

WI Interfaith Climate & Energy Campaign

People of all faiths working toward a just and sustainable future.

Islam and God's Balanced Creation

By Huda Alkaff, founder of the Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin

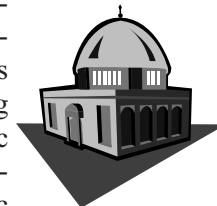
Nature and environment have always played an important part in the lives of Muslims. We understand that God has not created all this for naught. In fact, Muslims have been commanded to find the wonderful signs of God around them so that it will only increase them in their awe of their Cherisher and Sustainer.

In Islam, we believe that humans have been given a responsibility by God on this earth and that we will be accountable to God for our actions and the trust placed in us. Islam has urged humanity to be kind to nature and not to abuse the trust that has been placed on our shoulders. Both the Qur'an (the holy book for Muslims) and Hadith (Reports on the sayings and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad) emphasize the accountability and re-

sponsibility of humans towards the rest of creation and towards maintaining and protecting God's balanced creation. "And the earth We have spread out; set thereon mountains firm and immovable; and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance." (The Qur'an 67:1-4). "...and He has set up the Balance (of Justice), in order that ye may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance." (The Qur'an 55:7-9). "O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for God loveth not the wasters" (The Qur'an 7:31). And God means no injustice to any of His creatures". (The Qur'an 3:108) Prophet Muhammad urged kindness towards all living things and the environment. He is reported to have said: "Never does a Muslim plant trees or cultivate land, and birds or peo-

ple or animals eat out of them, but that is a charity on his behalf", "If doomsday is about to take place while anyone of you has a sapling in his hand, which he can cultivate, let him cultivate it for he will be rewarded."

The Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin intends to educate and inform about the Islamic environmental teachings and to form coalitions with interfaith environmental organizations in Wisconsin. Currently, this Group is working with two Islamic Centers in Milwaukee, the Islamic Society of Milwaukee and Masjid Al Qur'an, facilitating their participation in the Wisconsin Interfaith Energy Stewardship Collaborative, which focuses on improving energy efficiency in Wisconsin's participating congregations. The Group is also exploring ways to collaborate with EnAct Environmental Actions teams to build programs for Muslim families that focus on applying the Islamic environmental teachings in their daily lives, reduce waste, conserve energy and water, eat healthier foods, and together build a stronger sense of community.



INTERFAITH EARTH MONTH

In collaboration with WICEC and others, the Islamic Environmental Group of WI is co-sponsoring various events to celebrate April 2005 as the first "Interfaith Earth Month". The earth is mentioned more than 450 times in the Qur'an. Prophet Muhammad emphasizes the earth as a pure and purifying entity "The earth has been created for me (and for my followers) a place for offering prayer and as a means of purification..." Understanding and preserving the balance on earth is an Islamic duty and obligation.

For more information about the Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin, please contact Huda Alkaff at hfamea@yahoo.com.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. on Faith, Nature

By Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

While condemning environmentalists as “radicals,” the Bush administration promotes the radical notion that clean water, clean air, and healthy loved ones are luxuries we can’t afford.

They invoke Christianity to justify the rape of the land, violating manifold Christian precepts that require us to be careful stewards. Rather than elevating the human spirit, their interpretation of Scripture emphasizes the grimmest vision of the human condition. They embrace intolerance, selfishness, pride, arrogance toward creation, and irresponsibility to the community and future generations.

...The fact is, free-market capitalism is the best thing that could happen to our environment, our economy, our country. Simply put, true free-market capitalism, in which businesses pay all the costs of bringing their products to market, is the most

efficient and democratic way of distributing the goods of the land—and the surest way to eliminate pollution.

...The coal-burning utilities that acidify [our] lakes, poison our waterways with mercury, provoke 120,000 asthma attacks, and kill 30,000 of our neighbors every year are imposing costs on the rest of us that should, in a free-market economy, be reflected in the price of the energy when they bring it to the marketplace.

By avoiding these costs, the utilities are able to enrich their shareholders and put their more conscientious and efficient competitors out of business. But these costs don’t disappear. The American people pay for them downstream—with poisoned fish, sickened children, and a diminished quality of life.

Excerpted from the book Crimes Against Nature and reprinted with permission from the author.

May is a Month for Sustainable Travel to Worship

The month of May is a time for people to honor the environment by going to worship using a transportation mode other than driving—such as car pooling, bicycling, walking, riding the bus or even boating.

According to a comprehensive study by the Union of Concerned Scientists, driving cars causes more damage to the environment -



- in terms of air and water pollution, global warming, and habitat alteration -- than any other consumer behavior. Driving cars and light trucks contributes almost 30 percent of all greenhouse gasses. Faith congregations throughout Wisconsin are celebrating *Sustainable Travel to Worship* month by participating in a statewide friendly competition sponsored by WICEC, the Bicycle Federation of WI (www.bfw.org) and Wisconsin Walks (www.wisconsinwalks.org) for the highest proportion of trips to worship that involve an alternate transit mode. Participants will receive green wristbands. **Participating places are designating someone to be responsible for tallying all sustainable trips to worship and to report the proportion of all trips that use a car-limited mode.** To register contact Susan De Vos at atwfus@tds.net
Suggestion: Get your local churches to group together and compete locally!

CONSERVATION LOBBY DAY AT THE CAPITOL



WICEC Director Sarah Streed, WI Representative Rob Kreibich, RENEW Director Michael Vickerman (l-to-r)

More than 120 conservationists from across the state converged on the Capitol Feb 16 to share their conservation priorities with Legislators and Gov. Doyle. Legislators were presented with a copy of the *Wisconsin Conservation Briefing Book* outlining the top six priorities for the current session. (View the book at www.conservationvoters.org)

The WICEC WATT A WINNER! Award

To Dane County Circuit Judge David Flanagan who ruled against Wisconsin Energy's \$2.15 billion coal plant project in Oak Creek last November. The judge found that the Public Service Commission (PSC) of WI broke state law by not requiring Wisconsin Energy to propose an alternate site and for not taking into account the cost of power lines for the new plants. This unprecedented decision is the latest in an ongoing fight over the project. Since pulverized coal is old, dirty technology and the single largest source of industrial air pollution, Oak Creek has had opponents all along, including S.C. Johnson Wax and WICEC.

IN BRIEF ...

WEEK-LONG AIR ADVISORY IN WISCONSIN

An air quality advisory was issued on December 29 for 9 counties in Wisconsin—soon changed to include the entire state—which lasted nearly a week. The health advisory was issued because of the high concentration of fine particles that can get deep into lungs. The fine particles (including soot) come mainly from power plants and motor vehicle exhaust.

The health advisory said that children, the elderly and people who suffer from respiratory problems should stay inside and limit their physical activity during the time the advisory was in effect.



KYOTO COMES INTO EFFECT WITHOUT U.S.

When the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty to curb global warming emissions, officially came into effect on Feb. 16, 2005 without U.S. involvement, many noted that it was the first time in recent history that the US has not been at the forefront of world politics. With Russia's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol last November—bringing the total of countries to ratify the treaty to 128—only four industrialized countries remain outside the process: Australia, Liechtenstein, Monaco and the United States.

Kyoto's entry into force means there is growing pressure within the US to accelerate the national effort to address climate change, mainly by support of the global warming bill known as the Climate Stewardship Act. Citizens are being urged to ask their senators to support the Act.

EVANGELICALS BEGINNING TO GO GREEN

Recent polls and public statements of evangelical leaders show that a growing number of evangelical Christians view stewardship of the environment as a responsibility mandated by God in the Bible. The 30 million-member National Association of Evangelicals issued a statement last October saying, "We affirm that God-given dominion is a sacred responsibility to steward the earth and not a license to abuse the creation of which we are a part." Signatories included James Dobson (Focus on the Family) and Chuck Colson (Prison Fellowship Ministry). *Christianity Today* magazine supported the Climate Stewardship Act.



Nearly four out of five white evangelical Christians voted last year for Bush but that support could be changing. Recently, evangelical lobbyists urged Christians NOT to support Bush's "Clear Skies" Act, criticizing its lack of mercury regulation. www.creationcare.org.

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*People of all faiths
working toward
a just and sustainable future.*

We're on the Web!
www.wicec.org

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CARS, COFFEE, CLIMATE

How are they connected? Dozens of religious congregations in Wisconsin will find out during **Interfaith Earth Month** in April. WICEC and one of its organizational members, the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin (LOPPW), have created a Climate CAFÉ™ program to promote the federal Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) law used to prompt automakers to make more fuel-efficient, cleaner vehicles. Climate CAFE kits contain a unique sticker of WICEC's own design, indicating how many ounces of fuel various vehicles need to travel a single mile. Congregations may order a basic kit for a minimal fee, containing pre-assembled Climate CAFE cup holders with stickers attached, plus info. For about \$10 congregations will receive the full kit, including video, discussion booklet, sermon helps, bulletin inserts, sample letters and postcards to automakers, and a large umbrella to create your own CAFE. In 2002 WICEC was one of the campaigns in 15 states to hold a CAFE Day; Climate CAFÉ continues that success. For information on this **easy-to-do** interfaith program, contact 608-255-7399 or suelarson@mcleodusa.net

