

THE ADVOCATE

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- Interview with Rev. Rich Cizik on climate change
- Sowing Seeds: Join us in Washington, DC this June
- Hold a “Great Warming” screening at your church

WHY I WORK WITH A ROCHA

BY CINDY VERBEEK

Many of life’s struggles and joys revolve around relationships. Relationships with our “self”, spouse, children, parents, extended family, friends and acquaintances are all affected by (and affect) how we live and who we are.

Included in the bigger picture is our relationship with God and the rest of creation, both as individuals and as members of the human community. Sometimes, because of sin, these relationships are disconnected and in need of reconciliation. Consider the following relationships:

Humans and God

We are disconnected from God through our disobedience, pride and unhealthy living. When this relationship suffers all other relationships suffer as well. (Genesis 3:17-19, 23; Isaiah 24:4-6)

Humans and Humans

We are disconnected from each other through prejudice, hatred, judgmentalism, war, pride, greed, and self-hate. When these relationships

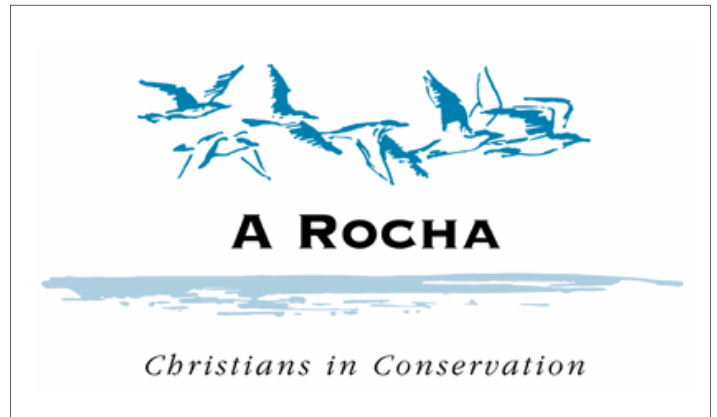
suffer the human community and the rest of creation suffers. (Hosea 4:1-3)

Humans and the rest of Creation

We are disconnected from the rest of creation through greed, covetousness, pride, neglect, and complacency. (Romans 8:20, 22; Jeremiah 12:4,11)

Thankfully this is not the final story or we would find very little hope to hang onto! This Easter season we consider Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Story continued on page 2.



CALLING ALL JUSTICE SEEKERS!

It’s called **Sowing Seeds: Growing a Movement** – and a movement needs people! Join thousands of movement builders this summer in Washington, D.C. to launch a renewed movement to end hunger and poverty in the United States and around the world.

Together, we’ll seek to do justice by taking action to end hunger and poverty, love kindness by loving and working on behalf of all who suffer, and walk humbly by seeking God’s will to overcome hunger and poverty.

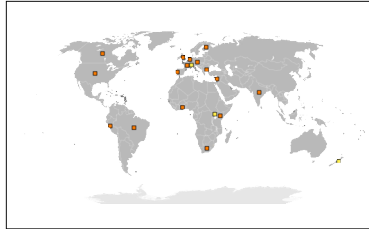
A CRC Justice Seekers Assembly will gather June 9th before the conference to set in motion a movement within our denomination, working together to seek justice within our own communities.

Learn all about Sowing Seeds, what you can expect there, how to register, what we’ll do at the CRC assembly, and all the info you need at www.crcjustice.org. Just click on the Sowing Seeds link.

A ROCHA, CONT'D

(Story continued from page 1)

Through these acts God has conquered sin because He loves us and has begun to reconnect all our broken relationships. The Bible says "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Jesus], and through him [Jesus] to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." Colossians 1:19,20. In learning to be more like Jesus, we are compelled to join Him in reconciling our relationship with all of God's creations.



A Rocha (meaning "the Rock" in Portuguese, the country and language of the original project) is a Christian Conservation organization working to show God's love to all creation. A Rocha Canada is part of an international family of projects in 16 countries that aims to care for God's creation by cultivating the health and restoration of all our relationships. This is why working for A Rocha is so exciting! Not because we believe that we can heal relationships through any act of our own but because we know that God can and does. Out of gratitude, love and in worship, we walk alongside the Creator who has already begun the healing process, by His grace and in Christ.

Consider these relationships again in the context of what A Rocha's five core commitments: Christian, Community, Cooperation, Cross Cultural and Conservation.

Humans and God – A Rocha is a Christian organization

A Rocha's work is based on our faith in Jesus, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, (Colossians 1:15-17). Through our activities we have opportunities to share Christ's love and encourage people to reconnect with God believing that in conservation work, as in all parts of our life, faith matters.

Humans and Humans - A Rocha functions at a Community level, works in Cooperation with others, and works Cross-culturally.

By involving ourselves in community (at an A Rocha centre, within the local community and internationally) we find opportunities and strength to reconnect with each other, and to begin healing our broken relationships (Jeremiah 32:38-39, 41).

Humans and the rest of Creation - A Rocha is a Conservation Organization

By doing sound biological research, conservation and education, we worship our Creator (not His creation), share in the declaration that "The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1) and acknowledge the redemption of all creation through Jesus (Romans 5:17; 8:19-21).

As the Church and Community Group Liaison it is my privilege to work with and challenge Christians to put these principles into practice at the small group/congregational level. As this ministry grows I pray that there would be a network of churches across our continent that are being intentional about a wholistic creation stewardship within their ministry and congregational lives. A lot of my work involves brainstorming with people and connecting them with resources that will help them reduce their impact on, and reconcile their broken relationship with, God's good creation. If you or your church would like to join in (or if you are already doing something in this area) please contact me. I would love to work with you in bringing the message of Jesus' reconciling act on the cross to the ends of the earth.

(NB. The idea for the relationships and the triangle diagram are revised from Cal DeWitt's lectures and notes from Dean Ohlman.)

Although the head office for A Rocha Canada is in Surrey, B.C., Cindy Verbeek is privileged to be able to work from her home in the beautiful Bulkley Valley in northern B.C. She is an active member of Houston Christian Reformed Church where she attends with her husband Dennis and their three small children. When not working for A Rocha she bakes bread, cleans diapers and desperately tries to resist her addiction to electricity and fossil fuels. For more information contact her directly at cindy.verbeek@arocha.org or see the A Rocha website www.arocha.org.

ACTION ALERT

Advocate reader Terry Woodnorth wrote in about a screening his church, Valley CRC in Binghamton, NY, held of the film, "The Great Warming" (see the resources section on page 3 for more.)

We thought this sounded like a great way churches can get involved in creation care issues. Here's some of Terry's email to the Advocate:

A screening of "The Great Warming" was held on February 17 at Valley CRC in Binghamton, NY. Through my existing contacts, I was able to get the local chapter of the Sierra Club and the Broome County Environmental Management Council to co-sponsor the event along with Valley CRC.

Promotion included a church bulletin insert, message on the church's outdoor sign, showing the film trailer at a worship service, listing in the events calendar in the local newspaper, and distribution via the e-mail lists of the co-sponsors and a local justice group.

We had a discussion time after the film for folks to share their reactions to the film. Most found the film quite hopeful and informative, and the suggestions for action were helpful. The need to involve faith communities in the issue of climate change was reinforced.

One suggestion (by a member of the community) was that churches should lead the way in taking action by planting more trees. He thought that should be pretty non-controversial.

We served refreshments after the film, and most people stayed around to talk further. A number of people from the church who were unable to attend the screening expressed a desire for a future screening or viewing individually.

What's your church done in the area of eco-justice and creation care? Drop us a line at osjha@crcna.org.

WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

Don't miss the latest issue of The Banner! Turn to page 18 for an article on climate change by Rev. Calvin DeWitt.

A Rocha (Portuguese for "the rock") is a Christian nature conservation organization. A Rocha is a family of projects working in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, North and South America, and Asia, with a focus on science and research, practical conservation and environmental education. Check out Cindy's article (front page) for more on what A Rocha does, and be sure to visit their website at www.arocha.org for news, resources, and connections for a better world.

The Great Warming: Narrated by Alanis Morissette and Keanu Reeves, [The Great Warming](#) is a dramatic film about climate change that sweeps around the world to reveal how a changing climate is affecting the lives of people everywhere.



It has been called "the best film about global warming ever shot," and taps into the growing groundswell of public interest in this topic to present an emotional, accurate picture of our children's planet. The Great Warming includes hard-hitting comments from scientists, religious leaders, a former CIA chief, and other opinion-makers about America's lack of leadership in what is certainly the most critical environmental issue of the 21st century.

The film also covers how evangelical Christians and other people of faith, who until recently were silent on this issue, are working with secular advocacy groups and scientists to push decision-makers to action. To order a copy of The Great Warming DVD for your church or personal use, visit www.thegreatwarming.com. You can also download The Manufacturer's Manual, "a holistic handbook of Bible-study, devotion, and sermon ideas" designed to be a companion guide to the Great Warming, on this page of the OSJHA website: http://www.crcna.org/pages/osjha_globalwarming.cfm.

The Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) is a unique evangelical ministry whose purpose is to "declare the Lordship of Christ over all creation" (Col. 1:15-20). EEN's flagship publication, Creation Care magazine, provides you with biblically informed and timely articles on topics ranging from how to protect your loved ones against environmental threats to how you can more fully praise the Creator for the wonder of His creation. Visit the EEN website at www.creationcare.org for resources and creation care campaigns.

The folks at Sojourners have prepared a new resource on faith and the environment called, "Holy Gound." The sessions for group study explore such topics as environmental racism, eco-feminism, and population explosion. It offers practical reflections and models for action through articles and study questions, plus listings of organizations and publications. It's suitable for committed environmentalists and people newly exploring environmental issues. Order at <http://go.sojo.net/ct/upz7eyE1umpV/>

ADVOCATE CALENDAR

West Michigan, Free Showing of An Inconvenient Truth! UM Metro Ministry invites you to a free showing of the Oscar-winning film about global warming, An Inconvenient Truth, on **Monday, April 16 at 7 pm**, at the Forest Hills Fine Arts Center, 600 Forest Hills Avenue.

The lobby will open at 6:15 pm with informational booths that will highlight local environmentally friendly ideas and services. The film will be preceded by a brief introduction

on local efforts to address global warming.

For more information, email Susan Gray at susan.jgray@comcast.net.



Sowing Seeds: Growing a Movement – June 9-12 in

Washington D.C. Thousands of people of faith will gather in Washington to launch a renewed movement to end hunger and poverty in the United States and around the world.

A CRC Justice Seekers Assembly will gather on June 9 to set in motion a movement within our denomination, working together to seek justice within our own communities.

Please visit www.crcjustice.org and click on the Sowing Seeds link for all the info.

JUSTICE AND WORSHIP

A Rocha, a Christian conservation organization, has lots of great resources for you (just click on the Resources link) at www.arocha.org. You'll find activities for various ages, Bible studies and more.

SPECIAL OFFER

Liquidation sale! Shalom Seekers, our social justice toolkit containing biblical reflections, worship resources and more, is being discontinued. Buy it now for 50% off. Learn all about the toolkit and how to order at www.crcjustice.org.

READER SURVEY

The Advocate has a new look! Love it? Hate it? Suggestions? Let us know at osjha@crcna.org.

FROM DEATH COMES NEW LIFE

AN INTERVIEW WITH REV. RICH CIZIK

Last week, I had the pleasure of chatting over the phone with Rev. Richard Cizik, the Vice President of Governmental Affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals. Rev. Cizik has been one of the most prominent voices in the evangelical world speaking out on climate change and what he calls "creation care."

His passion for the issue has not only raised some eyebrows, but has led to criticism from other evangelical leaders. We spoke about his "conversion" to creation issues, the tension within the Christian community over climate change, and more. I typed as fast as my fingers would allow so that I could so that I could provide as much of our great conversation with you as possible. -Tracy Young

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Christian Reformed
Church

Q: At a climate conference in Oxford in 2002, you had a change of heart on environmental issues. You've described your turning to issues of climate change as something like your conversion to Christ. What turned in your heart, what was it that made such a powerful change?

Richard Cizik: Well, I was presented with the most compelling science on what is occurring on the earth and the biblical mandate to care for this earth, in such a fashion, like never before, that I couldn't walk away and not acknowledge what happened to me. If the Biblical word for repentance is metanoia – turn and go in another direction – then that is what happened to me.

There's nothing comparable to when one turns to Jesus Christ, but a lot of my fellow evangelicals, when it comes to this issue, they need a conversion experience. And it's a conversion experience from, I think, a failure to understand the theological importance of the doctrine of creation care.

They need, I think, in some cases, confession, repentance, metanoia, that we've been in denial about our addiction to the abundant life. At least the consumer version of the abundant life. I think we have to die, as this is Holy Week, to our sinful life, and even our consumer life. And we need to live in a new way.

I left the Oxford conference with a commitment to preach and teach what I understood the Bible to say, but also to change my personal lifestyle and that of my family, because the Gospel is not a privatized movement. If Jesus is to be Lord over all my life, I would have to carry these reflective principles into public life as well.

Q: There is division in the evangelical

community on climate change and the environment. What are the bases of this division and what's your response?

RC: I think that some of it comes from an anti-science anti-intellectual viewpoint. Some of it is rooted in a political ideology that puts politics before faith. There are some people who are threatened by a movement that would cast doubt on the Republican Party. There are those who are threatened by it politically, and there are those who are threatened because they don't understand the theological significance of what we are saying. We are not pantheists, we are worshipers of God. This isn't from Satan; this movement is straight out of the Scriptures and from God's church.

Q: Do you think science will be a roadblock for some in the Christian community on wanting to engage in these issues?

RC: It remains to be seen. The evangelical movement has changed enormously over the past years. Those who see the war between religion and science is on the wane. Science is our ally, I've said that science simply is our ally in that it helps us to understand what creation is telling us about ourselves and about its Maker.

The issue of climate change, global warming– all of these present a threat so cosmological that you can't present them with out the Gospel. We are attempting to build a bridge between the world's finest scientists and the theologians. I believe that evangelicals will be significant players in the fixing of the breach.

Q: Some Christians might be surprised to hear climate change or creation care labeled as a moral issue. What makes it a moral or a social justice issue?

RC: Primarily its impact on the poor and unfortunate of the world. That is even becoming more apparent even this week. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is revealing the impact of climate change on the poorest of the poor in the world.

This is a serious ecological threat to the planet as we know it, that it impacts particularly the poorest of the poor is what makes this a moral issue. But even without that, there are impacts here in America in ways we don't understand. The impacts of these ecological issues even on each of us individually are far beyond what we understand. It's only when leaders begin to talk about this as a moral issue, not a "red" or "blue" issue, does the public wake up.

As we concluded the interview, Rev. Cizik had this to add:

The question we all have to answer is "can these dry bones live"? That's a dramatic image of what's happening to our planet. Nature is becoming sick and dying all around us. Through the Gospel message, dry bones do live. That's the Easter message this week. The Christian life is that we must die to ourselves and new life comes. From death comes new life – in real abundance.