

North Kildonan United Church

23rd April 2023 ~Nancy Cosway

“Invest in Our Planet” Earth Day 2023

Genesis 1:9-12

Psalms 104: 1-24

Your Outreach Committee is honored to be able to present this service celebrating Earth Day with you this Sunday. It is an important day for all as we remind ourselves of the fragility of our planet and all the species that live here. We realise that our climate is changing as we see more extreme weather around the world and close to home with tornadoes, winter storms in April, shrinking arctic ice, disappearing glaciers, rising sea levels and oceans getting warmer. All of this affects our planet and our lives.

This year, “Invest in Our Planet” is the theme of Earth Day. So, what does that mean? Play it Green says - *Investing in our planet means stopping reliance on out-of-date fossil fuel technology and redirecting our attention to creating a 21st century economy that repairs our planet, protects the species living on it and provides opportunities for all. It means reframing the conversation, accelerating action, and bringing us together to understand that this is possible and within our reach, if we work together.*

This means all society must play a part.

But what is Earth Day meant to accomplish?

53 years ago, on April 22, 1970, Millions of people took to the streets to protest the negative impact of 150 years of industrial development.

Earth Day is now a global event every year, and more than 1 billion people in 192 countries take part in what is the largest civic-focused day of action in the world.

It is a day of Political action and civic participation. People march, people sign petitions, people meet with their elected officials, people plant trees, people clean up their towns and roads. Corporations and governments use Earth Day to make pledges and announce sustainability measures. Faith Leaders, including the United church moderator, Carmen Lansdowne, connect Earth Day with protecting God's greatest creations, humans, biodiversity, and the planet we live on.

Let me read from an article by the Moderator and I quote:

"Unless you organize or participate in protests, lately it feels like Earth Day passes without a lot of reflection. Thirty years ago, we thought of Earth Day in specific terms; Save a species by protecting its habitat, repair the hole in the ozone by limiting aerosols, save forests by recycling paper. Joining environmental actions was often

complicated, but, at least on the surface, there were simple, concrete actions we thought would have an impact.” End of quote

We tried Banning plastic bags, banning plastic straws, using compostable take-out containers, recycling pop cans and many other limited activities.

But now we have a climate emergency.

Greta Thunberg, a Swedish climate activist, who began the “School Strike for Climate” has told world leaders: 'I don't want you to be hopeful, I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day and then I want you to act.' In an impassioned warning to act now on climate change, Thunberg told her audience at Davos: 'Either we choose to go on as a civilization or we don't.'

From NASA, Global Climate Change - It is undeniable that human activities have produced the atmospheric gases that have trapped more of the Sun's energy in the Earth system. This extra energy has warmed the atmosphere, ocean, and land, and widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere, and biosphere have occurred.

June 17, 2019, Canada's Minister of the environment said *"Tonight, we'll vote on the climate emergency. The science shows that Canada is warming at twice the global average and that we need to meet our international obligations. That's why I'm voting for the motion and that's why Canada's already taking action."* The motion was passed but I am not sure much action has been taken.

Moderator Lansdowne says the climate emergency is not just a big problem, it's the end of the world as we know it - just look at the weather events around the world this winter, tornados, earthquakes, floods, weather changes.

It is a complex and urgent problem Lansdowne suggests.

In 2022, the United Church of Canada committed to reduce its carbon emissions by 80% by 2030. We are doing it by working with 260 congregations to make their buildings more energy efficient. The goal is 500 communities & congregations to embrace the fact that there are no “one size fits all” solutions, and if we all did what we could, even if it felt small, we could make a difference.

- Decarbonizing our businesses.
- Committing to public transit.
- A staycation rather than international travel.
- Most of all we need to talk to each other about what we want to see from each other.
- We need to inspire each other.

So, what can each of us commit to as a way of investing in our planet - perhaps we need to focus on fundamentally changing human attitude and behaviour to invest in our planet.

Whether your motivation is social justice, faith, economic resiliency, or science – actions and choices can now make a difference for the future.

Let's end the world as we know it now, and allow a new world of creative, innovative and accountable breakthroughs to turn the thermostat down.

So, you might ask what can I do? Yes, individual actions can have an impact. Many of us can remember the impact of Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" that showed the devastating impact of pesticides. Though the scientific community already knew of the dangers, Carson was the first to make the information accessible and palatable to a mass audience in her groundbreaking book.

The scientific community knows what is causing the climate crisis and as individuals, communities, and governments we can take action.

Here are a few examples for each of us to consider and as you depart today this information is at the back of the sanctuary for you to take home and read in detail.

Save energy at home – e.g., switch to LED lights, wash clothes in cold water, lower your thermostat.

Walk, bike, or take public transit.

Throw away less food as when food rots in the landfill it produces methane.

Make your money count – choose products from companies who use resources responsibly and are committed to cutting their gas emissions and waste.

Speak up – appeal to local and world leaders to act now. No one can do it alone but we can all do it together.

In 2023 we must all enter this partnership for the planet. We need to act individually and together and Invest in the Planet

Let me end with a poem by Daday Tojores:

The Sound of Earth

*As I wake up in the morning,
I saw the sunshine in the window
As I go in the garden,
I saw the flowers as they grow.

The trees in the mountain
Gives us fresh air to inhale,
It gives us water everyday,
and fulfill life every way.*

*How beautiful surroundings that we have,
Its a gift from up above,
May you be thankful of what you have,
And share the blessings from loving God.*

*Today is a great day,
It's a love fulfilling way,
It's because I have to say,
That God is my guidance all the way.*