

Text: Luke 17:5-10

How many of us does it take to change a light bulb?

It is with great pleasure that I am standing before you today on World Communion Sunday 2007. You have probably noticed by now that along with World Communion, today's focus is on the environment. Many of you were here in April when I preached on Earth Day. I explained in that sermon that the true owner of the land is God. We as the people of God are to be its stewards and caretakers, living in it by God's permission and grace. Most importantly, however, God has entrusted us with this creation and it is up to us to be good stewards of it. I also reminded you of the issue of global warming which is on everyone's mind. The day before I preached that sermon, tens of thousands of Americans gathered at events across 50 states to ask our government to reduce carbon output by 80% by 2050. The group coordinating this national effort, Step It Up 2007, planned rallies outside churches, in our coastal cities, in cornfields and forests and on statehouse steps, all to call for action on climate change. The "One Earth, One Climate" movement brought together people of all ages for a day of inspiration and hope. As part of the movement, children and adults formed a human chain across Boston Common to mark what may become Boston's future waterfront, if polar and glacial melting continues unchecked.

A second Step It Up 2007 day is being planned for November 3rd. Everyone involved in the movement is passionate about changing the way we power the world. Remember that the created world was given to our ancestors and to future generations with the expectation that all people would care for it. In April I challenged you as a faith community to be good stewards of God's creation by lessening the effects of global

warming through the use of alternative methods of transportation, heating fuel and power. And now I ask you: How have you changed the way you do things since April? Are you walking, biking, or riding public transportation more? Have you replaced the light bulbs in your home with compact fluorescent bulbs which use up to 75 percent less energy and last 4 to 10 times longer? Do you recycle plastic bottles and aluminum cans and paper products? These are just some of the things that were mentioned. If you are interested in learning more about the local program, Danvers hosts an open house this Thursday afternoon October 11th from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Town Hall facility. A special climate control/global warming display will be featured at the electric company office. In addition to free pizza and hot dogs, there will be lots of educational information about energy conservation. To be serious about caring for the environment means changing our priorities and transforming how we think and act.

Let's look at the scripture lesson just read. In Luke the apostles are asking Jesus to increase their faith. We increase our faith living in community with other people of faith, for example with those in the Holy Trinity community. Participating in the worship and life of this church is important. Sharing with others our joys and concerns and working alongside those who have a passion for Christ in their lives will aid the Holy Spirit to work through others to inspire us. Another way we can increase our faith is to spend time in prayer. Rev. Susan offered ideas this past summer in a sermon series on Sabbath Living to give you practical ways to incorporate Sabbath space into your everyday lives.

A third way to increase our faith is by studying the scriptures. They inform and correct our faith. Without the guidance of the living word, the Bible, we may give our faith to something which will ultimately disappoint us, such as money, or a person or a

job, even a sports team. We have a perfect opportunity here at Holy Trinity during the Eleventh Hour each Sunday. Take the time to participate in one of the Disciple bible Study classes being offered. It will certainly add to your faith and its not too late to join the class currently studying the Old Testament.

Finally, we grow in faith as we act in faith. To increase our faith, in answer to the apostle's request, we must act! Faith can be strengthened as we act as caretakers for the environment. The survival of the earth is a moral issue for everybody. If we do not save the earth from human destructive behavior, no one will survive. That fact alone ought to inspire people to join hands in the fight for a sustainable planet.

Faith is not a matter of the head; it is a matter of the heart. The type of faith that John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, spoke of was the experience of conversion, explained in terms of a radical personal and spiritual transformation. He called it a 'circumcision of the heart'. When we encounter Jesus, love becomes the character of our lives. We are called to do extraordinary things with that transformative love. Just as the diamond shapes in the stained glass window in the front of our church change shape and color after coming to the cross, so we also become transformed. Wesley believed that after we have met the risen Jesus we have work to do. To stand still is to go backwards. We are called to embody habits, practices, disciplines and patterns that point to Christ's message for the world. The radical change of direction to which we look and change of patterns by which we live must reflect that Message. To practice healthy environmental practices means that we are embodying the risen Christ in our lives.

Last Sunday Rev. Susan challenged us with the story of Lazarus and the rich man. She said that unless we are intentional about cutting back on what we consume by looking at our spending habits, we won't live up to God's plan for the world that Jesus called for in that parable. We Americans spend our money in different ways. Some areas in which our consumer spending causes problems for the environment are:

Transportation, and Household operations. We have all heard something of the evils of the automobile. Household use of transportation is responsible for up to 51% of greenhouse gases and air pollution. The average car is responsible for about 2 metric tons of carbon emissions each year. Every day several hundred thousand people drive to work in Boston. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, thousands of Massachusetts vehicles contribute to more than 31 million metric tons of carbon dioxide that annually floods the environment. If we track our commuting experience public transportation comes out on top. It is a lifestyle decision that can also change your mood for the entire day. I use that time to read or, on occasion when I am really pressed for time, do my devotions.

Finally, household operations involve many things from heat and electricity to toilet paper and dishwashing detergent. Everything we buy and use as consumer has a potential for creating harmful habits. Which culprit uses the most electricity in our homes? One of the top contributors is lighting. Remember, just by changing our light bulbs we can use up to 75% less energy.

And so I ask: How has Holy Trinity become a church that is recognized for its care and concern for the earth? Are we willing to Step it Up with tens of thousands of others in our country with a call to action for the environment?

Have we made changes in our recycling habits since April? Lighting is a good place to start when “greening” a church. Do we use compact fluorescent light bulbs or are we still using old traditional ones? Does our lifestyle reflect a sincere desire to reduce carbon emissions by 50% by looking into renewable or solar energy power for our building? As the Trustees work on a capital improvement wish list for our capital campaign, may they be bold in challenging us as a church to green our facility and plan for an environmentally friendly future. I say, that unless we are intentional about living a life that is environmentally healthy, we aren’t living out the intentions that God has for us as good stewards of creation. The risen Christ is calling us to be his hands and his feet by embodying those practices that point to this message for the world. Amen and amen.