

1. Stewardship for creation – What does it mean to take on environmental responsibility in the context of the water crisis?

As we look at water, we must remember that water is an integral part of the natural environment and we must look after the totality of the natural environment if we are to survive and if we are to have clean water.

What can we do to prevent extinction?

Our instinct is to look after our fellow human beings.

But we have to realize that that our well-being is integrally linked with the well-being of the environment, and in fact, our lives are enriched by living in a healthy environment.

So,

- i) What can we do to be good Earthkeepers?
- ii) How can we live more harmoniously with creation?
- iii) How can we stem the sixth great extinction and encourage an attitude of respect for God's creation, learning not to kill?
- iv) Should there be legal rights for "a healthy environment" (South African Constitution) and should there be legal rights for the natural environment?

2. God and the churches' care for the poor – What are the implications of water scarcity, privatization etc. with regard to justice for the poor?

We must guard against the domination of commercial interests – serving mammon instead of God!

Aristotle said there were two economic systems: The "need" system and the "greed" system. He said it would be disastrous if we followed the greed system.

What has the world followed?

There are essentials that God provides for his creation that cannot be subject to commercial domination. Water is one.

Is it right to privatize water?

How do we treat it as a valuable commodity if it does not have a price on it?

How can we prevent the pollution of water? How can we establish the "Polluter Pays" principle?

3. The symbolism of water for life – What are the theological and spiritual meanings of water based on the Bible and how do they relate to the situation today?

Read the Bible with green spectacles! You will find that the Bible is full of the wonders of creation.

Consider the following passages:

Genesis 1:2, 9-10

Now the earth was formless and void, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Genesis 2:6:

Streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.

Genesis 2:10: *A river watering the Garden flowed from Eden.*

Ezekiel 47:1-12 : This is a vision of fruitfulness, abundance, and extolling the healing and life-giving qualities of **clean** water.

The river flowed into the sea and made its waters wholesome. Wherever the river flows, all living creatures teeming in it will live...

Revelation 21:1-4 and 22:1-2:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

John 4:10,13,14 – Living Water: The Samaritan woman: *He would have given you living water.*

Mark 1:4-5 – The Ministry of John the Baptist: *“they were baptised by him in the river Jordan”*

Questions

Water is seen as a source of Life in the Bible. How do I see it?

Since water has significant spiritual meaning, what can we do to help us treat water with greater respect and care – to value it?

4. Living our faith in communities – How should we address in our communities, our churches, our networks the different challenges posed by the water crisis?

1) How do we live out our faith in communities? Can we see this not only in terms of the Ecumenical Movement but Inter-faith? After all, we all, of whatever faith, breath the same air and drink the same water.

2) Should the Churches speak out about the drowning of the Bujagali Falls which are said to be a place of cultural and spiritual importance? The economic viability of the multimillion dollar dam is highly suspect.

3) How do we prioritize scarce resources? God tells us to establish justice, not to rely on our armies. (Psalm 33:16-19).

*No king is saved by the size of his army;
no warrior escapes by his great strength.
But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him...*

Is it right that nations spend valuable resources on armaments and so-called defence?

How can we say “No to war and armaments” and “Yes to community cooperation”?

4) There are many areas where we can co-operate in looking after and caring for our environment.

a) As community can we do something about rubbish disposal and water pollution?

b) As communities can we do something to try to stop soil erosion?

5) Question: Should we be seeking to work ecumenically and with other religions, and should we be bolder in our prophetic role and our advocacy?

The Vision of the Southern African Faith Communities’ Environment Institute (SAFCEI) is “*Faith Communities committed to cherishing living earth*”.

Our common concern is environmental justice, each from the perspective of our own faith but experiencing a great sense of unity in our common pursuit to find ways to live sustainably and in harmony with all creation.

www.safcei.org.za ; www.neccsa.org.za