and Gretel Van Wieren, pastor of Lawyersville Reformed Church in Cobleskill, New York. The study group's charge was to address the interdependence of economic and ecological policies as they relate to poverty and land use and to creatively explore ways in which member churches in the RCA can be more aware of and address these issues at the local level. The EEWG was made possible by a grant from the Mission Is One program of the RCA.

After a review and a cursory discussion of the scope of the report and its recommendations, the commission voted to "receive this study paper, seriously consider the recommendations contained therein, and where able, to take the action needed to adopt and implement them" (First Report, p. 4).

Globalization, Ethics, and the Earth

The members of the Earth and Ethics Working Group are: Steven Bouma-Prediger, Kent Busman, John Paarlberg, John Tiemstra, Fred VanDyke, and Gretel Van Wieren.

R-93
To recommend to the church for study the paper "Globalization, Ethics, and the Earth," and to encourage comment to the Commission on Theology by January 2006, for further reflection by the commission. (ADOPTED)

Reason:
The paper is worthy of study and comment.

I. THE CHURCH AND GLOBALIZATION

The Biblical Vision of the Household of God

As faithful followers of Jesus Christ, St. Paul exclaims we are "no longer strangers and aliens" but "members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). Similar to Paul's image of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12, the image of the household of God describes what it means to be the community of Christ, the church.

The biblical image of God's household offers us two vantage points, very different from that of the global economy, for understanding and living in the world. First, the image of the household of God helps us envision the big picture. God's household is the *oikos*—the whole lovely earth, the vast all-encompassing cosmos God created. It is God, not the market, who has the power to shape the form and direction of the cosmos. In Greek the word for household (*oikos*) is the root of the words "economy" (*oikonomia*) and "inhabited earth" (*oikoumenê*). Hence, living in the *oikos* as followers of God in Christ means we are part of God's gracious economy (*oikonomia*) and God's good earth (*oikoumenê*). In other words, unlike the way we think about the perimeters of our own physical dwelling place, the scope of God's household extends to the ends of the cosmos as the place God has designed. God's economy—rather than human-created economics—marks the oikos, the household of God where followers of Christ are transformed to preach and live the good news of the kingdom—serving the suffering, forgiving debts, giving food, clothing, and money to the poor.

In addition to giving us a cosmic vision of the oikos, the biblical image of the household of God provides on-the-ground, day-to-day advice for living in Christian community. The image of the household of God helps us discover what it really means to live in Christian

community—what it ought to look like for us to be authentically connected in all our activities with brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. This is where we see plainly that the ways of God's household are very different from those of the global economy. What are some of the ways the biblical vision of God's household differs from that of the global marketplace?

First, the household of God is built on the promise of Christ. It is founded on the promise that we, the whole community of saints—despite differences in race, ethnicity, gender, economic status, nationality—are mended together with God and one another. Our connections with our brothers and sisters in Christ are deep and unbreakable because we have, once and for all, now and forever, been built together into God's dwelling place by Christ the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). Hence we are through Christ united and in solidarity with our brother coffee farmer in Kenya, our sister seamstress in Taiwan, and our brother migrant blueberry picker in Michigan. Consequently, no one—neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female (Galatians 3:28)—is to be greater or lesser, more privileged or exploited, in God's household. This biblical vision of deep and everlasting communion with one another in Christ, no matter what one's station in life, is very different from the underlying vision of the global market.

The global economy sees and measures persons in terms of their productivity for and participation in the market. Further, the goal of the global economy is maximum production and consumption. When persons, communities, countries, or even entire continents are not productive or able to participate in the global market (as producers or consumers), they are literally cast out of the global economy and barred from opportunities to flourish. For example, while the entire continent of Africa has 14 percent of the global population, it holds only 1.7 percent of global market exchange. Though the Kenyan coffee farmer, the Taiwanese seamstress, and the Mexican blueberry picker in Michigan are productive contributors to the economy, they are considered exploitable and disposable resources by the global market. The market will set their wage, decide the number of hours they must work in order to turn the necessary profit, and determine when their labor is or is not needed. In contrast to the household of God, where deep and everlasting relationships in Christ are foundational, the free-market economy depends on short-term, disposable relationships that bend, sway, or die depending on the market's whims.

Second, in the household of God the fulfillment of basic needs and the flourishing of all things is a primary concern of the community. A market economy, as a means of exchange of goods and services, existed in biblical times (recall Pharaoh's exchange of bread, money, ploughs, and labor with the Israelites), but the biblical vision for human and earthly blossoming was often sketched in opposition to the market. The economy of the Egyptians in the end enslaved the Israelites (Exodus), the economy of the Babylonians ground the faces of the poor in the dirt (Amos), and the economy of the Romans served as the context for Jesus' instructions to choose between the money of Caesar or the kingdom of God (Mark 12:17). In the biblical narrative, instead of the market it is the household of God that offers a vision for living in sustainable relationships with God, one another, and the earth. Leviticus 25 tells of laws wherein indentured slaves were returned to their land, debts were released, the land was given a rest, and the edges of the fields left for the poor to gather food. Isaiah prophesies a time in the economy of God when persons (presumably the poor) will be able to buy milk without money. Acts 2 speaks of early Christians living in community, sharing their possessions, praying, eating, and breaking bread together. The apostle Paul pleads with the church in Corinth (2 Corinthians 8, 9) to send money to the church in Jerusalem, a community concerned with care for the poor.

The biblical vision is oriented toward care of the poor and the earth and a just distribution of resources. In contrast, the current global economy has no mechanism to care for the poor; rather, proponents of the market usually assume that the poor will be helped as more money and jobs are generated. This fails, however, to account for the vast number of peo-

ple who are excluded from participating in the global market because of education, geography, station in life, or inability to contribute. The supposedly free market includes only those who are able to contribute to profit, and this, oftentimes, at the expense of life. An example.

Gretel served as a pastor of two congregations located in dairy farming communities in upstate New York. She had many generational farmers in her congregations, several of whom, including the president of the county dairy farming organization, told her the following story about the negative effects of economic globalization on farmers and their families. In the late 1990s Wal-Mart moved into the community, with mixed emotions from local residents. Some mourned what they saw coming as the disintegration of their existing local economy. Others, out of work, with no possibility for employment in an economically depressed rural area, welcomed the corporation because they had no choice but to do so. Whatever the initial opinion about Wal-Mart's arrival, not many people thought favorably of the company. In fact, those in Gretel's congregations who ended up working at Wal-Mart outwardly disdained the company for numerous reasons, including the way the company slowly excluded local upstate produce from its shelves.

In initial negotiations with local officials, Wal-Mart promised that 75 percent of their produce would come from local and upstate farms. The first year, this happened. The second year, Wal-Mart told the farmers it couldn't afford their produce, so Wal-Mart contracted to receive 50 percent of produce from upstate farmers, while the rest would come from the Arkansas distribution center, where cheaper produce was imported from around the world. The third year, Wal-Mart claimed that local produce was entirely too pricey, and that they would not purchase any produce from upstate. Meanwhile, farms around the state continued to rapidly disintegrate while families and communities became destitute.

So while farmers in other countries, able to produce cheaper vegetables, seem to be benefiting, farms in North America are drying up by the thousands. The free-market ideology asserts that the market is simply finding its equilibrium. But this is simply not true. Other, often poorer, farmers are not necessarily flourishing because of the market's equilibrating force. There is much evidence that small farmers around the globe are suffering because of the fluctuations of the market and the domination of the market by large agricultural corporations. The current economy has no mechanism to fairly meet the basic needs of persons, communities, and the planet. All viable resources, human and planetary, are fashioned for profit, while unviable resources and persons are left by the wayside.

Third and finally, members of the household of God must care for the suffering of the world. This is where the vision of the household of God and the vision of the global economy diverge most dramatically. As Jesus reminds us, whenever we see (or do not see) one who is hungry or naked, we see (or do not see) the living Christ (Matthew 25). Christ, the suffering One, is very near to the heart of the suffering poor in our world, and thus so also should we be near to those who are suffering. When one member of the community suffers, the whole Christian community suffers. John Calvin put it well:

> We shall very much benefit from the sacrament if this thought is impressed and engraved on our minds: none of our brothers or sisters can be injured, despised, rejected, abused or in any way offended by us without at the same time injuring, despising and abusing Christ by the wrongs we do, that we cannot love Christ without loving him in our brothers and sisters. We ought not allow a brother or sister to be affected by any evil without being touched with compassion for them (Commentary on 1 Corinthians).

Calvin goes so far as to say that we are injuring Christ when any of our brothers or sisters is injured! And, further, Calvin suggests that our ability to know the grace of God is inherently connected with loving our suffering brothers and sisters. In the household of God the suffering poor play a very special role—they are lifted up, first, near to the heart of

Christ—whereas in the global economy the suffering poor are beaten down, last, far from privileged members.

Since we are all members of God's household, we have a responsibility to be aware of the ways in which our lives are connected, and how our decisions affect others in the household. To the extent that we contribute to setting the house rules, we must live so that everyone is treated fairly and the life of the household is sustainable.

The Church's Role in a Global Society

The three great forces in modern society are business, government, and what could be called the moral-cultural sector, which includes religious, educational, and other civic institutions. Each of these sectors of society has its own legitimate role to play, and needs the power and scope to play that role appropriately. Each of these sets of institutions needs to respect the role the others play in the development of human society. Each also needs to serve as a check on the others when they overstep their proper roles. A society dominated by government becomes oppressive, and economic development is often retarded. A society dominated by the church can also become oppressive, and also suffers economically. And a society dominated by business can be equally oppressive, posing the danger that the business sector will come to dominate government and religious institutions.

Economic globalization both presents challenges and provides opportunities. The opportunities it offers include the possibility of a better life in material terms for many millions of poor people all over the world. For those who are not poor, it offers the possibility of continued development of technology and other human endeavors that can improve life for everyone. These opportunities arise fundamentally from continued specialization of human activities in the context of a geographically expanding market, and need not result in increases in the exploitation of natural resources and environments.

The challenges of globalization arise from the fact that the global fragmentation of power in government and civil society opens the way to the accumulation of excessive power by multinational corporations. These corporations base their activities on a vision of a good society that gives pride of place to the pursuit of wealth in a global marketplace. This vision promises liberation, but delivers only enslavement to Mammon. Large, wealthy businesses obtain influence in society through advertising and corporate control in the media, and by using political fundraising they obtain access and influence in government. The mobility of capital in a modern global economy increases the power of these businesses over labor, government, and civil society by allowing the businesses to play off one community against another in a competition for jobs, technology transfer, and financial support. This power is used to further increase the wealth of those in control of the corporations at the expense of other social values. Not all businesses are devoted to the maximization of wealth, but since wealth begets power, the most influential corporations are likely to be the ones most devoted to the wealth-maximization principle. It is from this power, enlisted in the service of wealth, that the world must be liberated.

In order to deal effectively with the challenges of globalization, two things must happen. First, balance needs to be restored in the power relationships of business, government, and the civil institutions of society. A situation in which large multinational corporations are the dominant institutions in society is not healthy. The countervailing power of government and civil society needs to be restored. Second, a holistic vision of a good society needs to be shared by the leaders of all sectors of society. The influence of large corporations has contributed to a public discourse in which it is assumed that the growth of the economy is the highest, indeed the only possible, goal of a good society. For the world to be liberated from this thoughtless service to Mammon, the public agenda must include, in addition to economic well-being, justice, peace, sustainability, and spiritual health as social goals.

Restoring the power of government in a global society means that national governments need to cooperate to thwart the tendency of multinational corporations to play one jurisdiction off against the other. In the environmental field, there are many working examples of such cooperation already. The CITES agreement on endangered species, the Montreal Protocol on ozone-depleting gases, and the Law of the Sea testify to the effectiveness of intergovernmental cooperation on environmental matters. The so-called first-world governments can also play an important role by providing financial and technical assistance to other governments for the implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation. Cooperation in the area of social policy is less well established, but here too there is scope for intergovernmental cooperation on health, education, labor rights, and provision of social insurance.

It is also important to increase the transparency and democratic accountability of national governments and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). Opening these bodies to greater access by civil institutions and ordinary citizens will broaden the scope of the information the bodies receive, enlarge the range of values that informs their decisions, and reduce the relative influence of multinational corporations. It is important to reduce the influence of money in politics, especially in powerful countries like the United States. The U.S. government should cooperate with other governments on anti-corruption measures that cover both private and public sectors. Governments should be more receptive to input from civil society, especially specialized environmental and social service institutions. These institutions already have a formal role in many international conferences and IGOs, but, at least in the U.S., they are treated with suspicion by government. They are classified as "special interests," rather than being recognized as being different in kind from businesses, representing concerns that are widely held in society, and possessing expertise and information often not available elsewhere.

Civil society institutions also need to cooperate globally to counteract the power of business corporations. Fortunately, this is happening more and more frequently. By adopting a common analysis of the globalization phenomenon, backed by empirical research, they can offer a compelling alternative to the analysis offered by the corporations, and by many politicians. The NGOs, labor unions, universities, and even the media can also offer a common agenda on the environment and poverty that will be hard for governments, IGOs, and businesses to ignore.

The Christian church is the original global civil institution, and it needs to play a special role in the globalization process. The church, together with leaders of other religions, can call the leaders of all social sectors, as well as the people at large, to a deeper vision of the goals of a good society—a vision much more compelling and winsome than that offered by modern materialism. The church is in the best position of any institution to insist that the meaning of life is not to be found in the abundance of possessions, and that the lust for wealth is actually an obstacle on the path to God. The church can credibly claim that humans have a responsibility for protecting the integrity of the earth, and that a truly good society has no poverty. Church-related educational and social service institutions can contribute to the development of alternative analyses of globalization based on these insights, and develop the policy proposals needed to point the world in a different direction.

For this alternative vision to lead to true social change, business leaders also need to adopt the holistic vision of a good society, and implement that vision in their business policies. It is a mistake to think that businesses can function only as agents in pursuit of the pecuniary interests of their shareholders, or that they have no alternative except to operate in the marketplace without concern for the integrity of the earth or for the well-being of their workers and customers. Business leaders should care for the earth, and they should treat people as they would wish to be treated. The church must take a leading role in articulating these responsibilities and in holding businesses to account for their performance.

II. SUSTAINABILITY, ECONOMICS, AND ECOLOGY

The Meaning of Sustainability

Sustainability is that quality characterizing any process or condition that can be maintained indefinitely without interruption, weakening, or loss of its valued qualities. Sustainability in human society (*social sustainability*) is a condition in which high levels of stability and functional effectiveness of social institutions of education, civic administration, and commerce are maintained rather than degraded. Such conditions are achieved within the bounds of the local community through positive feedback associated with high levels of community participation and citizen engagement in community affairs (*social capital*), coupled with high levels of love, compassion, honesty, fellowship, self-restraint, forbearance, peace, and other shared moral ideals that emphasize community over personal autonomy (*moral capital*). Sustainability is a quality of environments and ecosystems (*ecological sustainability*) that, over normal cycles of disturbance events, maintain a characteristic diversity of major functional groups of organisms, productivity, and rates of geochemical cycling. Thus, sustainable ecosystems are those whose source functions (products and services to human and non-human life) and sink functions (ability to absorb and assimilate waste) are constant and not degraded over time. Sustainability is a quality of economic systems (*economic sustainability*) in which per capita consumption does not decrease through time.

The very concept of sustainability, and even more its application, is regarded with suspicion. In ecosystems in general and in economic resource exploitation in particular, sustainability has rarely been achieved. Ecologists have no difficulty demonstrating that environmental resources are rarely, if ever, managed sustainably and are inevitably overexploited by humans. Economists have criticized the concept of sustainability as passively unnecessary because human wants are satisfied automatically by private decision-making in the context of a market economy, or as positively harmful by inhibiting growth necessary to the continued creation of wealth. Our purpose here is to explain how, in principle, we might live sustainably in social, environmental, and economic spheres of life, and to address various criticisms of the concept of sustainability.

The Achievement of Sustainability

Sustainability begins in the social dimension when individuals exist in correct relation to God and to one another. We begin the journey to sustainability in the church—that community in which God is acknowledged as sovereign, God's will is obeyed, and God's subjects benefit from their obedience. To create social sustainability, the church must teach and transmit the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the means of obedience to such lordship, which are expressed as the personal and corporate virtues that create long-term social capital in a sustainable society. Christians must see one another with dignity as fellow creatures made in the image of God, sinners jointly in need of Christ's forgiveness and reconciliation, and saints individually gifted and collectively called to be transforming agents of God's will in the world.

A high degree of economic inequality is inconsistent with social sustainability. The church, properly functioning, reduces economic inequality by building a community of trust in which members treat others as they wish to be treated, thus establishing a foundation for the realization of justice. Justice is equity in treatment and the provision of needed material goods for all. The church must also act as a moral compass in a morally directionless world, correctly identifying, for members and non-members alike, humanity's ultimate ends, and training its members to choose what they shall want and what they shall value consistent with those ends. The church's task is to not simply allow our wants and values

to be chosen unreflectively as expressions of our own individual appetites, manipulated by corporate and economic forces outside our control, but to shape and form our desires and values according to the moral ideals of the household of God.

Ecological sustainability is a necessary condition of social sustainability, and the management of ecological sustainability requires a socially sustainable community that makes reasoned choices about environmental quality that serve to achieve moral ideas that give primacy to the common good rather than individual autonomy. Management actions required for ecological sustainability are specific to each ecosystem, but can be clarified by their purposes and principles. The four primary interactive controls of every ecosystem are climate, soil, disturbance regime, and species components. The first goal of management is that these controls must be conserved to achieve a sustainable system. Soil, disturbance regime, and species components can be conserved by direct human management. Climate, however, cannot. But given its pervasive effects on ecosystem function, it is all the more important that humans refrain from activities that affect climate in ways adverse to ecosystem function and species adaptation. Ecosystems achieve sustainability in large part because of negative feedbacks among their interactive controls that prevent large-scale deviations from long-term average states. Humans should work to maintain such negative feedback responses. Where such responses have been weakened or removed, humans must act to preserve environmental sustainability by compensating for the loss of such feedback. Finally, to manage for environmental sustainability humans should act to link flows of matter and energy among different ecosystems.

The sustainability of humans and the natural world must be mutually self-reinforcing. Thus sustainable environments and ecosystems are ones in which local, resident people use and benefit from products and services produced by the ecosystem, share in the decision-making process of management of the ecosystem, and assume responsibility for the maintenance and protection of the ecosystem's sustainability. These conditions are the foundations of economic sustainability. Although we have already noted that, historically, most resources have not been managed sustainably, most resources have not been managed with the goal of sustainability in mind. Today there are no significant areas of old-growth coniferous forests in Michigan because the timber barons of the previous century correctly perceived that personal wealth would be maximized by rapid liquidation of these forest assets. But the towns and villages of lumbermen who labored to convert such natural capital (trees) into personal wealth for these landowners are now abandoned, and the jobs of the lumbermen are lost, along with the forests in which such towns grew up. Thus we see that profit maximization for one cannot lead to a sustainable wealth for many, much less the sustainability of the natural capital that formed the foundation of that wealth. Where ecological sustainability is ignored, cultural sustainability is also destroyed.

There are notable examples of sustainable management of natural capital, especially where local communities possessed the power of management decisions and used that power for the good of many, not just a few. Today, many scientists have judged Pacific salmon fisheries of the conterminous United States sustainable because managers allow a designated number of fish to escape to the ocean. Commercial and subsistence fishing are allowed only after a specified number of salmon have escaped into spawning streams. This negative feedback to fishing pressure, which allows fishing only when adequate recruitment is obtained, may contribute to the recent record-high salmon catches from this fishery after thirty years of management. Sustaining the fishery requires protection of spawning streams from changes in other interactive controls, such as dams that prevent winter floods (disturbance regime), warming of streams by removal of riparian vegetation of logged sites (climate), species introductions (functional groups), and inputs of silt and nutrients in runoff or municipal sewage outfall (nutrient resources). In these examples of environmental sustainability, the recurrent pattern is: 1) management rules are linked to time- and place-specific knowledge of the resource; 2) the intrinsic value of the resource is taken as

a given, such that maintenance and enhancement of the resource, rather than profit maximization, is the first priority.

Economic sustainability depends upon social and ecological sustainability. Once the conditions for social and ecological sustainability are in place, economic sustainability is possible only if economic policy and individual economic behavior pursue right ends through appropriate means. More specifically, to achieve economic sustainability we must first recognize that natural capital has fixed limits. Like it or not, we are finite creatures living in a finite world. We must also acknowledge that while human capital and ingenuity can complement natural capital, the ability to substitute human capital for natural capital is not infinite. With these limits acknowledged, economic sustainability requires that:

1. Productivity increases are achieved by improving technical efficiency and reducing waste, rather than by increasing the exploitation of natural capital;

2. The preservation of natural capital is acknowledged as something valuable in itself, and thus that markets and associated mechanisms, while means of efficient distribution and pricing, not be viewed as means of ultimate valuation for resource management decisions. In other words, the purposes for which natural capital is used should be determined by social and civic institutions and an informed participatory community rather than by the economic preferences (aggregate personal tastes) of autonomous individual consumers;

3. Global environmental agreements and local environmental practices and purposes are given priority over economic rules in global disputes; and

4. World economic policies are aimed at improving the life circumstances of poor people worldwide, rather than achieving maximum economic growth at the expense of ecological and social sustainability.

We have treated the three dimensions of sustainability separately to this point, but the attainment of true sustainability requires simultaneous pursuit and synergistic interaction of all three. Although, from a purely economic standpoint, inequitable distribution of goods and services might be theoretically sustainable, it is morally wrong and inevitably leads to social instability. Thus economic sustainability supports social sustainability through increasing equity of goods, services, and economic opportunity. Increased social sustainability, when combined with increasingly equitable economic opportunity and improved levels of education, can contribute to reduced population growth in poor countries. Reduced population growth decreases poverty, which lessens pollution and the adverse environmental effects associated with resource use among the world's very poor.

But while the primary burden on poor countries is to improve the life conditions of those most destitute, and thus achieve a more sustainable economy and society, the primary burden on the so-called developed nations is to reduce the ecological impact of economic activity and provide capital and technological assistance to the poor. Poorer countries need to achieve higher standards of living, with accompanying growth (increasing production) and development (increasing efficiency and equity) of their economies. Rich countries must reduce and ultimately stabilize the ecological burden of consumption at lower levels, and make transfers of wealth in technical expertise and reproducible capital to poorer countries, not only to relieve suffering and deprivation but to reduce destructive environmental effects associated with low-grade manufacturing and agriculture.

The motivation to achieve a condition of earthly sustainability through intermediate ends requires a knowledge of ultimate ends that only the church can give. This combined attention to temporal condition within a context of eternal destiny is common in biblical teaching, especially in the gospel teaching of Jesus Christ:

> If God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will he not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry, then, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear for clothing?" For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own (Matthew 6:30-34, NASB).

The message here is not to live thoughtlessly, but to deal with the conditions of the present day because God's provision is sufficient for both present and future. The church's role in living sustainably is to teach that enough for today is, indeed, enough. Living sustainably cultivates an attitude of faith in God's provision rather than in continuous human striving after increasing acquisition.

Real Choices and "Economic Realities"

Global markets intensify the process of competition. Conventional economic analysis points to the usefulness of competition in controlling the concentration of economic power in the hands of one or a few enterprises in a particular market. If decisions are made solely on the criteria of prices or costs and competing alternatives are available, then there is only one way that things can turn out. The pressure will always be on to reduce costs in any way possible.

There is value to this competition over costs. Improving productivity by reducing the resources that go into the production of goods increases living standards and, properly done, can reduce the environmental impact of production. But costs can also be reduced by using bargaining power to reduce the prices paid to the owners of resources. In this way all of the gains from increasing productivity can be captured by the people with the most power. If there is perfect competition, everybody has an infinite number of alternatives and nobody has any greater bargaining power than anyone else. But perfect competition never occurs in real life.

So corporations closing plants in the U.S. and moving jobs to the developing countries will complain that they have no choice—competitive considerations "force" them to make this decision. Employers cutting back on retirement benefits, polluters resisting regulation, manufacturers resisting safety requirements, and governments offering "corporate welfare," all will make similar claims. All of these actions are claimed to be simply the result of "economic reality," about which the companies have "no choice."

We know, however, that competitive forces are not so intense that these actions are always required. When you go into the store to buy some item on your shopping list, you often find several versions of the product—different brands or models, with different prices. You usually don't automatically buy the cheapest one, but the one that offers the best value. You seek the best combination of product characteristics and price. Similarly, when taking a job, you don't automatically take the one that offers the highest wage. Many other considerations enter in—the degree to which it makes use of your skills, the possibilities for advancement, the location, the hours, the feeling of community in the workplace, and so on. The uniformity of prices that is characteristic of perfect competition does not hold. There are real choices.

Corporations that claim their decisions are driven by "economic realities" are often making similar efforts to weigh many factors that go into plant location, product and process engineering, and employee compensation. Cost is always one of these factors, but there are others as well. Sometimes the "economic realities" are simply a polite way to talk about

the managers' desire to exercise their bargaining power to increase the corporation's profits and their own compensation at the expense of employees, suppliers, customers, or taxpayers. In other words, "economic realities" are not the necessities that they are often made out to be, and sometimes they are used to mask corporate greed.

The churches' call for ecological, economic, and social sustainability demands that corporations exercise their power in a sustainable way. A narrow focus on corporate profitability is not sustainable, nor is it economically necessary. Competition in the global economy is not so intense that it demands this sort of behavior. Where competition does threaten to become too intense, there are ways for government and civic institutions to alter rules and mores to achieve a more sustainable result. Businesses may instinctively resist these reforms, but far-sighted Christian business leaders will support practical reforms in the direction of sustainability. This does not mean that there will never again be any plant closings, mergers, bankruptcies, or layoffs. The economy changes over time, and it is a mistake to try to stop all those changes. To get complete security from the economy, we would have to give up the possibilities for further development. But while some people will get hurt when economic change occurs, it is important for the community to find ways to minimize the costs of change, and to spread those costs out so that they don't fall too heavily on only a few people. From a Christian perspective, we all share the same house and must therefore share both benefits and burdens.

The Proper Roles of Economics and Ecology

Economics and ecology are estranged sister sciences. On the one hand, economics is unquestionably a life science to humans, because economic concerns dominate our life. Or, as Alfred Marshall put it succinctly, "Economics is the study of the ordinary business of life." Yet economics has a character of its own, and cannot be made to fit the paradigm of a life science as traditionally understood, such as biology, ecology, or entomology. So the question is: How can economics and ecology identify shared knowledge so as to become a 'shared science' in which each fully informs the other toward solutions of mutual interest and need?

Economics as a discipline has confined itself to explaining market transactions between humans as if nature did not exist. Similarly, ecology has confined itself to studying natural systems as if humans did not exist. Neither discipline can accurately understand its own subject, or predict its behavior, in these isolated frameworks. We can better understand what economics and ecology share, and better direct the application of their shared knowledge, if we examine different realms of sharing separately. The first realm is that of shared concepts, the second is that of shared models, and the third is the realm of shared problems and policy.

<u>*Shared Concepts*</u>. Both ecology and economics attempt to understand the transformation of low-entropy resources into useful products and services, with accompanying production of high-entropy wastes, and both are fundamentally system-oriented. In the larger system, nature, matter-energy transformations involve plants and other primary producers using energy (usually sunlight) to transform natural resources (soil nutrients and other material) into specific commodities (cellular structures) arranged and exchanged through "currencies" of common values (energy-yielding cellular compounds that supply fuel for cellular reactions). In the process, organisms not only "manufacture" commodities from raw materials, but also perform services of mutual benefit, such as producing oxygen, removing (or releasing) carbon dioxide, recycling (through decomposition) waste into elemental forms (nutrients) that can re-enter the production process as raw materials. Growth occurs when primary production (a biological equivalent of income) exceeds maintenance metabolic costs (primarily respiration), allowing the organism to increase in size or invest in replicating itself. Development, as distinguished from growth, occurs when net primary pro-

duction can be directed to forming new structures of increasing specialization that normally increase the efficiency of the organism in obtaining energy or increase its resistance to stress.

The smaller system, the human economy, normally functions analogously, and also derivatively. It removes low-entropy forms of stored energy, such as fossil fuels or plants, releasing the energy in controlled steps during transformation (manufacturing, agriculture, and human work). These processes transform raw material into specific goods or services. Commodities wear out, producing waste, which is either recycled back into the production process as raw material or accumulates physically within the system. The capacity of the larger ecosystem to support basic life processes, to provide a supply of raw materials for economic production, to supply energy, and to absorb waste affects the operation of the smaller human economic system. When any of these capacities of the larger system is degraded, economic activity in the human system is constrained.

Although both economics and ecology are fundamentally studies of the transformation of matter and energy within systems, both are also studies of the actions and effects of species upon one another, especially the ecology of dominant species. It is a truism in ecological study that many communities are ordered by the activities of a single plant or animal, sometimes called the "keystone process species," whose activities control flows of matter and energy and create niches for other species to use. In the world ecosystem, this species is *homo sapiens*, whose highly developed technologies and cultural cohesion make possible habitat alteration on a landscape scale. Thus to understand the dynamics of the global system, both ecology and economics must study the dynamics of the dominant species.

Shared Models. Simple, but often quite accurate, linear models of ecosystem and economic function can be constructed in similar ways. "Stocks" of material resources move from points of origin (sources) to points of absorption (sinks) at rates of movement (flows) that determine rates of conversion. Mathematically, stocks can be defined as initial quantities changing according to "converters" (mathematical equations defining flow rates and parameters changing the quantity of the stock, such as birth and death rates or investment and depreciation), with "connectors" showing the path through which material is transferred from one stock to another or from sources to sinks. Managers attempt to estimate initial quantities of pertinent stocks, determine optimal flow rates via mathematical equations, and then regulate flows to achieve optimal conversion rates, usually for the purpose of a maximum sustainable yield.

Shared Problems. Given the striking similarities in the conceptual organization of ideas, it is all the more remarkable that not only is there little consideration of economics in traditional ecology, and little consideration of ecology in traditional economics, but the two disciplines are often adversarial to one another in matters of policy. What could have created this paradoxical condition?

Traditionally, ecologists have tried to understand biological interactions among species by isolating variables of interest in undisturbed biotic communities, and then, by gaining an understanding of one interaction and one process at a time, attempted to reconstruct the system using knowledge of the various parts. To better isolate and study the role of interactions among non-human organisms, ecologists have played the game "let's pretend humans don't exist." Ecologists have no trouble seeing humans as *managers* who perturb "natural" systems to achieve certain ends, but, except for a few deviant practitioners who insist on studying something called "human ecology," most mainline ecologists rarely if ever consider humans as *actors* in "natural" ecosystems. As a result, economic activity, the controlling activity that defines much of human behavior, is not integrated into ecological theory.

Just as many ecologists have made a long career playing the game "let's pretend humans don't exist," most mainstream economists have done equally well playing the game "let's pretend nature doesn't exist." Traditional textbooks of general economics show models of economic activity in which "resources" come from nowhere and, once discarded, go to nowhere. By following the traditional economic assumption that reproducible capital may easily be substituted for natural resources, economists have failed to recognize the essential role of natural resources in sustaining economic activity.

The final obstacle that prevents economics and ecology from having a shared view of the world can be seen in how each defines the concept of "purpose." Economists, commendably, have attempted to make the case for conserving biodiversity, in particular threatened and endangered species, by techniques of contingent valuation. This is the theory that the value of something is determined by a survey of preferences. The most common methods of contingent valuation are "willingness to pay" and "willingness to be compensated," approaches in which individuals are asked, "How much would you be willing to pay to save species X?" or "How much would you expect in compensation for the loss of species X?" Responses are combined to generate an economic measure of the "value" of the species.

The problem with the contingent valuation approach is that it equates purpose with preference. The value of an endangered species is no more than what one is willing to pay to express one's own environmental taste for birds, fish, spiders, butterflies, mammals, reptiles, clams, plants, or bacteria, and those who are willing to pay the most are those who get to have their preferences enforced. This approach assumes that the only value in preserving biodiversity is usefulness or attractiveness to humans. In fact, the respondent is not expressing the economic benefit of the endangered species but is assigning (albeit with a very imperfect instrument) a relative estimate of moral worth and obligation to the preservation of the particular species, and indicating the level of sacrifice he or she is prepared to make to fulfill such an obligation. It is the disconnection of modern economics from its roots in moral philosophy that makes such an obvious expression of moral value invisible to the modern economist's measuring instrument.

For all their crassness in equating purpose with preference, economists do treat purposes as real. Biologists in general, and conservation biologists in particular, treat purposes as illusory. They testify to the public and to Congress that we should save species. Their audience rightly and respectfully asks the purpose of this activity. The typical biologist offers some incoherent mumbling about maintaining ecosystem function, or fulfilling our encoded genetic love of life (biophilia), or increasing local or global biodiversity. But these are statements of description, not prescription. Many biologists are not willing to claim that the love of non-human creatures is a virtue, for that would admit the reality of objective value and so point to a moral ideal. They are not willing to claim that we have an obligation to serve and protect such creatures, or that the species is valuable in itself, for that would raise the dreaded specter of intrinsic value and cast a chilling shadow on the neo-Darwinian explanation of the creature's present existence and past history as a non-repeatable biological accident that is without purpose. When biologists offer descriptions without purpose and economists offer purpose as preference, benefit-cost analysis takes the place of moral consideration.

For ecology and economics to come to a shared vision, both must come to an accurate understanding of purpose. United purpose in diverse disciplines begins with life and thought organized around God. On this the two greatest commandments are explicit: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...And you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37, 39). Thus to be fully united, both ecology and economics must be seen theocentrically. Indeed, they must be seen Christocentrically, for the study of ecology and its application in conservation, rightly understood, is an expression of the reconciliation of "all things" through the death

and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:1-15). And the study and practice of economics, rightly understood, is an expression of justice in the distribution of goods intended to transform our social relationships and manage our own needs and desires in a posture of faith, contentment, and rest in God's provision.

More exactly, the purpose of conservation is to achieve the outcome of a world full of "good" life (in this case, the good lives of non-human creatures), to allow human beings to fulfill their obligation to serve and protect (Genesis 2:15) the creation entrusted to them, and through the practice of such service to cultivate people who embody characteristics of moral excellence in their dealings with the created world. The purpose of economics is to manage human affairs and activities in light of these purposes—that people may live well, without hunger or deprivation, and without loss of resources or opportunities for future generations to live in the same way. In this way we can come to see economics as a "life science," and envision how economics and ecology use shared knowledge to achieve God's intended purpose of shalom.

III. RESPONSES TO GLOBALIZATION

Serving God in Our Economic Life

Our economic life should be ruled by life in God's kingdom—the household of God—but God's reign does not currently extend to our economic life. Two questions arise: Why does God's rule not presently extend to the economic life of the church? and What can and what should we do about it?

The obstacles to serving God in our economic life are many. First, there is the pervasive materialism of North American culture. The god More Stuff is arguably the dominant god of our age. Mammon and its pursuit are a national pastime. The GDP is the government's barometer of whether we have had a good year. Our self-esteem and sense of success hinge upon whether we have the biggest house, largest diamond, fastest computer, despite the fact that the garages of many homes today are as big as the average house built in 1957. Christians all too often have been co-opted by this increasingly global culture of materialistic consumption. Not only as individuals but as churches, regional ecclesial bodies, and denominations we have often been seduced to see material plenty as the litmus test of success and a sign of God's grace. So one obstacle we all face is the constant and insidious temptation to make money (and stuff) an idol.

Lest such cultural analysis keep the issue at arm's length, we must face our own distorted desires to acquire. For example, we need to be brutally honest about the ways we convince ourselves that our wants are our needs. I think I really need that new canoe (don't you too?) since the one I have is too small, old, shallow, or whatever. I need that new book (it's on sale!), that new coat (the winters here are cold!), that new Bible (the better to know God!). Now, we all have needs, and many are legitimate; but let's face it, many needs are wants in disguise. And satisfying many of our wants, and those of our culture at large, often comes at the expense of meeting the basic needs of the poor. So we need to pray for and cultivate the virtues of honesty and humility and courage in order to discipline our own distorted desires.

The second obstacle is the all-too-common belief that economic matters are not part of the gospel. We in the church have often spiritualized the gospel, seeing money matters as outside of or less central to our faith. This dualistic worldview views money and possessions as "secular" concerns, as contrasted with more "sacred" matters. The gospel, on this view, is about "spiritual" matters and fundamentally uninterested in money or other "material" concerns. Such a view truncates the lordship of Christ, limiting it to bits and pieces of life and allowing us to conveniently mold God into our image. To address this obstacle we need to be clear about the nature and scope of Christ's claims to lordship: Jesus claims the

whole of us and all of our lives. And what it means to be a disciple of Jesus includes our economic life. In short, we need to be reminded of the depth and breadth and height of Christ's lordship and God's grace.

Third, many in the church have become fascinated with "hot 'n' now 'n' big." Success is often defined in terms of the latest or the biggest. In this view, growth is always good. We forget that unlimited growth is the ideology of the cancer cell. Or we uncritically privilege the present. The latest cultural fads and fashions come to dominate our life, rather than the time-tested practices of Bible and tradition. Rather than viewing success as faithfulness, we see it in terms of what our culture says is important. What can and what should we do? We can steep ourselves in the riches of Scripture, e.g., by reading the Gospels straight through. We can plumb the depths of the Christian Story, e.g., by studying a Catholic saint or praying the Jesus Prayer of the Russian Orthodox. We can learn of exemplary people and model communities past and present that have lived out God's sovereignty in their economic life. We can celebrate what is faithful rather than what is big or new.

Fourth, the world in which we live is complex. It can be properly understood only with careful and critical thought. Yet often we do not strive to understand the dynamics of our world, for thinking is hard work. Trying to fathom contemporary economic life is difficult, and we often give up trying. But try we must. For example, we need to learn more about how our world works, and not only its geo-political-economic life but also the ecological systems that underpin all life on earth. This would involve not only a better understanding of globalization but also learning where your food comes from or knowing the trees or flowers in your neighborhood. We must improve our ecological literacy. And we can encourage some among us in the church to specialize in learning economics and ecology and ethics and the like. We can commission some to serve the church by providing insight into our common life on oikos earth. With such knowledge we can then act in more shalom-filled ways.

Fifth and finally, we too often fail to see economic life as the life of the household we call earth. As mentioned previously, etymologically economics is the law of the household and ecology is the study of the household. Economics and ecology need to inform each other to the mutual benefit of each, and both together need to inform the policies and practices of the church. We too often fail to see things whole, to understand how systems work, to grasp how dependent our economic life is on the goods and services of the economy of nature and what the true consequences of our actions are. So we need a richer and fuller and more accurate understanding of what economic life is and how God's economy should shape our own.

All of the above assumes a vigorous and healthy church community. It presumes that church is not a building but a people—a people called by God to bear witness to God's good future of shalom. In other words, restoring God's sovereignty over our economic life requires that church be more than a club, and one's faith more than a hobby. We must be part of a vibrant Christian community. So we need to baptize with gusto and bury with joy and grace. We need regularly to observe the Lord's Supper as a meal of remembrance, communion, and hope. We need to preach like Amos and Jeremiah and sing our hearts out like Miriam and Mary. We need to forgive like Hosea. We need to feast at church potlucks. We need to work so that Sunday morning from 11:00 to 12:00 is no longer the most segregated hour in America. We need to see all of life, including our economic life, as a sacred trust from God to whom we are forever grateful. Our lives are, after all, to be a response of gratitude to God's grace.

So the business of business ought to be more than business. Our economic life, as Christians, ought to be seen as under the rule of God's household—a place in which justice and peace kiss and the earth and its many creatures flourish. This household must be made real by those who follow Jesus.

In trying to more faithfully serve God in our economic life we would be greatly helped by having a biblical view of material possessions. Such a perspective would include the following claims:

- Material possessions are a good gift from God for us to enjoy.
- Material possessions are also one of the primary means of turning human hearts away from God.
- A necessary sign of sanctification is transformation in the area of stewardship.
- Certain extremes of wealth and poverty are in themselves intolerable.
- The Bible's teaching on material possessions is inextricably intertwined with more "spiritual" matters.

On the one hand, there is nothing wrong with money or possessions. Indeed, money has been put to great good for God's reign of shalom, and we simply need certain possessions. Christians should not be world-fleeing ascetics, nor should we romanticize poverty. But on the other hand, money and what it buys are grave temptations to put our trust in something other than God. Idolatry, not atheism, is the persistent challenge to the people of the Bible. It is a patent falsehood that (as a bumper sticker once put it) "Whoever dies with the most toys wins," and so neither should we put our ultimate allegiance in that which moth and rust consume. So perhaps, given our current context, some asceticism would be therapeutic.

In light of this challenge, we would do well to explore how the classical Christian disciplines can shape our desires and our vision of the good life. Time-honored practices like prayer, fasting, service, and worship shape us and mold our desires in shalom-filled ways. In this regard we need to explore practical strategies for resisting Mammon and serving Christ. How can we individually and communally—in our homes, churches, camps, workplaces—resist the rushing current that is our materialistic culture and its siren song of success while cultivating and putting into practice a more faith-filled way of life? Here are seven simple strategies:

- **Say no.** Don't buy the latest, fastest, biggest. Live simply.
- **Tithe.** Give a percentage of your income away—to your church, to Bread for the World, to Church World Service, to missionaries, to the local soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
- **Fast.** During Lent or Advent, skip a meal or two and use the time to write a letter to your mayor or member of Congress.
- **Volunteer.** Work at church or at camp, at the local homeless shelter or nature center, with the local Habitat folks or greenway group.
- **Give.** Go through the clothes closet or toy box or basement attic and give useable things away.
- **Care.** Take care of a pet, a creek, a lake, a forest. Pick up some trash. Recycle. Drive less and walk more.
- **Pray.** Pray the Lord's Prayer. Pray the Jesus Prayer. Pray alone, pray with others, pray with the chickadees.

Goods are for life, not for luxury. And the disciplines that mark our life should help us properly use our goods, not only to bring us joy but to foster fellowship with our neighbors (human and non-human) and communion with God.

Restoring Economic Community

The question of personal economic behavior addresses a number of issues found in middle-class, North American culture in the new millennium. You can feel the angst as it slips into our psyches and evokes statements such as: *If I can buy it, I should buy it. The pie is shrinking and I have to get my share. More for less is always best!* The average North

American is feeling pressure to get what he or she can get for as low a price as possible, and the purveyors of profit are all too happy to sell it to us. What is forgotten, hidden, or ignored in this scenario is the price that is "paid" by others so that our "cost" can be lowered.

- If I can ignore the price paid by the tomato harvesters in Florida, potato farmers in Idaho, and grape pickers in California who often make less than liveable wages, then I can enjoy my Taco Bell burrito, McDonald's French fries, and box-o'-wine that I got cheap.
- If I can hide the price incurred by towns (which frequently give subsidies and tax incentives) and local businesses (which often have to close) in order to lure large box stores into my area, then I can spend even more of my money getting things that didn't really make me happy in the first place.
- If I can forget the price paid in carbon emissions from my large SUV contributing in a disproportionate way to global warming (not to mention the hazard they pose to other drivers in smaller cars), then I can drive the American dream with no cost to my conscience.

Our churches and faith communities are no more immune to this than any other sector of society. In fact, we often follow right along, thinking that bigger-better-faster-slicker really could impress the Creator of the Universe. Here are a few key mantras to keep in our minds as we look at how we can respond faithfully in our economic behavior:

First: **Your stuff is not your stuff.**

It's God's. The Bible is clear that "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." We hear it on Sundays and then beg to differ with it the other six days of the week. Saying, "I can buy whatever I want. It's my money," is not only bad economics, it borders on blasphemy. Whatever we own or buy, we own or buy as stewards of the Lord. Understanding this reality frees us from the tyranny of possession. The current vision of individual autonomy runs aground when compared to the biblical vision of God's sovereignty of creation.

Second: **Remember that your stuff is connected to all other stuff.**

Everything has a story. Everything comes from somewhere. To be a good steward of anything, you must strive to know it well. Use your curiosity and discover what you can about what you buy. If nothing else, this should help curb impulse buying. Also, you might discover some fascinating things, e.g., that while you are not the center of what is important economically, you are connected, so that what you do economically makes a difference. You may think that your (singular) purchase will not have any effect, until you remember that, to invoke St. Paul again, you (plural) belong to something bigger. And that something, the Household of God, is what can be celebrated or denied, built up or torn down by your economic behavior.

Third: **Find the human behind the stuff.**

We are reminded in Scripture that God cares for all people. Indeed, the Abrahamic covenant states that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." This does not have to remain mere sentiment. Blessing all peoples can be a reality of our economic practices. "Who made this clock?" "Who grew these tomatoes?" "Who delivered that package?" Find out who is behind what you purchase. Did your purchase help them, or was your purchase based solely on taking advantage of someone else's plight? Getting "the best deal" should not be the only thing we strive for in our purchasing of goods. You will never find all the stories, but if you can't find any, maybe somebody is hiding something that they don't want us to know.

Fourth: **Celebrate the stuff you do have.**

Look around you. Do the things that you surround yourself with affirm your worldview? Do your possessions free you to follow Christ into the world, or does your stuff tether you down? What gives you real joy? More than likely, what liberates and brings joy are the things that are low on the monetary scale but high on personal connections.

If we are correct in stating that through our economic behavior we can affirm the sovereignty of God as well as begin to live into the vision of Christ bringing the world together, then what goods we buy and how we buy them matters. We must replace impulse and consumer-driven desire with discipline that looks behind the goods in order to see the larger picture. Our goods will then serve to connect us to our neighbors near and far. And we must reconnect the price we pay for goods with the actual costs (financial, social, environmental, etc.) that it takes to bring those goods to us. As we travel this path, we will round corners where we see that our economic decisions are neither private nor disconnected from others, but in fact bind us together in ways that become a shining witness to God's vision of a world where all shall be blessed.

Calling Forth the Household of God

At a symposium on the consequences of economic globalization in Bangkok, Thailand, in November 1999, member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches called on the churches in the North to engage in "concrete acts of solidarity to alleviate the massive suffering in our nations in the north and in the south," and "to address your governments and the institutions that are designing and implementing the current globalization project." To this end the household of God, as the global church, must work to influence public opinion and persuade decision-makers in politics, business, and other sectors of society to stop the exploitation of the majority of the people of the world and the destruction of the earth. For the Reformed Church in America, this should translate into the following actions at each level of organization:

Congregations

- Churches should resist investment where financial profit is the key concern over and against the basic needs of the poor. When church monies are invested, church members should encourage investment in socially and environmentally responsible funds.
- Church members should engage in public policy advocacy to Congress, advocating for fair and just trade and agricultural and business policies whereby the health of the poor and the environment are considered instead of only financial profit.
- Church members should advocate to the international financial institutions (International Monetary Fund and World Bank) the release of debts for the world's most highly indebted countries.
- Church members should work to influence corporations so that the market and shareholder demands for profit do not trample people or the earth.
- Churches should support organizations that work to create more just and sustainable arrangements for people and the earth, such as Church World Service, CROP Walk, Habitat for Humanity, and Bread for the World.

Classes and/or Regional Synods

- Classes and regional synods should train deacons in public policy advocacy (one of the diaconal ministries) related to issues of the economy and the earth.
- Classes and regional synods should educate people about the global ecumenical work of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, especially their commitment to covenanting for justice in the economy and earth.

General Synod

- General Synod should make a long-term commitment (seven to ten years) to walk with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in their global ecumenical processes of covenanting for justice in the economy and earth (See "Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth," adopted by the WARC 24th General Council, Accra, Ghana, August 2004). This would entail taking seriously the above-mentioned document, especially paragraphs 37 through 42 (under the section "Covenanting for Justice"), which ask us, the RCA, to translate our confession of faith into concrete actions both regionally and locally.
- General Synod should draft and adopt a "faith statement" on economic globalization and ecological destruction in order that church members, classes, and regional synods may better resist the destructive forces of economic globalization and be advocates for global social justice. One such statement (something short of an official confession of faith) is "Faith Stance on the Global Crisis of Life," adopted by the WARC South-South Member Churches Forum meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in April 2003.
- General Synod should receive and study "What Does God Require of Us?: A Declaration for Just Trade in the Service of an Economy of Life," a report from a WARC consultation of North American churches meeting in January 2004 at Stony Point, New York, and implement the policy implications listed there.

The church is being called forth. Our brothers and sisters in Christ in the communion of Reformed churches around the world are calling us in the Reformed Church in America to listen and to act. The question is, will we? Will we hear their suffering and work faithfully to stop the exploitation of people and the earth? The biblical vision of the household of God beckons us to a life of loving service. May God give us the compassion and wisdom and courage so to live.

Annotated Short List on Earthkeeping and Economic Justice

Books: Biblical and Theological Basics

The Bible
Kind of confusing in parts, with a lot of detail about families and hair length and the number seven, but what a great love story. God redeems this love-wrought world by tenting among us. It doesn't get any better than this.

Caring for Creation: Responsible Stewardship of God's Handiwork. Calvin DeWitt. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998.
Insightful and succinct presentation by the dean of the evangelical environmental movement for why Christians ought to care for the earth.

For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care. Steven Bouma-Prediger. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.
A comprehensive treatment of a variety of issues—ecology, environmental science, history, Bible, theology, ethics, apologetics—in support of the claim that caring for the earth is an integral feature of authentic Christian discipleship.

Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions. Craig Blomberg. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.
A scholarly yet accessible volume, this is the best book on the subject.

Books: Environmental Studies

Earth in Mind. David Orr. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1994.
One of the most stimulating books on education, the earth, and the human prospect, written by one of the leaders in environmental studies.

Hope Human and Wild: True Stories of Living Lightly on the Land. Bill McKibben. St. Paul, MN: Hungry Mind Press, 1995.
A presentation of three real-life case studies from around the world, illustrating that we can care for the earth and the poor and thus bring hope to a hurting world.

Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things. John Ryan and Alan Thein Durning. Seattle: Northwest Environment Watch, 1997.
A fascinating and eye-opening account of where all of our stuff—coffee, shoes, computers, cars, T-shirts—comes from and the hidden costs of our everyday life.

Books: Economics, Politics, Society

Globalization and Its Discontents. Joseph Stiglitz. New York: Norton, 2002.
Written at a popular level by a well-known economist, the book offers a critique of various features of globalization.

Globalization and the Kingdom of God. Bob Goudzewaard. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001.
An analysis of globalization from a Christian perspective, with suggestions on how Christians can and should influence governments and corporations.

How Much Is Enough? The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth. Alan Durning. New York: W. W. Norton, 1992.
A well-written and devastating critique of our consumer society.

Books: Practical How-To

The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Action: Practical Advice from the Union of Concerned Scientists. Michael Brower and Warren Leon. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999.
The single best book on what the average consumer can and should do to make the world an ecologically healthier place. Clearly and engagingly written, this is a treasure trove of practical advice based on the best science.

Greening Congregations Handbook. Seattle: Earth Ministry.
One of the most creative and comprehensive handbooks for helping Christians put into practice earthkeeping in their church.

Books: Curricula and Study Guides

Crossing Ten Seas: Studies on the Theme That All May Have Life in Fullness. Geneva: WARC, 2002.
An excellent set of studies on economic justice and ecological health, done in preparation for the World Alliance of Reformed Churches gathering in Accra, Ghana, in July 2004.

Globalization at What Price? Pamela Brubaker. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2001.
An accessible primer for Christians on globalization, with study questions at the end of each chapter. Short, clear, and practical.

Simpler Living, Compassionate Life. Edited by Michael Schut. Seattle: Earth Ministry.

A compelling text that pulls together a wide variety of authors in its case for living more simply, complete with four-, six-, and eight-week study guides for using the book in classes.

Books: Devotionals and Spirituality

Earthsongs: Praying with Nature. Wayne Simsic. Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 1992.
A wonderful devotional with thirty-two "prayer services," each including an opening prayer, a psalm, a reading, a hymn, and a closing prayer. Themes include spring, wildflowers, water, trees, solitude, storm, and night.

The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality. Belden Lane. New York: Oxford, 1998.
Interweaving Christian spirituality, the exploration of wild places, and the story of his mother's slow death from cancer, in this beautifully written book a master storyteller brilliantly displays the power and solace of the Christian mystical tradition.

Videos (available from TRAVARCA: 800-968-7221; travarca@rca.org; online catalog: http://travarca.rca.org)

Affluenza. 57 minutes/high school–adult. An eye-opening look at our culture's addiction to stuff and its prevailing assumption that affluence constitutes the good life. 1997/KCTS Seattle and Oregon Public Broadcasting. See www.bullfrogfilms.com.

Escape from Affluenza. 60 minutes/high school–adult. Creative and insightful ways to escape the rampant materialism of modern North American culture. 1998/KCTS Seattle and Oregon Public Broadcasting. See www.bullfrogfilms.com.

Periodicals

Creation Care. Published quarterly by the Evangelical Environmental Network, this is one of the best Christian periodicals that covers environmental issues.

Earth Letter. This practical and creative publication comes out five times a year; published by Earth Ministries in Seattle, the same folks who put out the *Greening Congregations Handbook* and *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life*.

Other Resources

God's Earth, Our Home. From the National Council of Churches of Christ, this packet of twenty-one items contains twelve study sessions, a leader's guide, worship resources for all ages, a glossary, and a chart on making your church a creation awareness center.

Let the Earth Be Glad: A Starter Kit for Evangelical Churches to Care for God's Creation. Evangelical Environmental Network. Biblical studies, sermon starters, worship resources, and more for making creation care an integral part of your church.

Putting Faith into Practice: An Environmental Audit of Religious Buildings, Lands and Properties. Freda Rajotte and Harold Taylor, from the Canadian Coalition for Ecology, Ethics and Religion. Just what the name says it is.

Websites

www.churchworldservice.org

www.creationcare.org

www.jubileeusa.org

www.webofcreation.org

Church Statements: RCA

"Biblical Faith and Our Economic Life," General Synod, 1984.

"The Church's Peace Witness in U.S. Corporate Economy," General Synod, 1985.

"What Is Justice, Peace, the Integrity of Creation?" General Program Council, 1990.

Church Statements: World Alliance of Reformed Churches

"A Charter for Fair and Just Trade in the Service of All," North American Churches Consultation, January 2004, Stony Point, NY, U.S.A.

"Faith Stance on the Global Crisis of Life," WARC South-South Member Churches' Forum on Confessing/Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth, April 2003, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Church Statements: Other Christian Denominations

"A Faithful Response: Calling for a More Just, Humane Direction for Economic Globalization," United Church of Christ, 2003.

"Engaging Economic Globalization as a Communion," Lutheran World Federation, 2001.

"A Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All," Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1999.

A more complete bibliography can be found at http://www.rca.org/mission/witness/creation/resources.html.