

Sacred Acts: How Church's are Working to Protect the Earth's Climate

978-0-86571-700-8

In Genesis, God is recorded to have made humans the stewards of his creation, yet many Christians and churches have largely overlooked this primary responsibility. In *Sacred Acts*, Mallory McDuff, a professor at Warren Wilson College, has compiled inspiring success stories of faith communities that have put into action their beliefs about the sacredness of all creation. Evangelical, mainline, and Roman Catholic churches, as well as interfaith organizations including Green Faith, Earth Ministry, and Interfaith Power & Light, are featured. Spiritual principles combine with science, activism, creativity, and enthusiasm to provide practical guidance and inspiration for other churches.

Arranged in four sections—stewardship, spirituality, advocacy, and justice—the book's twelve chapters are written by some of the leading voices in the Christian environmental movement, both clergy and laypersons. Practical stewardship is modeled by churches growing community gardens on church property, improving building energy conservation, and promoting natural burial. An evangelical climate scientist explains the scientific facts and projections of climate change and laments the political and denominational divide that exists on this critical issue. Church responses to the shockingly high environmental costs and health dangers of the burning of coal and of mountaintop removal mining are also shared. Advocacy and justice efforts are explored in climate-caused immigration, the placement of high-pollution industries in poor areas, and the need for economic justice related to race, employment, and salaries. The importance of sustained prayer and action for those in natural disaster areas is demonstrated in the post-Katrina Gulf Coast. Throughout, the scriptural basis of why Christians should be involved in climate change and related causes is credibly expounded.

Among the many lessons learned from this compilation are that we must "shift our thinking and actions at the most basic levels" and that "the healing of the world begins with the healing of the places where we live." For those skeptical about climate change, the real cost-savings possible from adopting green practices and the potential to draw new converts from those who value the environment are presented in compelling terms.

In *Sacred Acts*, Dr. McDuff, a lifelong Episcopalian, builds upon her previously published work, *Natural Saints*, to demonstrate convincingly that churches can effectively mobilize to care for the Creation. As church members and religious leaders awake to their biblical charge, *Sacred Acts* serves as a highly recommended guide for persuasive theology and effective action.

C. WILLIAM GEE (Summer 2012)

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