmill on that site? A new form of an old idea about harnessing the wind. Portsmouth officials have requested bids for a wind generator to be installed at the high school. Middletown can't install wind generators because height restrictions at and around the airport, means locating a wind generator on the outskirts. Without the ability to tie in directly to town structures means being part of National Grid. National Grid will buy energy from the town's wind energy generator at wholesale rates and sell it back to them at retail rates.

Aquidneck Island people are buying local foods; replacing incandescent light bulbs with CFL's; buying hybrid cars; replacing one time use plastic shopping bags with their own reusable ones; buying green energy; recycling more and getting more involved with global warming issues. Conserving open space, cleaning up the Bay, even walking your dog requires a leash and a plastic bag are activities not necessarily associated with global warming but they do serve to make our community a better place to live.

You may be asking yourself, well okay that is some of what is going on elsewhere, but what about me and Channing. What are we doing to support our 7th principle?