



The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: he leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. - Psalm 23:1-3

Habitat for Life 2001

Habitat for Life is the theme for the 2001 Soil and Water Stewardship Observance. This annual observance, celebrated between the last Sunday in April and the first Sunday in May, reminds us of our individual responsibilities to care for the soil and water resources upon which we depend. Its history dates back the tradition of Rogation Days in Medieval Europe, where a celebration of prayer and penance became a popular annual event designed to implore God to help people avoid privation and suffering from periods of bad weather, drought, or crop failures.

Soil and Water Stewardship is sponsored by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), whose members are 3,000 local conservation districts that manage soil and water conservation programs in every community. Since 1955, NACD has selected an annual theme and developed educational materials for churches of all denominations. The materials are reviewed by an Advisory Committee composed of ministers and lay leaders from a number of religious denominations.

In the 2001 materials, we are reminded that people, like all living things, depend for their survival on the world around them. Although societies differ in terms of history, wealth, or culture, they all need healthy, safe places to live. The loss of those places brings tragedies that haunt us all. As responsible people, we seek to do what we can to prevent disasters, or to help people recover in the aftermath.

It is common to think about people losing their homes and the quality of their living environments as something that happens to someone else, in some other place. That may not always be the case. As we see sprawling growth take valuable farmland, read about a town's drinking water being polluted by chemicals, or watch a flood wipe out farms and towns, we are witnessing a loss of the habitat for life that is needed by all people and living things. When an animal or plant species goes extinct, we are a little less because of that loss. If that extinction occurs because we, as humans, were careless or thoughtless, we bear the weight of sinning against God's Creation.

As you read this message, think about your personal responsibility to be a good steward of the land, water, wildlife, and other resources that are part of God's Creation. Call your local conservation district and become an Earth Team volunteer. Keeping our surroundings (our habitat) clean and healthy is a job for all of us, working together in the organizations, churches, schools, and communities that frame and shape our lives.