



EARTH CARE @LEWINSVILLE

WE HAVE BUT ONE EARTH, AND IT BELONGS TO GOD

Earth Overshoot Day – the date in a given calendar year that demand for Earth’s ecological resources exceeds what the planet can regenerate—occurred this year on July 29. Calculated annually by the international research organization Global Footprint Network, the date has moved from December in 1970 to late July in recent years. Stated another way, humans are using 74% more than what the planet can renew; we would need 1.7 earths to provide the resources we use and absorb the waste, including carbon emissions, we produce. The Country Overshoot Day for the U.S.A. occurred even earlier, on March 14. If everyone lived like Americans, we would need 5.0 earths.



The repercussions of decades of overshoot are reflected in the landmark report released on August 9, 2021 by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The report, prepared by 234 scientists utilizing more than 14,000 studies from around the world, was characterized by the UN Secretary-General as “a code red for humanity.” It found that climate change is widespread, rapid and accelerating with increasingly disastrous effects. Some of the worst consequences can be avoided if we move quickly and aggressively to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

How should we, as caretakers of God’s creation, respond? In an address to the August 2021 Presbyterians for Earth Care Conference, the Reverend J. Herbert Nelson, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), urged taking responsibility “in whatever way we can.” He stated that “Jesus came to remind us that what we have in this world we have to give back. It doesn’t belong to us, including our own lives.” He noted that “it’s likely many people will read the IPCC report, maybe shake their heads and say, ‘mmm, mmm, mmm’.” Then they’ll “move on and begin the next day the process of taking, taking, taking. There is enough for all of us, but the exploitation of what God has given us has to stop.”

We have been given an urgent call to action. We must recognize and reduce the environmental overshoot of our personal actions and our collective practices as a congregation. We must work with our larger community and elected officials to bring about change at a societal level.

- More about Dr.Nelson’s address and the PCUSA response to the IPCC report:
<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/we-are-tearing-down-the-creation-god-has-given-to-us/>
- Key points of the IPCC report: <https://earthsky.org/earth/the-2021-ipcc-report-what-you-need-to-know/>
- More about Earth Overshoot Day and potential solutions:
<https://www.overshootday.org/about-earth-overshoot-day/> and
<https://www.footprintnetwork.org/>
- Determine your own personal Overshoot Day (with suggestions for pushing it back):
<https://www.footprintcalculator.org/>

-- [*From the September 2021 Newsletter*](#)