

## **We are All the Climate Generation**

Acts 4:1-12, 1 John 3:16-24, Earth Sunday, April 21, 2024

By Patty Friesen

In our Acts reading today Peter and John are under arrest for committing a healing in the temple. Peter and John are arrested because they testify to Jesus, by whom, they claim, there is “the resurrection of the dead” (4:1-3). Jesus warned his disciples to expect the very crisis that Peter and John here encounter: “When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say” (Luke 12:11-12).

This story in Acts reminds us that spiritual authority is primarily the result of the Holy Spirit’s work in human life. Peter was an ordinary man who did extraordinary things to influence thousands of people because he was “filled with the Holy Spirit.”

I’ve chosen this lectionary text on Earth Sunday because it reminds us that healing is the ongoing work of God after the resurrection and that God will use ordinary people like each one of us to affect healing in the earth. Young people are called the Climate Generation because they are the ones most impacted by climate change and will be the generation that has to bring healing to the earth but I daresay that we are impacted and responsible for healing. We are all the climate generation.

I’d like to share this 4-minute video clip by Felix and Kaleb Martens Bartel from Drake, (sons of Pastor Lisa Martens Bartel and cousins to Dylan and Olivia) talking about the church and climate change...Matthew Braun was also on this call coordinated

by Mennonite Church Canada's Climate Action coordinator Sandy Plett and Matthew was good too but Felix and Kaleb are cutier.

Felix says churches have big roofs and should consider solar panels and that would be a witness that the church cares about the environment. He also said that churches should consider fundraising for environmental groups. Kaleb, after he got over his hiccups, said that they learn about the environment at school but not at church (that's on his pastor mother!)

We are trying to care about the environment at church. I know together as a congregation it's harder to get on the same page with greening our building, but a number of individual congregants walk or cycle to work, others shop local and shop thrift and others recycle like crazy. Others have put up solar panels this year and have purchased hybrid or electric vehicles. Our young people are invested in this issue and have a green faith meaning their faith in God is intricately connected to their climate action. With their designated Green Fund, they may start a pollinator garden.

Community Connections is trying to partner with the youth on green education, and projects so they don't feel alone in their convictions. And they are not alone. We are all the Climate Generation. Several OMC recyclers, cyclists, EV and solar panel owners are meeting with the youth this morning @ 11 if anyone else wants to come learn more about what church members are doing for green energy. We will go around the circle introducing ourselves and what we are doing - like AA - Hello my name is Patty and I shop thrift because I believe in keeping clothes out of the landfill.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, biologist and author of Braiding Sweetgrass has invested much of her career studying plants so that her fellow humans might know our

connections to the earth and with that knowledge, find the urgency to act. “We are all bound by a covenant of reciprocity,” Kimmerer says which calls us to honour our responsibilities for all we have been given, for all that we have taken.” Kimmerer suggests Christianity sets humans too far apart from other creatures on earth by giving us a privileged place. The idea that we were created in the image of God authorizes human power in ways that separate us from other creatures. We Christians who care about creation and believe God calls us to this care are trying to present a different perspective to the world.

It was a delight to have SaskEV Club here last July 1 for the Osler Parade to show off their electric vehicles - Teslas, Bolts and Hyandais in the Osler parade and afterwards in the church parking lot. The EV Club was impressed that a church would sponsor such an event because as they said, they thought most religious people were apathetic to climate change at best, hostile at worst. I have never done so much witnessing to the Gospel in my whole life as I did in the meet-ups with these environmentalists - telling them about our faith in God as our Creator, Jesus as reconciler of all creation and our commission as caretakers. A local family of four who test-drove my Nissan Ariya also asked why we were hosting this event as a church and I said because as Christians we care about our planet.

Over rollkuchen and watermelon in the Osler town hall the Sask EV Club discussed climate change. Chevy Bolt owner Glenn said, (we know each other by the vehicles we drive even if we can't remember each other's names). Glenn said, I think the adage **Reduce, Recycle, Reuse** needs a slight adaptation to **Reduce** our

consumerism for sure, **Replace** our fossil fuels, oil and gas both with solar electric, and then **Reconcile** with those who think differently than us.

I told Glenn I'd quote him in this sermon and he laughed. He'll probably never convert to Christianity but he's my new friend and in many ways he's challenging and converting me to be more outspoken in my environmental beliefs. I don't know if I made any converts to Christ on July 1 but it got the Sask EV Club thinking about religion and the environment.

In 1 John 3:16-24, we cannot possibly find within us the power to give ourselves for others, including the earth. God alone has made love a reality for us. Without the assurance of that gospel, we would remain paralyzed by fear. In the Cotton Patch Version of 1 John 3:18: "My little ones, let's not talk about love. Let's not sing about love. Let's put love into action and make it real." Thanks be to God, who, through Jesus Christ and disciples in his Spirit, gives us the vision, the energy, and the resources to reduce, replace and reconcile our lifestyles to be sustainable on the earth. Let us pray...