

Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Fourth of Four Sermons in a Series entitled “Sacred Creation”
“The Praxis Principle”

The Reverend Dr. Scott Everett Couper

Hebrew Scripture: Genesis 2:1-4

Christian Scripture: Revelation 21:1-8

Sunday, 19 May 2019



- You will find on the internet many scholarly studies and articles that argue that ‘doom and gloom’ do not work and humor is more effective in persuading when it comes to ‘climate change’ advocacy.¹
- “Yesterday, a group of scientists warned that because of global warming, sea levels will rise so much that parts of New Jersey will

¹ Boykoff, Maxwell and Beth Osnes. “A Laughing Matter? Confronting Climate Change through Humor”, *Political Geography*, 14 February 2018. https://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/admin/publication_files/2018.10.pdf, accessed 23 May 2019.

be under water. The bad news? Parts of New Jersey won't be under water.” [Conan O’Brian]

- “If it solved global warming, would you give up the TV remote and go back to carting your bottom over to the television set every time you wanted to change the channel. If that was the case in America, I think Americans would watch one channel forever.”

[Bill Maher]

- Review of Sermon Series “Sacred Creation”
 1. Bible
 2. Soteriology (Salvation of the Earth)
 3. The Crisis Itself (Co2 and temperature and massive species extinction)
 4. This week: Practical Theology (what can we do as individuals and as a church, local and wider?)
- Definition of Praxis



Praxis is the process by which a **theory**, lesson, or skill is enacted, embodied, or realized. "**Praxis**" may also refer to the act of engaging, applying, exercising, realizing, or practicing ideas.

practice, as distinguished from theory.

"the gap between theory and praxis, text and world"

accepted practice or custom.

"patterns of Christian praxis in church and society"

- Practical Theology

Critics of climate change solutions often articulate that that which is proposed is unrealistic or idealistic.

Two points:

1. Genesis ('Garden of Eden') and Revelation ('New Heaven and a New Earth') are descriptions of the or an ideal



Yet, simply because it is not ultimately attainable by ourselves, we nonetheless seek to attain it.

Just because we cannot be perfect, does not mean we do not work towards committing no more sin.

2. Doing the right thing, theologically, should not be a matter of economics (simply a cost-benefit analysis)

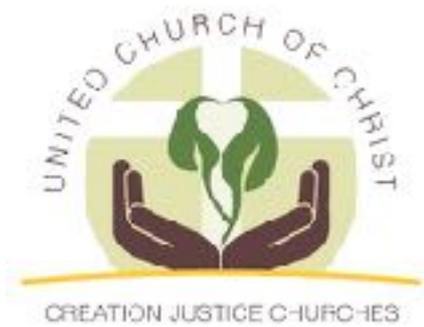


If it were a simple matter of cost-benefit analysis, we would do little that Jesus advocated. The story about the Good Samaritan was not about a cost benefit analysis.

My Tesla was an outrageous expense, but it was an investment in my children's and grandchildren's future.

And if it is not based on a cost-benefit analysis for *me*, it can nonetheless be based on a cost-benefit analysis for 'the kingdom of God', the Earth, for the country, and for future generations. The environment will cost far more later to fix (and survive), than it will now.

- Practical Practices for Individuals and Households
 1. EV vehicles, solar houses
 2. Reduce plastics (shopping bags, packaging)
 3. Investment portfolios (personal and church)
 4. Advocate and vote for local and national government
- Practical Practices for Local and Wider Church



1. Creation Justice Church

Whether it is taking on climate change or addressing the lead poisoning of children, environmental justice ministries could not have a higher purpose or calling than they do now. If the followers of Jesus today care about the air we breathe, the water we drink, or the world in which we live, then environmental justice ministry should undoubtedly be an integral strand in any church's DNA. The UCC's Creation Justice Church program aims to help you do just that. Here are some of the tremendous features and benefits of doing the program:

- A. Congregations collectively discern their high calling to care for creation and seek justice for the oppressed.
- B. Congregations make a commitment so serious and so sacred that it necessitates talking about God's covenant with us and with all of creation.
- C. Congregations not only become recognized as "green." They become a part of a larger network of churches and a larger movement to change the world.
- D. Congregations engage in critical thinking about the socioeconomic dimensions of environmental justice such as race, class, and global inequality.
- E. Congregations foster a deeper sense of connection: connection to God, to each other, and to the world in which we live.

F. Congregations unleash their imagination and creativity as a sense of purpose propels them to make a difference.²

2. Green New Deal



What is a Green New Deal?

A Green New Deal is a big, bold transformation of the economy to tackle the twin crises of inequality and climate change. It would mobilize vast public resources to help us transition from an economy built on exploitation and fossil fuels to one driven by dignified work and clean energy.

The status quo economy leaves millions behind. While padding the pockets of corporate polluters and billionaires, it exposes working class families, communities of color, and others to stagnant wages, toxic pollution, and dead-end jobs. The climate crisis only magnifies these systemic injustices, as hard-hit communities are hit even harder by storms, droughts, and flooding. Entrenched inequality, meanwhile, exacerbates the climate crisis by depriving frontline communities of the resources needed to adapt and cope.

Climate change and inequality are inextricably linked. We cannot tackle one without addressing the other. A Green New Deal would take on both.

To tackle the climate crisis at the speed that justice and science demand, a Green New Deal would upgrade our infrastructure, revitalize our energy system, retrofit our buildings, and restore our

² United Church of Christ, "Creation Justice Churches", https://www.ucc.org/creation_justice_churches, accessed 23 May 2019.

ecosystems. In so doing, a Green New Deal would cut climate pollution while creating millions of family-sustaining jobs, expanding access to clean air and water, raising wages, and building climate resilience. To counteract inequality, those benefits would go first and foremost to the working class families and communities of color that have endured the brunt of the fossil fuel economy.³

3. Teach and practice a love for the environment (Faith in Action)

4. Recycling in our church

5. Energy efficiency in our building and grounds

6. Investment portfolio (church's endowment)

This was the word of God, and it was preached to the people of God, and the people of God responded, "Amen".

³ "What Is a Green New Deal?", Sierra Club, <https://www.sierraclub.org/trade/what-green-new-deal>, accessed 23 May 2019