

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE, REVERE:  
A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN NOVA SCOTIA ACTING ON  
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

by

Peter Young

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Environmental Studies

at

Dalhousie University  
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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

School for Resource and Environmental Studies

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## DEDICATION PAGE

To my parents,  
who loved and supported me through yet another degree.

To my friends at Dal,  
who made it so enjoyable to (once again) be a student.

To my friends in Ukraine,  
who helped motivate me to finish my thesis and move on.

And to God,  
without whom this would all be meaningless.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Awareness and concern about the environment have been growing in recent years, and this fact has not been lost on churches. Though arguments have been made that Christianity is a cause of the world's current ecological problems, many denominations have issued statements encouraging environmental responsibility, and a growing number of churches are teaching an ethic of care for what God has made. This thesis examines several churches who have been acting on environmental issues to understand what concern looks like in their faith communities. It was seen that the doctrine of stewardship is a primary reason for care, and there is a need for teaching on the theological basis of concern. Groups and activity within churches happen when there is a champion to move things forward, and environmental concern is just one part of a connected existence that links people with their faith, each other, and life outside the church.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

CCCB	Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
CEL	Christian Ecology Link
CRC	Christian Reformed Church
EEN	Evangelical Environmental Network
ELCIC	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
KJV	King James Version translation of the Bible
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
NIV	New International Version translation of the Bible
UCC	United Church of Canada

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*Peter Young*

*Ironbound Island, Nova Scotia*

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Climate change campaigners talk of the need for political leadership. That's code for asking the government to force us to take the decisions that we won't undertake voluntarily. But what happens if they won't? What happens if they're too wary of the voters? In a global age where religion's becoming more politicized, and politics is becoming more religious, surely this is a chance for the spiritual leaders of the nation to move into a vacuum. To take on a prophetic voice. (Dowd & Sorrentino, 2007)

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Christian churches are a common sight in both large and small communities throughout Nova Scotia, bringing together a variety of people based on a common belief in God. In 2001, 31% of Canadians attended religious services at least once a month (Clark, 2003), and approximately three quarters of Canadians identified themselves with some branch of Christianity (Statistics Canada, 2003). The membership of many large churches is diverse, consisting of people from various professions, income levels, backgrounds, and social statuses. Individual American churches are usually very homogeneous racially (Dougherty, 2003), which is likely true for Canada as well given the cultural similarities, but numerous races are present when viewing a denomination as a whole (Statistics Canada, 2001). Despite their internal diversity, churches form organized units that meet regularly and exist in communities of all sizes across North America. "In my community, there are 450 churches. That makes us the largest agency in town, if we work together" (Dowd, 2005). The potential influence of church communities mobilizing has been demonstrated by such events as the 2004 American election, when "Bush again secured the White House because of 'a super-mobilization of the Christian right'" (Ashbee, 2005). For people concerned about issues such as climate change and pollution, Church communities could be a powerful ally in the struggle for environmental change, but the relationship between organized Christianity and the environmental movement has sometimes been a rocky one.

Lynn White, in his 1967 paper “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”, blamed Christianity for the current ecological problems in the world. He stated: “[Christianity] not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends” (White, 1967). Many scholarly commentaries have been written on White’s thesis, falling somewhere between attributing outright guilt or utter innocence to religion (Proctor, 2005). One article stated: “White could be ‘correct’ even if his theology is faulty” (Eckberg & Blocker, 1996), meaning that even if White is wrong in his interpretation that the Bible is anthropocentric, his observations of what Christianity has promoted could be true.

Branches of organized Christianity, in return, have been wary of certain aspects of the Green Movement. Environmentalism has been associated with other religions, such as Paganism or the New Age Movement, raising concerns for some churches about deifying and worshipping the earth. Environmental concern also sometimes gets grouped together with other causes, such as the Gay Rights and Pro-Choice Movements, on which many conservative churches take a very different stance than social activists. These and other factors have contributed to many churches remaining silent on the environmental debate for a long time, but news stories and the literature indicate that this has begun to change.

There is a growing movement within Christianity to view environmental issues as moral issues with Biblical relevance. “As essential natural processes are disrupted and vital resources become scarce in many regions and as awareness among the dispossessed of the great economic inequities rises, the chances of ecological catastrophe, socio-economic breakdown, and violent conflict steadily increase. These are fundamental issues of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation that form the larger context in which the gospel must be interpreted and preached today” (Rockefeller, 2001). Recognition of problems and getting people to do something about them, however, are two different things. By studying churches where people are responding with action it is possible to gain a better understanding of the conditions and events that lead to change. This has the potential to then be used as a roadmap in other churches interested in becoming active.



## **1.2 STUDY OBJECTIVES**

The research that will be presented in the following chapters is a regional study of environmental concern among a group of churches in Nova Scotia. Several mainline Christian denominations are represented in both rural and urban environments. The criteria for study inclusion were fairly flexible, but during initial contact with the representatives of potential churches three main requirements were sought:

- The church was/is doing both teaching about the environment and making changes to how they operate to reduce their environmental footprint.
- The motivation for concern included theological reasons, and was not solely financially driven.
- There was some history to what was happening; it was not a brand new initiative.

The goal of the research is to discern how environmental concern has developed in Nova Scotia churches, focusing on when and how it started, what has happened up till now, and where things are headed. This data provides insights into the similarities and differences between what churches have experienced, what things are required for faith-based environmental concern in this region, and what common challenges exist. By using open ended questions and inductive techniques, other themes and insights also emerged from the data during analysis. It is hoped this information will be useful to churches that are starting to become more environmentally conscious and allow them to benefit from the experiences of others.

## **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND ANALYSIS**

As the study was being planned, several research questions helped shape what information was sought.

- What are the triggers and reasons for environmental concern in Nova Scotian churches, and is it being driven by the pastoral leadership or the congregants?

- What has their journey been like, and what types of activities are churches engaged in?
- What are the influences of location, the national denomination, and other churches on local environmental concern?
- What is their vision for the future, both for their church and for the greater Christian community in the province?

To address these questions, an investigative approach using some elements of Grounded Theory was utilized. Data was collected by visiting churches and conducting face to face interviews with the clergy and congregants involved in what was happening. The interview transcriptions were analyzed using open coding, which allowed for both the answering of initial questions and the emergence of new ideas. Themes such as the interconnectedness of faith and life, the unique contributions Christianity can make to the environmental movement, and the need for a champion to drive concern were uncovered and explored in the analysis stage.

#### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

The apparent lack of formal studies gauging environmental value progression of churches in a geographic area in Canada means this thesis has the potential to provide knowledge in a new area of research and give a basis for other research to build upon. As environmental concern in churches continues to grow, the study results will also be valuable to community and environmental groups looking to partner with churches on environmental causes by identifying the areas where church groups tend to be concerned and touchstones that can initiate interest. “The church has a crucial role to play in developing informed concern for earth community, reverential appreciation for biological as well as cultural diversity, and spirited passion for eco-justice” (Hessel, 1994).

## **1.5 THESIS OUTLINE**

Chapter 2 of this document will introduce some of the theory related to the thesis topic and a review of the associated literature. Chapter 3 will define and discuss the methods employed in collecting and analyzing the data from the participating churches. Chapter 4 will provide a summary of the information gathered, and Chapter 5 will discuss the themes and ideas raised. Finally, Chapter 6 will summarize the key findings of the research.

## **CHAPTER 2      BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

In order to find this Green gospel at the heart of Christianity we need to clear away centuries of anthropocentric thinking which has put man rather than God at the center of the universe and which has made the church in the Western world at least one of the prime aiders and abettors of the exploitation and pollution of the earth's resources. (Bradley, 1990)

During the development of the thesis study proposal, relevant literature was consulted to see what information existed concerning Christianity and environmental concern. However, since an exploratory approach using some elements of Grounded Theory (explained in Section 3.2) was being used, the initial research questions formed a starting point for data gathering rather than a hypothesis to be tested. It was difficult to predict in advance what results would be found, and more particularly what further ideas and themes would emerge and warrant discussion. As a result the literature review continued during the analysis stage as new topics developed, and it will be incorporated when relevant during the discussion in Chapter 5.

In this chapter, general background information and literature relevant to setting the foundation for the study will be reviewed.

### **2.1    LYNN WHITE AND THE CLASSICAL PERCEPTION**

Christian viewpoints on the environment, while relatively new in popular discourse, have existed for a long time. Saint Francis of Assisi wrote his Canticle of the Sun in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, showing a special reverence for what had been created by God and describing animals and elements of the natural world as his brothers and sisters (Galli, 2002; P. Robinson, 1909). There were also the Celtic Christians, who emerged from a pagan culture and saw the natural world as a way to feel closer to God. "In Celtic spirituality, certain locations were called 'thin places', where the division between heaven and earth

was said to be at its narrowest” (Rejesus, 2006). Some scholars feel the modern interest in Celtic Christianity overemphasizes their environmental concern (Olsen, 2003), but other early Christian figures also saw connections between God and nature (see Section 2.3.3). More recently, theologian Joseph Sittler was speaking about the need for environmental concern as early as the 1950s (Sittler, Bouma-Prediger, & Bakken, 2000). However, when considering the modern debate on Christianity’s view of the environment, many people would first think of Lynn White Jr..

In 1967, White published his paper “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”, and blamed Christianity for the current ecological problems in the world. He stated: “Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends” (White, 1967). White formed this interpretation of Christianity from the Biblical Creation story in which humans were given dominion over nature (Genesis 1:26). The same story though includes a call for humans to be stewards of a world that belongs to God (Genesis 2:15), and White’s assertions have been challenged by many authors. However, others acknowledge a level of truth to his arguments. “The western churches, particularly since the Reformation, have been almost totally anthropocentric in their teaching and have had virtually no regard for the non-human elements in God’s creation” (Bradley, 1990). Even if White was wrong in his interpretation that the Bible is anthropocentric, his observations of what Christianity has promoted could still be true (Eckberg & Blocker, 1996).

Shakespeare wrote: “The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose” (Shakespeare, NA). Arguments can be made from the Bible to both support and downplay concern for the environment, and there are several common viewpoints on each side.

## 2.2 COMMON BLOCKS TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN FOR CHRISTIANS

In the past, Christian churches have not been a large presence in the environmental movement, and this has to do with more than mere disinterest. There are several common reasons why many churches have not been involved in, and have even been wary of, environmentalism.

### 2.2.1 Importance of the Spiritual over the Physical

Western Christianity has been influenced by Greek thought, which saw a division between the physical and the spiritual. Greco-Roman philosophical schools, such as hermeticism and Gnosticism, declared a dualism which regarded the spirit as good while matter became associated with corruption and evil (Kirk & Kirk, 1993; Michaud, 2003). Added to this is the fact that a person's time on earth is temporary, while a person's soul is eternal. Christians who see salvation as an "other world" reality of far greater importance than life on earth will not easily be challenged by their faith to act on issues like the environment. Thus, greater value and emphasis is placed on spiritual matters than physical ones (Bouma-Prediger, 2001; Tomek, 2006), sometimes to the neglect of the latter.

### 2.2.2 Association with Other Religions

"One cannot sustain that which one does not revere" (Porritt, 1990). In the realm of environmental concern, some religions have been quicker to respond than others. Belief systems such as Paganism, native spiritualities, and the New Age movement place a high value on the earth, and have become associated with environmental concern. Some Christian churches in return became concerned about the influences on people who might get involved in environmental groups, or their reasons for joining. "Since the New Age movement has made much of the ecological movement, some church folks are ready to claim that anybody who is concerned about the environment must be into New Age thinking. Anyone who happens to espouse a cause that is already on the agenda of a deviant religious movement, no matter how biblically based that cause might be, is often

declared a heretic” (Campolo, 1992). The founder of the Christian environmental group Restoring Eden summed it up simply: the church is so afraid of worshipping nature that they have forgotten it is okay to love it (Illyn, 2001).

### 2.2.3 Association with Other Causes

Environmentalism is typically viewed as a politically left wing concern, and can suffer in some Christian circles by being associated with other social causes (such as abortion) that are contrary to the doctrine of many conservative churches. “The case against abortion is based on the moral imperative of the equal right to life of all human beings. But if humans are weighed against animals and found wanting, where does that leave such a right [...] Although Green parties in different countries do not espouse exactly the same policies, they appear to be united in one important respect: their support for abortion” (Whelan, Kirwan, & Haffner, 1996). If environmentalism is seen as part of the same agenda as gay rights and the pro-choice side of the abortion debate, some churches will view it with wariness.

### 2.2.4 Right to Prosperity and Dominion

The first chapter of Genesis describes God’s creation of the universe. The final living creatures made were humans, to whom God said: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Genesis 1:28, NIV). Other passages in the Bible speak of God blessing His people, such as: ““For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV). Between these passages and others (e.g. Deuteronomy 28:1-13, Proverbs 13:21), the world can be viewed as being here primarily for the use, growth, and prosperity of humans. And in Western thinking, prosperity can be tied to notions of comfort and financial gain, which often come at an environmental price.

The tribal, pre-scientific culture of the peoples in the Old Testament did not pose a serious threat to the continued fruitfulness of the natural world. “In the inhospitable plains, barren deserts and desolate steppes of the Middle East, the early settlers had to channel all their efforts and energies into dominating, controlling, and taming the natural world. This was essential so that the natural world might be productive and support the emerging civilizations” (Tomek, 2006). To an expanding scientific culture though, the results of domination can be much more devastating.

#### 2.2.5 Being Fruitful

As stated in the previous section, God commanded people in the first chapter of Genesis to be fruitful and multiply. However, excessive population growth can result in environmental problems as the demands for resources exceed the land’s ability to produce them sustainably, and wastes are produced faster than they can be absorbed. This makes population growth an environmental issue, but churches usually place the highest value on human life. Most evangelicals do not view all of creation as being of equal importance (Jones, 2005), and the Catholic Church does not condone birth control (Paul VI, 1968). This conflict may be a reason why some churches have been slow to address environmental concerns (Tomek, 2006). Not all Christians see a larger population as a problem, either. Calvin Beisner, a theology and social ethics professor at Florida's Knox Theological Seminary, stated: “Many people approach the whole issue of population under the assumption that man is fundamentally a polluter and a consumer, whereas I would say that man is fundamentally a producer and a redeemer, a reconstructor of things [...] you can say that ‘the more of them there are, the greater good they can do’” (Jones, 2005).

#### 2.2.6 God Will Not Allow the Worst to Happen

After the flood in Genesis, God made a covenant to never destroy the earth by flooding again (Genesis 9:15). This raises the question of whether God would allow climate change to destroy the earth (Mark, 2009), and some Christians feel the worst assessments of environmentalists can not happen because God would prevent them (Fang, 2009;



Shimkus, 2009). “[The] Christian view sees the creation as held in place by God and, to a very large extent, does not consider humanity to have the capacity to ‘destroy the earth’. Consequently the degree of fear that a Christian can have for ‘the future of the planet’ can never match that of a Green. This applies especially, it seems to me, with regard to questions of global warming” (Norton, 2008). This in turn can result in less concern about the severity of environmental issues, since God will not allow things to come to an end before the chosen time.

### 2.2.7 End Times and a New Earth

The book of Revelation at the end of the Bible deals in large part with prophecies about the return of Jesus and the things that will happen before and after it occurs. In chapter 21 it is written:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” (Revelation 21:1-5, NIV)

The idea that the present world will be burned up and replaced with a new one when Christ comes has led some Christians to have less concern for the state of the earth (Bouma-Prediger, 2001; Robinson & Chatraw, 2006; Srokosz, 2008). Like an old car, if it’s about to go to the junk yard, why be too concerned if it gets a few extra dents and scratches? Some can even take this further, believing that the sooner it wears out, the sooner it will be replaced. “This kind of theology can get people to throw caution to the wind and act irresponsibly. It becomes too easy for them to say to themselves, ‘What difference does it make if I’m not careful about preserving the environment? No matter

what I do, the world will just get worse and worse until He returns, so I might as well enjoy what God has put here on earth for me to enjoy and not worry about the social consequences.’ [...] [Some preachers] can even point to a coming ecological holocaust as a kind of ‘good news.’ They see it as a ‘sign’ that the second coming of Christ is at hand” (Campolo, 1992). This sort of theology does not encourage environmental concern.

## **2.3 COMMON REASONS FOR CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN**

Just as there are reasons why some Christian churches have been wary of environmentalism in the past, there are several common reasons why churches are now seeing environmental concern as relevant to their faith communities and something they should be engaged in.

### **2.3.1 Stewardship**

In the second chapter of Genesis, it states: “Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed [...] the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Genesis 2:8,15, NIV). The word “work” in this passage comes from the Hebrew word *abad*, which can also be translated as “serve”. The Hebrew word for “take care of” is *shamar*, and it indicates a loving, caring, sustaining type of keeping (C. B. DeWitt et al., 1998; Schultz, Zelezny, & Dalrymple, 2000). From these expanded definitions come the Christian view of stewardship over the earth, countering (or contextualizing) the dominion given in the first chapter of Genesis. “Environmental stewardship is the idea that we should care for, manage, and nurture what we have been given” (Robinson & Chatraw, 2006). “It would be absurd, however, to imagine that he who created the Earth then handed it over to us to be destroyed. No, the dominion God has given us is a responsible stewardship, not a destructive dominion” (Stott, 2000). Nowhere in the Bible does it say to overpopulate the earth, pollute the water, and hunt to extinction the animals in the land, sea, and sky. Being a gift, the world has value, and the gift of dominion over nature was not a license to selfishly use or abuse everything that had been made. The world belongs to God

(Deuteronomy 10:14, Psalm 24:1, 1 Corinthians 10:26) and people are both its managers and caretakers, accountable for all the ways in which they do or do not cultivate the natural world about them (Cajes, 2001; Kaiser, Davids, & Bruce, 1996).

### 2.3.2 Sharing God's Concerns

Christians believe humans are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27), and that they are to worship God and follow His example (e.g. Exodus 20:3-6, John 12:26, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Ephesians 5:1). In the Bible, there is evidence for God's concern about everything that was created on earth, not just people.

After the Biblical story of the flood in Genesis, God makes a promise to never destroy the earth by flooding again. He creates a covenant not just with Noah and his offspring, but with "every living creature on earth" (Genesis 9:9-10, NIV). The inclusion of non-human creatures indicates they are of moral concern to God, and other Bible passages support this idea (e.g. Psalm 104, Psalm 145:9, Matthew 6:26). Even John 3:16, one of the most quoted passages in the Bible, reflects this. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV). "In the original Greek, the word for world is the Greek word *cosmos*. And as any lexicon makes quite clear, the Greek word *cosmos* refers to anything and everything that is in the universe, including the animals, flowers, insects, and fish – God loves them all" (Campolo, 1992). If God cares for the whole earth, then there is reason for Christian churches to care about the whole earth as well.

### 2.3.3 Another Way to Know God

As a work of God, the natural world is an expression of God's creativity, and may be used not only to reveal His existence but also learn more about Him. Paul the apostle wrote: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20, NIV). Saint Augustine, one of the early Church Fathers, followed up on this theme and said, "some people, in order to discover

God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Note it. Read it. God whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead He set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?" (Opening the Book of Nature, 2006) St. Irenaeus of Lyons wrote: "For creation reveals Him who formed it, and the very work made suggests Him who made it, and the world manifests Him who ordered it" (Opening the Book of Nature, 2006). St. Clement of Alexandria wrote in the third century A.D., "the initial step for a soul to come to knowledge of God is contemplation of nature," and Martin Luther said, "God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars" (Rhodes, 2006). The signature of God in creation is seen as a revelation of both His existence and His nature. The Bible is sometimes referred to as the Book of God's Word and nature as the Book of God's works (Murphy, 2006; Robinson & Chatraw, 2006). "Understanding God solely through creation or solely through the Bible would be like reading a richly illustrated text by looking only at the pictures or only at the words. Either reading would be lacking something, great beauty or essential details" (Johnson, 2002).

Many references to the natural world exist in the Old Testament and New Testament, and approximately eight percent of the Bible relates to environmental principles (Johnson, 2000). Jesus used nature in His teaching; parables about seeds, crops, soil, and trees abound, relating deep spiritual truths and revealing elements of God's character (Robinson & Chatraw, 2006). To those who are familiar with this nature imagery, it can prompt Biblical contemplation when in a natural environment. Stories exist about Saint Francis seeing in elements of the natural world, such as flowers and sheep, reminders of Biblical stories and truths (Galli, 2002). Some people also feel closer to God in nature, echoing the Celtic Christian notion of thin places, which were locations where the division between heaven and earth seemed smaller (Rejesus, 2006).

If the natural world is a way for Christians to learn more about God, a means through which God reveals Himself, and an avenue for people to feel closer to Him, then it makes sense this would be a reason for preserving nature. It is also a reason that does not have a

secular equivalent. “Why wouldn’t the church be leading the charge in keeping a portrait of God’s beauty as close to pristine as possible?” (Robinson & Chatraw, 2006)

#### 2.3.4 Living Simply

Two aspects of Western society that have had a strong influence on its culture are Christianity and capitalism, and the two have become intermingled. However, the Bible contains teachings that conflict with capitalism. The New Testament warns against building up treasure on earth instead of in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21), that you can not serve both God and money (Luke 6:13), and to guard against greed because life does not consist of how much a person possesses (Luke 12:15). Contentment is to be found elsewhere. “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction” (1 Timothy 6:6-10, NIV). Patriarch Bartholomew of the Orthodox communions expressed a similar viewpoint when discussing *enkrateia*, or self control (Rasmussen, 2003), and a recent Christian campaign stated “real wealth is the ability to provide and not to consume” (CBM, 2009).

Christians who respond to the Biblical call for a less materialistic lifestyle will have a lifestyle which is less damaging to the natural environment. “On a finite planet, frugality is an expression of love and an instrument for justice and sustainability: it enables all life to thrive together by sparing and sharing global goods” (Astudillo, 2005). “All the things we use, all the things we make, everything we manipulate, everything we accumulate, derives from the creation itself. If we learn to seek godly contentment as our great gain, we will take and shape less of God’s earth. We will demand less from the land. We will leave room for the other creatures” (C. B. DeWitt, 2009). Those “other creatures” can also include people in other parts of the world who are negatively impacted by the materialism of Western nations.

### 2.3.5 Social Justice

In Proverbs it states: “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:8-9, NIV). The term “liberation theology” came into use after the Catholic Church’s Second Vatican Council in 1962-1965, and proposed that social conflicts and class struggles should not be ignored by the church. “Most revolutionary was the idea of liberation theologians that the Kingdom of God could be established here on earth by trying to accomplish social justice and fighting poverty”(Gooren, 2002). Environmental concern has been viewed as a related issue since a destroyed environment often leads to injustice. The 1987 United Nations report “Our Common Future” recognized that poverty is an important cause and effect of environmental problems (Kirk & Kirk, 1993), and this fact is stated as well in the 1994 Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation (EEN, 2008). “Most people in the Western world still enjoy unprecedented affluence. At the same time over a billion people are hungry. [...] Unless we make significant changes in the way we relate to the environment and in our patterns of consumption, we will witness increasing levels of desperation and violence caused by the uneven distribution of food, water, and wealth” (CBM, 2009). The Covenant Law in the Old Testament fosters an ethic of environmental concern combined with social justice that calls Christians to attend to both ecological integrity and social equity together (Hessel, 1994). Thus an existing concern for social justice in a church can lead to a concern for the environment.

### 2.3.6 Financial Benefits

In some situations, being environmentally concerned can bring financial savings. Renovations and improvements that increase energy and heating efficiency require an initial investment, but reduce long term operating costs in homes and buildings. Behavioural changes, such as driving less, turning off unnecessary lights, and setting thermostats to a lower temperature in winter, bring immediate savings. The double bonus of reduced environmental impact and saving money is an incentive shared by both

Christian and secular society, and it is a very real influence for churches dealing with shrinking congregations and increasing operating costs.

### 2.3.7 Relevance to Modern Concerns

Christianity does not exist in a bubble, and adherents are also members of society. As concerns over global warming and environmental problems have grown in recent years, especially among younger generations, churches are increasingly seeing it as necessary to address environmental issues if they wish to remain relevant in the lives of people. “For many youth in industrialized, urbanized countries, religions and Christian denominations no longer speak with a voice they wish to hear, or a voice that is believable. If they have concerns about the environment, human rights, personal relationships and sexuality, there are organizations in society, unaffiliated with religion, that seem to have a more authoritative and legitimate voice. [...] Even when they recognize the contribution of church-related organizations to social causes, their perception is that these groups are not typical” (Crawford & Rossiter, 1993). If churches fail to address this disconnect, it will widen.

## 2.4 STUDIES ON CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN IN A REGION

It is not difficult to find articles and academic papers exploring the relationship between Christianity and environmental issues. Much of the literature seems to focus on philosophical debates, general trends between measures of religious belief and environmental concern, current developments at the national denominational level, reasons why churches are wary of environmentalists, and the Biblical reasons why they should be concerned. Some researchers show a negative relationship between religiosity and environmental concern, while others indicate little connection, and still others contend religion can have a pro-environmental effect (Sherkat & Ellison, 2007). The ethical, theological, and sociological dimensions have been widely explored, as shown by the fact that the Google Scholar database lists over 1000 citations of Lynn White’s classic article (Google Scholar, 2010). Even examples of what Christians are doing in various

areas or through national associations are available (e.g. Choo, 2006; Johnson, 1998; Motavalli, 2002; RNS, 2007). However, studies of what actual churches are doing in a geographically small area, and why, do not form a significant portion of the literature.

“While most religious research focuses on denominations and individual ideology and activity, the congregation is the locus of religious activity for American Christianity (White 1968). The congregation, not the denomination, is the social context of the Christian religion in the United States” (Schwadel, 2005). Given the cultural similarities, it is quite probable the same is true for Canada. Congregations in turn will be influenced by local concerns and the local culture, and in a small geographic region it might be expected these factors will affect local congregations across denominational lines.

The literature review revealed different examples of Christian groups in regional areas working to incorporate stewardship into their faith communities. Several of these cases are described below.

Along the Hudson River in the United States, orders of nuns and priests have grouped together in an organization called ROAR (Religious Organizations Along the Hudson River) to consider what stewardship of their lands means, and how to preserve it for the future. Other nuns on the Atlantic Coast are part of ROW (Religious on Water), and have used prayer, education, and advocacy to broaden understanding of water as sacred and life-giving, and to try and halt dumping in an area of the ocean called the New York-New Jersey Bight (Lefevere, 2003).

Christian Ecology Link (CEL) has developed a campaign called Project Noah, which aims to invoke action at the personal, national, and international level. The campaign was initially endorsed by member churches and organizations, and later expanded to several other denominations. Individual participants are asked to sign a covenant to make personal alternations, such as switching to a green electricity provider if possible, to undertake as consumers a freely chosen lifestyle change that backs up the demands for action they make as citizens of their government. The campaign aims to draw people into



covenant with their neighbours, and with those at risk from climate change (the poor, future generations, and endangered species), to motivate transformation and work to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions sufficiently to prevent dangerous climate change (Bodenham, 2005).

Churches in the UK are using a toolkit called Eco-Congregation to integrate environmental practices into their church communities (Pickering, 2004). The program helps churches first identify what they have done, what they are willing to do, and what is not a priority. Resources are then available in modules based on areas of church life (e.g. worship, theology, youth work, adult education, church management, local community) rather than environmental topics (like water or energy). This allows a church to request materials specific to the priorities they identify, and gives the people in charge of those ministries relevant resources they can integrate into their existing programs. The use of targeted modules rather than general packages reduces waste and helps avoid churches being overwhelmed with information that is not useful (Pickering, 2004).

An award scheme is a further part of Eco-Congregation. Developed to help churches work towards their targets, the award provides independent assessment and recognition of achievements. The four key criteria are a review of current and future environmental initiatives, spiritual initiatives linking environmental issues with the Christian faith, practical initiatives that demonstrate the church practices what it preaches, and community ventures such as projects with schools or links with environmental bodies (Pickering, 2004). A review of churches that have received the Eco-Congregation award show they are not all the same. They exist in urban and rural areas, vary in size from under 40 members to over 200, and come from different denominations covering both liberal and conservative traditions (Pickering, 2004). However, they do have similarities, some of which reflect the award goals.

[The] churches have in common the presence of ‘an initiator’, someone who raised the profile of environmental issues and without necessarily doing the work, co-ordinated activities. They all rooted their environmental ministry in worship, helping the congregation to identify their creation care ventures as a core part of

church mission and personal discipleship rather than one-off ventures of good citizenship. All the churches have sought to put into practice what they preach in some way and have worked with, or through, their local community. Each Church reports that whilst the issues have been challenging, they have been embraced and enjoyed by their fellowship, become an integral part of church life, and those in the community regard the church with a fresh relevance. (Pickering, 2004)

Examples of activities engaged in included operational changes and building retrofits. One church, when unable to get the grant required to afford adding photovoltaic tiles to their roof, proceeded with a heating system upgrade rather than give up and do nothing. Another church worked to manage part of their graveyard as a conservation habitat. Recycling within church buildings ranged from common items like paper and glass, to stamps and ink jet cartridges, while one parish accepted spare fruit, produce and glass jars for a preserve and jam making venture. Teaching about environmental concern ranged from environmental themes in a kids club to a Lenten sermon series on creation theology. A rural parish integrated creation care perspectives into their traditional Harvest Festival and Rogation Sunday<sup>1</sup> services. Community involvement included an annual litter pick up, putting green tips in the parish magazine that was distributed to the community, encouraging a home energy self-audit, and lobbying a local council for curbside recycling pickup (Pickering, 2004).

Many of the studies found during the literature review focus on research done in the United States and abroad. Examples of formal research on initiatives in Canada, and especially Nova Scotia, are sparse. Further, a general trend seems to be there have been studies on the effect of religion on environmental attitudes, but little on the effect on actual environmental behaviour, and it shouldn't be assumed they are the same (Black, 1997).

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<sup>1</sup> For information about Rogation Sunday, see Section 5.1.3.

## **2.5 EXAMPLES OF CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN IN CANADA**

An article in 1999 stated that liberal Christians had been involved in the secular environmental movement for decades, but only some recent evidence indicated concern by conservative evangelicals. In Canada this was most developed on the West Coast, with “scant evidence of it” in the rest of the country (O’Leary, 1999). A CBC radio show in 2007 though reported the greening of religion is well under way in Canada (Philpot, 2007).

In British Columbia and the American Northwest, Catholic bishops conducted a three year study of the Columbia River and its watershed in the late 1990s. They visited sites along the river and listened to people who depend on it (Johnson, 1998), and at the end, they wrote a pastoral letter on the area’s condition (Columbia River Pastoral Letter Project, 2000). Further east in Ontario, a Roman Catholic church has been constructed to meet the LEEDs sustainable building certification criteria. The structure includes a solar wall to heat and cool the building, a perennial garden irrigated by rain water on top of the underground parking, and a living wall of foliage to help improve the interior air quality (Alternatives Journal, 2005; SooToday.com, 2006).

On December 13, 2009 churches across Canada responded to a call from Kairos (a national ecumenical organization with a social justice and environmental focus) to ring their bells for a climate change agreement. Over 300 churches of all denominations took part in the global action timed to coincide with the ecumenical service of the World Council of Churches in Copenhagen (Stratton, 2009; United Church, 2009). Earlier in the year on October 24, the International Day of Climate Action gathering in Halifax, Nova Scotia was organized by a coalition that included Kairos, the Maritime Conference of the United Church of Canada, and the Lutheran Justice Group (CREST, 2009). The national websites for different Christian denominations reveal other activities taking place in Canada, and these will be touched on in Section 2.7.

## 2.6 MAKE-UP OF NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia is Canada's second smallest province geographically, with a land area of 52,917 km<sup>2</sup>. The population in 2006 was 913,462, with most of the population living in rural areas; only 7 communities were listed as having a population over 10 000 people (Statistics Canada, 2008a; Statistics Canada, 2008b). While a mix of nationalities is present in the province, most residents are of European descent (Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2007).

**Figure 1**      **Map of Nova Scotia**



Religious affiliation in Nova Scotia is available from Census Canada, but it does not appear among the released data sets for the 2006 census (Statistics Canada, 2009a). The most recent available data is from the census in 2001. Table 1 shows the Christian denominations in Nova Scotia at that time affiliated with more than 1% of the population, and how the numbers compare with 1991 (Statistics Canada, 2007).

**Table 1: Denominations Affiliated with over 1% of the N.S. Population**

Denomination	% of Nova Scotia Population		
	1991	2001	Change
Roman Catholic	37.2 %	36.5 %	-0.7%
United	17.2 %	15.9 %	-1.3%
Anglican	14.4 %	13.4 %	-1.0%
Baptist	11.1 %	10.6 %	-0.5%
Presbyterian	3.5 %	2.5 %	-1.0%
Lutheran	1.3 %	1.2 %	-0.1%
Pentecostal	1.2 %	1.0 %	-0.2%

## 2.7 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF DENOMINATIONS PARTICIPATING

Seven churches were interviewed during the course of the research from six different denominations. The denominations included are shown in Table 2, along with the percentage of Nova Scotians belonging to each and the location where interviews took place.

**Table 2: Christian Denominations Participating in Study**

Denomination	Number of Churches Participating	Geographic Location	Nova Scotians in Denomination (2001)
Roman Catholic	2	Halifax	36.5 %
United	1	Cape Breton	15.9 %
Anglican	1	Valley	13.4 %
Evangelical Lutheran <sup>1</sup>	1	Halifax	1.2 %
Christian Reformed	1	Halifax	0.1 %
Mennonite Brethren	1	Halifax	0.1 %

<sup>1</sup> The Statistics Canada religious affiliation information for Nova Scotia listed Lutheran only once. The value given is thus an aggregate of all Lutheran-identified denominations, and not just Evangelical Lutheran alone.

According to the 2001 census data, approximately two thirds of the Nova Scotia population associate themselves with the denominations represented in this study (Statistics Canada, 2007). These denominations are found throughout Canada, and all have taken stances regarding the environment. The remainder of this section provides a brief overview of the statements made and resources provided by the national organizations to their members, based primarily on their websites.

### 2.7.1 The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in Canada is difficult to separate from the world wide Catholic Church, which acknowledges the leadership of the Pope in Rome and is influenced by his teachings. “Official Catholic teaching about environmental stewardship began during Pope John Paul II’s 1979 trip to the Americas [...] and continued in the 1980s through a series of encyclicals and messages, such as ‘Sollicitudo rei socialis,’ that stressed responsibilities to future generations, the need for redistribution of wealth, and the environmental responsibilities of human dominion” (Bakken, Engel, & Engel, 1995). In 1990, John Paul II said that Christian responsibility toward nature is an essential part of faith (Motavalli, 2002), and in 2001 he stated: “Humanity has disappointed God's expectations. ... Man is no longer the Creator's ‘steward,’ but an autonomous despot who is finally beginning to understand that he must stop at the edge of the abyss” (Guntzel, 2005). The current Pope, Benedict XVI, was elected in 2004 and has been dubbed “the green pope” for his interest in environmental issues (Publishers Weekly, 2009). In his encyclical “Caritas in Veritate” published in July 2009, he stated the environment is a gift to all, and responsibility to the poor and future generations must be remembered. In 2009 it was announced that environmental concern would be a key part of his message for World Peace Day in 2010 (Wooden, 2009), and the Vatican has become the first sovereign state to go carbon neutral, planting trees in a Hungarian national park to offset its emissions (Cones, 2007).

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) has made several statements about the environment. In 2003, they released a pastoral letter stating: “To enter into

ever-deeper relationship with God – this ‘Lover of Life’ – entails striving to develop right relations with nature and with other human beings [...] the ecological crisis is also a profoundly religious crisis. In destroying creation we are limiting our ability to know and love God” (CCCB, 2003). The letter touched on theology, environmental problems, statements by Pope John Paul II, and issues around fresh water, finally ending with suggestions of ways for people to respond. Another pastoral letter was published in 2008 as part of the United Nations’ International Year of Planet Earth (CCCB, 2008a). The letter revisits the Biblical and Papal calls for people to be responsible, touches on current environmental problems, and raises Canada’s failure to live up to its commitments. “It appears to be more difficult to respect the laws of nature than to transport humans to the moon and back! [...] Our leaders have made commitments in Rio (1992), Kyoto (1997), Johannesburg (2002), and more recently in Bali (2007). But they have great difficulty in moving from words to action” (CCCB, 2008b). The bishops call for people to meet the moral crisis with a conversion “aimed at the ruptures we have created with nature, with our neighbour and with God” (CCCB, 2008b), and to respond in ways such as rejecting the obsession to possess and consume, adjusting lifestyles to the limits of available planetary resources, and remembering the needs of others and future generations.

### 2.7.2 The United Church

The United Church of Canada (UCC) became noted in the area of environmental concern when they called on their members to stop buying bottled water in 2006 (Biggs, 2006; CBC, 2006). “Living in right relationship with creation” was chosen as their mission theme for the year, and the church’s Mandate magazine May 2006 issue focused on the topic (UCC, 2008). “The United Church of Canada has a long history of working to protect the integrity of creation. Concerns were first expressed at General Councils as early as 1968, with the first policy position adopted in 1977” (UCC, 2009f).

The UCC website (<http://www.united-church.ca>) contains a prominent “Social Justice” link on its main page, which leads to a page with sub-topics, Ecology being one of them. The Ecology section addresses climate change, energy use, genetic engineering,

sustainable communities, and water (UCC, 2009f). Each topic has its own page, listing such things as resources, information, ways to take action, links to other UCC pages and pertinent external websites, and information about the UCC's position. The water section includes a link to the Water in Focus campaign, which calls congregations to advocacy and provides resources for learning, worship, and action (UCC, 2009a). The Sustainable Communities section contains a link to the Green Church Project, an initiative of the United Church in Montreal, which contains resources and "aims to empower congregations and ministry sites in adopting environmentally aware practices in their community operations as well as sharing a Christian spirituality closer to nature" (Green Church Project, 2010).

The United Church has adopted different policies related to environmental issues. In 1990, the 33<sup>rd</sup> General Council endorsed a policy on sustainable agriculture, and the 34<sup>th</sup> General Council in 1992 adopted the policy statement "One Earth Community" which affirmed 12 key ethical principles (UCC, 2009c). At the 37<sup>th</sup> General Council in 2000, energy policy providing "an integral view of energy in its ecological and social context" was adopted (UCC, 2009b). At the 38<sup>th</sup> General Council, the UCC formally endorsed the Earth Charter, a declaration of fundamental ethical principles for building a just global society in the 21st century, and recommended its study in United Church Congregations (UCC, 2009d; Earth Charter Initiative, 2010). The 39<sup>th</sup> Council in 2006 saw several policy decisions about water being made, including calling congregations to advocacy and asking the Canadian government to oppose water privatization (UCC, 2009e). As well, a policy concerning genetically modified food and the patenting of life has recently been developed (UCC, 2009c).

### 2.7.3 The Anglican Church

The Anglican Church of Canada website (<http://www.anglican.ca>) contains a link on its main page to a "Mission and Justice" section, which has different items concerning the environment. Resources include an Earth Day liturgy, a "350 Campaign Parish Kit" that was prepared prior to the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in



Copenhagen (Hales, 2009), links to Kairos, and guides to help parishes think about changes they can make (Anglican Church of Canada Partnerships, 2007; Davies, 2002). There is also a separate website called Greening Spirit, “Where Anglicans are pledging to reduce their impact on the Earth” (Greening Spirit, 2009), which has news, resources, and pledges for households, congregations, and diocesans to make changes to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The Anglican Church has an Ecology and Economy working group, which “studies environmental and economic issues and looks at ways that the church can respond in faith. We give priority to issues that are a concern for Canadian Anglicans and our partners or that have broad ecumenical support” (Anglican Church of Canada, 2008b). There is also a Partners in Mission & Ecojustice Committee, which includes in its mandate to “receive, prioritize, and respond to social, environmental and ethical issues within Canada and globally” (Anglican Church of Canada, 2008c). A sub-group formed in 2007, the Task Group to Reduce Carbon Emissions, has been “exploring ways to support Anglican churches to reduce their carbon footprints” (Anglican Church of Canada, 2008a).

At the 2007 General Synod, a motion was passed to “call upon all Anglican churches in every diocese and all Anglicans to set targets for reducing green house gas emissions by curtailing their energy consumption” (Anglican Church of Canada, 2007). The motion also called for identifying, developing, and promoting educational resources “to raise awareness in Anglican dioceses and parishes about the issue of climate change as a spiritual issue,” and “to help them set and achieve lower green house gas emission targets” (Anglican Church of Canada, 2007).

#### 2.7.4 The Evangelical Lutheran Church

Statistics Canada lists Lutheran only once in their table of religious groups in Nova Scotia (Statistics Canada, 2007), but more than one Lutheran denomination exists. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) is the branch included in this study.

Their website (<http://www.elcic.ca>) contains a Stewardship of Creation section, which focuses on an initiative started in 2007 to “reduce the negative impact the ELCIC, at all levels, has on the environment” (ELCIC, 2007c). The initiative includes a Stewardship of Creation accreditation program for congregations who appoint an Environmental Steward or Environmental Stewardship committee and undertake concrete environmental initiatives in at least five areas of operation (ELCIC, 2007b). The site provides environmental information, ideas, and resources for both individuals and congregations, covering physical (e.g. purchasing, transportation, energy use) and spiritual topics (ELCIC, 2007a). It also provides a list of external books, movies, websites, and resources (ELCIC, 2007d).

Other Canadian Lutheran websites were also examined. Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) is a relief and development agency formed in 1946 in response to the humanitarian crisis in post-war Europe (CLWR, 2010a). Their website is not focused on environmental issues, but it did have a few resources relating to sustainability, and a link to information about the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (CLWR, 2010b). The Lutheran Church of Canada website (<http://www.lutheranchurch.ca>) does not reveal much with regards to environmental concern. There were a few resources related to energy efficiency (Lutheran Church-Canada, 2010b), but in the History and Beliefs section, all that was stated concerning the environment was: “Energy stewardship is essential for churches and schools,” “Stewardship of the environment includes the proper use of all the earth's resources. This is essential for congregations and all people,” and links to Genesis 1:26 and Genesis 2:15 (Lutheran Church-Canada, 2010a).

#### 2.7.5 The Christian Reformed Church (CRC)

The Christian Reformed Church in North America website (<http://www.crcna.org>) has “Social Justice” as one of many topics under the “Our Ministries” link on their main page, which includes Simple Living and Creation Care sections. The Creation Care page includes resources for churches and individuals, suggestions on how to take action regarding the recent United Nations climate talks in Copenhagen, as well as information

on an annual Green Congregation Grant competition that rewards two congregations that demonstrate “effective and replicable ‘greening’ through education, lifestyle, and theological initiatives” (CRC, 2010c; CRC, 2010d). The CRC Office of Social Justice also started publishing a magazine called Justice Seekers in the spring on 2009, and its premiere issue was on Creation Care (CRC, 2010e).

According to their website, the Christian Reformed Church has made both denomination-specific statements and statements in coalition with other evangelicals concerning the environment. In 2004 they were one of the signatories on the Evangelical Declaration on Creation Care (CRC, 2010b), which urged Christians (individually and corporately) to work for creation’s care and renewal (EEN, 2008). In 2006 the Executive Director of the CRC in North America signed the statement “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action”, put out by the Evangelical Climate Initiative, which declared that human-induced climate change is real and called on the U.S. government to limit CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In 2009, the CRC Office of Social Justice signed the Micah Network Declaration with other churches and agencies, calling on world leaders to address climate change and environmental degradation (CRC, 2010a).

#### 2.7.6 The Mennonite Brethren Church

The website for the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (<http://www.mbconf.ca>) does not contain much information relating to environmental concern. Unlike some other denominational websites, there were no obvious links to an environmental section found on the front page, and searching for “stewardship” brought up pages primarily concerned with financial issues. Searching for “environment” provided a bit more information, though results were more stories of individuals than denominational initiatives (Rempel-Burkholder, 2009).

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is the relief, development, and peace branch of the church. Visiting their website (<http://mcc.org>) provides more insight. “Caring for God's creation is not a new idea for Mennonite Central Committee [...] MCC has been

working for decades to answer God's call to serve as stewards of creation and to meet the needs of our global neighbors” (MCC, 2010a). The main Creation Care page contained links to various resources that could be purchased and stories about what MCC has done in different parts of the world (MCC, 2010b). Searching for “environment” provided links to different resources and sites, including ones in Canada. The general Canadian Creation Care page contained books and DVDs that could be purchased, links to videos, and information about climate change and the 2009 Copenhagen meetings (MCC, 2009b). The Ontario MCC page contained a Creation Care section (MCC, 2009a) with newsletters, information about a 2009 program promoting solar energy, and a DVD study series that had been “designed as a 4-week adult Sunday School, small group, or Bible study group course. The goal is to encourage and inspire the Church to take greater care of God’s creation” (MCC, 2009c). Interestingly, every province in Canada had its own section on the MCC website, except for the four Atlantic Provinces.

## CHAPTER 3      METHODS

Like the prodigal son, we need to repent, reorganize our priorities, and return in humility to caring for the whole household. (Lowe, 2009)

### 3.1    STUDY OBJECTIVES

The growing awareness and concern in society over environmental issues has been appearing in some churches as well. As shown in Section 2.3, the literature indicates different triggers that can initiate positive environmental attitudes among Christians. By speaking with churches in Nova Scotia that had progressed beyond talking about environmental concern to taking action, this study proposed to determine what factors contributed to their environmental consciousness, what was being done, and what they envisioned for the future.

The scope of the research was refined through discussions with the thesis supervising committee. The initial research proposal, which involved a large scale survey of churches in Nova Scotia followed by a limited number of follow-up interviews, was determined to be too ambitious for a master's level degree. The scope was narrowed to concentrate on churches that had already incorporated environmental concern and action into their faith communities, and as stated in Chapter 1, several questions drove the initial research focus.

- What are the triggers and reasons for environmental concern in Nova Scotian churches, and is it being driven by the pastoral leadership or the congregants?
- What has their journey been like, and what types of activities are churches engaged in?
- What are the influences of location, the national denomination, and other churches on local environmental concern?
- What is their vision for the future, both for their church and for the greater Christian community in the province?

Rather than formulating a hypothesis about what the situation may be and collecting data to verify or disprove it, an exploratory approach utilizing elements of Grounded Theory was used to investigate what is happening in Nova Scotia.

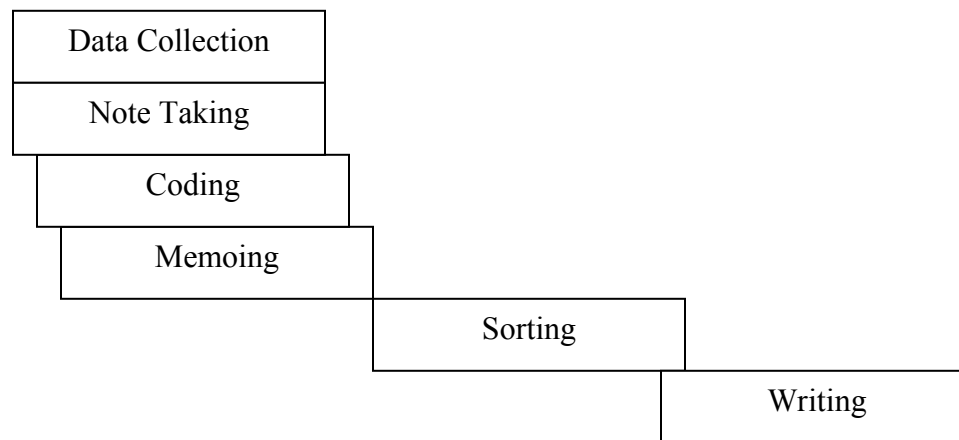
### **3.2 GROUNDED THEORY**

The Grounded Theory method of research was launched in 1967 by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, who defined it as “the discovery of theory from data – systematically obtained and analysed in social research” (Urquhart & Fernandez, 2006). It is an inductive methodology, using a set of rigorous research procedures and avoiding preconceived ideas. Rather than developing a hypothesis and collecting data to test it, grounded theory is emergent and seeks to discover the theory implicit in the data (Dick, 2005; Rhine, 2009). The theory is developed inductively from a collection of data; as such the resulting theory should fit at least one dataset perfectly (Borgatti, 2006). The researcher ideally approaches the data as a blank slate, but it may be optimistic to state researchers can enter a situation theory free without having done at least some review of relevant studies (Seidman, 1998; Urquhart & Fernandez, 2006).

A standard Grounded Theory approach has several stages, some of which overlap. The first stage is to identify the area of research interest, but not to identify a predetermined research problem to be addressed. The next stage is data collection, and the manner in which it is done depends on the research area. For qualitative research, methods such as interviewing or participant observation may be employed, but Grounded Theory can also be applied to research involving quantitative data. As data is collected, notes are taken on what is found, and analysis and coding begins. Patterns are looked for, data is compared, and theories begin to emerge; these help guide further data collection. Open coding of the notes and data “for anything and everything” (Scott, 2009) is used to help build categories and identify themes, and memos are made to capture ideas about them and potential relationships. Over time one category (or sometimes more) will emerge frequently, becoming the core category of the research. Open coding is then replaced

with selective coding of things related to the core variable, and further theoretical sampling is done to clarify the emerging theory about the core category, until data saturation is reached. The relevant literature is analyzed and integrated, being treated and selectively coded as another form of data. All the information is then organized, and the write-up of the final theory occurs (Dick, 2005; McCallin, Nathaniel, & Scott, 2009; Rhine, 2009; Scott, 2009).

**Figure 2 Phases of a Grounded Theory Study (Dick, 2005)**



The research for this thesis used elements of Grounded Theory, such as open coding and looking for themes that emerged from the data, but it did not follow all the rules of a classical Grounded Theory approach. The differences will be mentioned in the relevant sections of this chapter.

### **3.3 DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

“The adequacy of a research method depends on the purpose of the research and the questions being asked” (Seidman, 1998). When the thesis proposal was being developed, a primary question was how best to collect information from participants about the research topic. Two issues considered were what collection method would be the most appropriate, and what the impact of that method would be on the data quality and study cost. The benefits of surveys and interviews were examined, and initially a two-phase

project utilizing both was considered. However, it became apparent this would be scoping the project too large, so the proposal was scaled back and the decision made to use only a survey or only interviews.

Data collection by survey had several attractive features. One was the ease of distributing a survey to people across the province, since both mail and the internet could be used, and a larger number of people could be included than with interviews. The internet survey option had the added benefit of providing results in electronic form, thus eliminating the time required for entering results from a paper survey and removing data entry as a source of error. It also had the potential to be cheaper than mailing surveys with a postage paid reply envelope, and it was hoped that the ability to do the survey online may encourage greater participation since the respondent would not need to physically mail anything back. A common problem with surveys is a poor response rate, and the levels suggest one cannot assume non-respondents and respondents have the same views (Ornstein, 1998a). However, by making initial phone contact with churches to explain the research, request participation, and answer any questions prior to sending a survey, it was anticipated the participation rate could be improved.

As the focus of the thesis research was clarified, it became apparent that interviews held several advantages that made them the more appropriate data collection method. A limitation of surveys, in addition to the potential for a poor response rate, is the possibility that they may not be completed in full. With an interview, the researcher can ensure each question is covered, and the participant can be encouraged to simply share what they know if they feel uncertain of an answer. Questions can also be explained if there is confusion over what is being asked, or returned to later if the participant wishes to have more time to think. The biggest reason though for the choice of interviews was the type of data being sought.

As previously stated, the thesis research is exploratory in nature rather than seeking to address a specific hypothesis. Open ended questions were seen as the most appropriate to gather information and better able to yield interesting results, but “in 50 years, survey



researchers have made little progress in dealing with open questions, except to confirm the conventional wisdom that they are expensive and provide less reliable data” (Ornstein, 1998a). When conducting surveys the response task should be easy, such as circling a number or checking a box, and written answers should be avoided unless they are optional (Fowler, 1993). Many concise questions would be required to approach the same scope of information that can be obtained from a single open ended question, but a long survey could have a poor response rate. Concise questions also do not leave as much room for the emergence of themes and information the researcher does not anticipate, which goes against the Grounded Theory goal of the researcher and a blank slate and avoiding preconceived ideas. Thus, in order to obtain the depth and scope of information desired, the use of surveys was rejected.

Once the interview method was chosen, the next decision was the medium to use; face to face and phone based interviews were the two alternatives considered. There were no factors that precluded one option and required the other since the interviews did not need to occur in a specific location, nothing needed to be shown to the interviewees, and the participant locations were all within Nova Scotia (Alreck & Settle, 1995). Phone interviews had the benefit of being easily scheduled at any time for anywhere in the province, and they were also less expensive (as well as more environmentally friendly) than driving to see participants. However, physical presence usually helps the interviewer to build a greater sense of trust with the participant, and it allows both physical and verbal responses to be observed (Alreck & Settle, 1995). Further, it was felt that communication is clearer and easier when talking in person, and obtaining a quality recording for later transcription would be simpler. Thus, face to face interviews were chosen as the data collection method.

### **3.4 GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE**

The province of Nova Scotia was chosen as the study region. Numerous Christian denominations were present for possible participation (Statistics Canada, 2001), and using the whole province allowed for the inclusion of churches in both urban and rural

areas. By limiting the scope to just Nova Scotia, the participants would share the same provincial identity; cultural differences between areas, while present, would not be as significant as if several provinces were included. Participants would share similar environmental advantages and challenges, such as the availability of province wide recycling and composting, and the requirement for non-residential buildings to pay for these services. Constraining the study to Nova Scotia also allowed flexibility in choosing the data collection method by eliminating travel distance as a significant constraint. Moreover, the lack of study on environmental activity among Christian churches in the region presented the possibility to contribute to the field of knowledge, providing useful information to both Nova Scotia environmental groups looking to partner with church communities and to church communities themselves that are looking to better address environmental issues.

### **3.5 SAMPLE SIZE**

Discussions with other graduate students and the thesis committee indicated that 15 to 20 interviews would form a good sample size for the thesis. It was felt that sufficient coverage of what was occurring at a church, and why, could be obtained by interviewing 2 to 3 people who were involved; interviewing more than this would provide increasing amounts of overlapping information, and not be the best use of limited interviewing resources. Participants would ideally include both the pastoral staff and the congregation to get viewpoints from both the pulpit and the pew.

A minimum of 5 churches were required for participation to provide the desired number of interviews. To gain different perspectives, churches from both Halifax (the largest city in the province) and rural areas were sought. Different denominations were also included, rather than focusing on just one, to see what influence this may have on church experience and the answers provided. However, given that most denominations would have only one church representative, the sample size would not support general conclusions to be drawn about the environmental views of a specific denomination in

Nova Scotia. The research was thus seen as a case study of individual churches rather than a general denominational profile.

### **3.6 SELECTION OF CHURCHES**

The identification of potential churches to participate in the study was done using the snowball method, which involves using referrals from initial contacts to generate additional contacts (StatPac, 2009). Some leads came from Kairos, a national ecumenical organization with a social justice and environmental focus, which has 11 member groups from several denominations (Kairos, 2009). Conversations with people at their Atlantic Annual General Meeting in 2007 identified several churches in Nova Scotia doing environmental activities. Conversations with the author's own pastor and people in the School for Resource and Environmental Studies led to the identification of other churches. Contact was then made via e-mail and phone calls to learn more about what each church was doing, and why.

It was decided to restrict the potential churches for the study to those belonging to traditional Christian denominations (e.g. Catholic, Anglican, United, etc.). A key reason for this was to limit the doctrinal differences between the participating churches, so they would be coming from a similar basic Christian framework. The information found would then be applicable to most other traditional and mainline Christian churches, which form the majority of the religious community in Nova Scotia (Statistics Canada, 2001).

The environmental criteria for research inclusion was not gauged using a formal list of items as in some studies (e.g. Schultz et al., 2000). However, there were three key components being sought:

1. The church was/is doing both teaching about the environment and making changes to how they operate to reduce their environmental footprint.
2. The motivation for concern included theological reasons, and was not solely financially driven.

3. There was some history to what was happening; it was not a brand new initiative.

The level at which these criteria were met was considered somewhat flexible, as long as they were present. For example, in November of 2007, West End Baptist Church in Halifax hosted a discussion about Christian responses to issues such as climate change, with a keynote address by the Minister of Environment and Labour for the Province of Nova Scotia (Kidston, 2007). Having a Baptist church among the study participants would have been welcome, but it was not apparent that there was a history of environmental activity at the church prior to the event, so the church was not approached for inclusion. As stated by Robinson: “Plenty of churches have talked about the importance of the environment, but few have rolled up their sleeves and gone to work in the way that’s necessary for conservation and renewal to occur” (Robinson & Chatraw, 2006).

### **3.7 TRANSCRIPTION**

Classic Grounded Theory rejects the idea of recording and transcribing interviews (Dick, 2005; Roderick, 2009). However, being new to the area of qualitative research and given that only a single interview was happening with each individual, it was felt that taping the interviews would be the best way to obtain the data for later analysis. The wisdom of this decision was confirmed later when one joint interview was done with only selective recording at the request of the primary participant. The hand written notes from that interview did not provide the same depth for analysis as the transcripts obtained in the other interviews, especially when the main analysis was done a year after the interview occurred.

The decision on whether to do partial or full transcription was discussed with the thesis committee, and it was decided to perform full transcription. This allowed the complete context of statements being made to be available for viewing during analysis without referring back to the recordings, and having the participants’ exact words helped with proper interpretation. Further, given the approach of searching for themes emerging from

the data while avoiding initial assumptions, it was not fully known during the transcription stage what elements would be important. Performing selective transcription may have excluded things that eventually helped support and develop the final ideas discussed in Chapter 5.

## **3.8 ANALYSIS**

### **3.8.1 Coding Method**

Open coding was used to analyze the data once interview transcribing was completed. Open coding is based on the concept of data being “cracked open” as a means of identifying relevant categories (Davidson, 2002), searching for issues, themes, and patterns. An open mind is to be maintained, and preconceived ideas avoided to prevent forcing theories on the data or looking for support of existing ideas (Allan, 2003). To aid this process and make it easier to extract the data related to identified themes when the results were written up, the decision was made to use qualitative analysis software.

### **3.8.2 Analysis Tools**

Various programs exist to help with the coding and analysis of interview data. Several free programs have been written, but the ones investigated appeared to be limited and not very easy to use. Nudist was considered since it had been used by SRES in the past, but a search showed it is no longer available or supported. The two most common current programs appeared to be NVivo and AtlasTI.

NVivo appeared to be more popular than AtlasTI, and a demonstration licence was obtained to experiment with. My initial impression was not favourable though, and it seemed to be complicated to accomplish what was desired. A demonstration provided at the school for AtlasTI, on the other hand, showed it to have a very straight forward interface for doing basic coding and organizing (which were the main features sought). Comparing the attributes of the two programs, it appeared NVivo had stronger capabilities when it came to statistics, but this was not important for the study at hand.

Further, the NVivo student licence was only good for 12 months, and it was more expensive. Given all the considerations, AtlasTI appeared to be capable of doing what was required and was chosen as the software analysis tool.

### **3.9 SOURCES OF BIAS AND ERROR**

In any research, it is necessary to consider what the possible sources of bias and error are, and how they may affect the results obtained. Several potential issues were identified for this project.

#### **3.9.1 Sample Size**

As previously stated, the sample size sought was a minimum of 5 churches from various denominations, with 2 to 3 participants per church. When the study was complete, 5 of the 6 denominations taking part were represented by a single church. This is not sufficient to draw strong denomination-based conclusions, and as a result, the analysis took the approach of a case study rather than a profile of the denominations involved.

Each church provided 2 or 3 interview participants, as this number was felt to be sufficient to corroborate answers and provide a good profile of what the church has done and is doing. In the cases though where only 2 people participated, the potential existed for differing opinions on details to arise with no third voice to help indicate which was correct. However, since many questions relied on personal perception and knowledge rather than a staunch requirement for exact facts, this is not considered to be a significant source for error. Further, by using an exploratory approach and open coding, differences in answers between interviewees could actually raise interesting questions (such as how the level of personal concern affected the participant's perception of whether enough was being done by the church and what should occur).

A related concern is the risk of people exaggerating what the church is doing to make their actions look better, or giving answers reflecting more what they think the

interviewer wants to hear than reality. It was hoped that since the people being interviewed are Christian workers and volunteers they would strive to provide accurate and honest answers to the best of their ability. The general trend found after the interviews seemed to be that people were modest and matter of fact about what their church was doing, and they acknowledged that more could be done; this reduced concern that participants were trying to “green-wash” their answers.

Another concern was that not every church had a representative from the congregation among the interviewees, and whether that could in some way affect the results. It was decided this also was not a significant problem since the nature of the study may benefit from, but did not require, interview participants from both the pastoral staff and the congregation.

### 3.9.2 Sample Inclusion

The criteria for churches to meet to be eligible for study inclusion was not a detailed set of guidelines, as mentioned in Section 3.6. Appropriateness was based on the result of information gathered from e-mail and telephone contact with a spokesperson for the church, be it the pastor or someone referred by the pastor. This subjective selection process could be considered a potential source for variance. However, since the thesis design was exploratory rather than constrained to proving a specific hypothesis, receiving varying viewpoints from participating churches was itself an insight into the breadth of church situations in Nova Scotia. Indeed, strict selection criteria at the beginning might conflict with the exploratory and emergent nature of the research style being used.

The first church interviewed, and used to test out the questions developed as well as time how long interviews would take, was the church attended by the author. A concern raised about this is the danger of assumptions being made about what participants are saying based on familiarity rather than their actual words (Seidman, 1998). Partially for this reason it was chosen as the initial test church, so as not to waste one of the other churches identified in case the interviews showed a need to rework the questions being

used. However, the questions worked as they were, and it was decided to include the data collected in the final analysis. By looking for meaning in the context of the interview script, this bias should be minimized. Also, activities and situations unique to the church were felt worthy of inclusion, and the themes brought out could be compared with other congregations in the corpus of data for confirmation and reinforcement.

A small exception to the usual acceptance criteria was made for the second Catholic church that participated in the study. It was known that one of their youth groups did a teaching night once a year that focused on the environment, and they were in the process of merging with two other parishes and building a new church that would use geothermal heating. Their inclusion was based largely on their environmental thinking with regards to their future building, and the assumption that there were things already being done which had led to those decisions.

### 3.9.3 Funding Source

In some studies there is the potential for a conflict of interest if funding is being provided by a third party with a vested interest in the results. This was not a problem in this study since the only funding received was from the university, so there was no outside pressure concerning the findings.

### 3.9.4 Interview Questions

A danger with questions is having the way they are asked affect the answer given (Ornstein, 1998b). For example, asking a clergy member, “Is it okay to smoke while praying?” could elicit a different response than asking “Is it okay to pray while smoking?” (Chiaro & Nocella, 2005). One way to overcome this is through the use of standardized questions (Fowler, 1993), though using an interview guide conflicts with ideas present in classical Grounded Theory (Roderick, 2009). This was another way the research methodology varied from a strict Grounded Theory approach. Given a lack of experience with interviewing and the relatively small number of churches being studied, the thesis committee did not argue against using a standard question list. It was not



uncommon though during interviews to add additional information to explain or clarify a question, or even attempt to make it more relevant to the person being interviewed based on their previous answers (such as when they did not appear to be as knowledgeable in some areas as others). Sometimes a question needed to be re-asked if the answer provided indicated the question may have been misunderstood. The same question order was used in each meeting though, and no questions were added to or dropped from the interview guide over the course of the data collection.

As the research was conducted there were interesting new questions that arose out of the interviews. For example, what would churches consider the biggest block to making changes? What would they do if there were no restrictions? How much did they publicize what they were doing? A research aspect found in Grounded Theory is being aware of themes emerging from the data and focusing on clarifying the key theme being pursued (Davidson, 2002; Rhine, 2009). However, the number of interviews and churches being studied was limited, so the interview questions were not changed in order to maintain conformity and have the same information base available for the analysis of each congregation.

### 3.9.5 Temporal Considerations

The thesis work captures a time of growing awareness and concern in Nova Scotia churches about environmental issues. As time goes on, things such as the effects of climate change, rising oil prices and the fear of peak oil, environmental accidents, and societal reactions will affect communities, and in turn influence the churches within them. The response of churches can be expected to change with time.

The thesis interviews happened over an almost 10 month period in 2008, the first interview occurring on February 7, and the final interviews being held on October 30. In that time, Nova Scotia gas prices grew to all time highs and had started to recede (GasBuddy.com, 2009), a world wide recession began to settle in, and Earth Hour occurred on March 29 (which several churches interviewed after the event mentioned

being involved in). The thesis write-up occurred a year after this, so during that time the denominational websites searched for resources could have changed. Thus, the length of time for both the interviews and thesis could be seen as a source of variance since it is a transitional period. However, this is not considered to be a major concern. For the example of Earth Hour, only one church was interviewed before it occurred, and it was just one activity among many for other congregations. Further, the data of interest is the knowledge of the participants, and given churches with a history of activity were sought, the immediate societal pressures and changes were only one aspect of their stories. Issues such as rising oil prices were already a concern before their 2008 peak, as were dwindling congregations and limited resources before the recession took hold. Thus, given the exploratory nature of the research, the changes that occurred over the thesis period are not seen to be a significant source for concern.

### 3.9.6 Geographical

Churches were sought from both urban and rural areas to see how setting might affect responses. However, only 2 of the 7 churches eventually interviewed were not from within Halifax, and one of them was from Sydney, the largest urban community on Cape Breton (though much smaller than Halifax: 33 012 people compared to 282 924 (Statistics Canada, 2008b)). As a result, there is an insufficient sample size to draw urban versus rural conclusions, and the data may contain an urban-centric slant. Even though 52% of Nova Scotia's 913 462 people lived in the Halifax and the Cape Breton Regional Municipalities in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2009b; Statistics Canada, 2009c), almost half of provincial residents live in rural areas outside these regions, and thus there may be some limitation in the applicability of the research to the province at large.

### 3.9.7 Transcription and Interpretation

All interview transcribing was performed personally by the primary researcher (Peter Young). This had the advantage of the transcriber being familiar with the subject matter and having been there for the initial recording, which hopefully increased the accuracy of understanding what was being said. However, it was sometimes difficult to hear on the

recordings exactly what the participant was saying, leading to the potential for mistakes. Voice recognition software was used to create most of the interview transcripts, and the text checked as it was generated, but there still existed the possibility of incorrectly transcribed phrases being missed. Errors in wording have the potential to change the sense of what is being said. To minimize the risk, during the analysis phase the transcripts were read through while the interview recordings were being played; this led to different transcription mistakes being caught, as well as some difficult-to-hear statements being recognized. Final quotes used in the thesis were checked again for accuracy against the recordings, and then confirmed with the interviewees to make sure they accurately reflected their thoughts.

While the research was exploratory in nature, there were specific questions asked (Appendices A.4 and A.3) and the answers aggregated (Chapter 4 and APPENDIX B). Sometimes a question was not answered directly, so when possible the response was interpolated from relevant responses in other parts of the interview. However, dealing with words is not like dealing with numbers and formulas; there is more room for interpretation and misinterpretation about what respondents are saying. It is possible some things said may have been understood incorrectly during the analysis. To try and minimize this, context was considered when looking at statements (especially if they seemed to contradict ideas expressed elsewhere in the interview), and when meanings were unclear, it was not attempted to force meanings onto statements.

### 3.9.8 Personal Bias

Grounded Theory stresses the idea of the researcher as a blank slate, approaching the data without bias or preconceived ideas. However, this is difficult to achieve, especially for new researchers (Roderick, 2009; Urquhart & Fernandez, 2006). Personal views have the potential to be one of the biggest biases within the results. Having been a lifetime Christian, and this belief system being the reason for the author's environmentalist stance, what it means to be a Christian with environmental concern is something that had been considered for over ten years. Personal ideas on the connection as well as its two

components individually, have the potential to affect how the author interpreted the data and what was viewed as important or relevant. However, by being aware of these potential biases, striving to be open minded, seeking to understand statements in the context of the participants' views, and ensuring the themes presented in Chapter 5 emerge from and are supported by the research data, the effects of any personal bias will hopefully be minimized and not affect the integrity of conclusions reached.

## CHAPTER 4 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Ultimately, the care for creation agenda will be advanced congregation by congregation, at the grassroots level. (Motavalli, 2002)

This section summarizes the findings from the church interviews. The results from the formal questions are provided, but discussions around the general themes that emerged and their possible meanings will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Due to the fact that data was collected using interviews rather than a survey with set choices, the answer groups found in many of the tables and graphs in this chapter were based on commonalities between responses. In some cases, best interpretation was necessary to categorize a respondent's answer or attitude when they did not clearly address the question. Some tables/graphs have a "did not answer" entry either because the response did not answer the question, the interview was conducted with two people and only one person responded, the question was left out because a prior answer made it irrelevant, or the question was accidentally missed during the interview process.

Several large tables have been placed in APPENDIX B, and the reader will be referenced to these when appropriate.

### 4.1 DENOMINATIONS PARTICIPATING

As stated earlier, churches from six different denominations took part in the study. Table 3 shows the Christian denominations in Nova Scotia affiliated with more than 1% of the population according to the last two censuses, as well as those participating in the study that fall below that limit (Statistics Canada, 2007). The denominations included in the thesis research are shaded in grey.

**Table 3: Denominational Affiliation in Nova Scotia**

Denomination	% of Nova Scotia Population	
	1991	2001
Roman Catholic	37.2 %	36.5 %
United	17.2 %	15.9 %
Anglican	14.4 %	13.4 %
Baptist	11.1 %	10.6 %
Presbyterian	3.5 %	2.5 %
Lutheran <sup>1</sup>	1.3 %	1.2 %
Pentecostal	1.2 %	1.0 %
...		
Christian Reformed	0.1 %	0.1 %
Mennonite Brethren	0.1 %	0.1%

The denominational groups taking part in the study represented the religious affiliation of 70.3% of the provincial population in 1991 and 67.2% in 2001. The published 2006 census information at the time of thesis completion did not include religious statistics, but if we assume a similar drop in affiliation over time, these denominations represented approximately 64.7% of the Nova Scotia population in 2008 when the research was conducted.

Two churches were interviewed from the Roman Catholic denomination, and all the other denominations had one church representative. In some cases though, the definition of what constituted “a church” became cloudy. One of the Catholic churches interviewed had combined with another church about two years previously, and another Catholic church was in the process of building a new building where three different parishes would be combined into one. The United church interviewed was looking at combining with at least one other local congregation in the future, and the Anglican church was part of a parish that had a sister congregation they worked with, as well as a third church that

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<sup>1</sup> The Statistics Canada religious affiliation information for Nova Scotia listed Lutheran only once. The value given is thus an aggregate of all Lutheran-identified denominations, and the participating church was Evangelical Lutheran.

only operated once a month during the summer. The Mennonite-Brethren church taking part rented space in a building owned by another church, so even though they operated as a separate church community, they had to coordinate with the other congregation on building-related matters. Thus, while most of the data collected pertained specifically to the congregation being interviewed, there were some answers that spanned another.

## 4.2 CHURCH PARTICIPANTS

A total of eighteen interviews were conducted. Table 4 shows the breakdown by denomination.

**Table 4: Denominational Affiliation of Interview Participants**

Denomination	People Interviewed	
	Pastoral	Non-Pastoral
Roman Catholic	3	1
United	1	2
Anglican	1	2
Evangelical Lutheran	1	2
Christian Reformed	1	2
Mennonite Brethren	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>

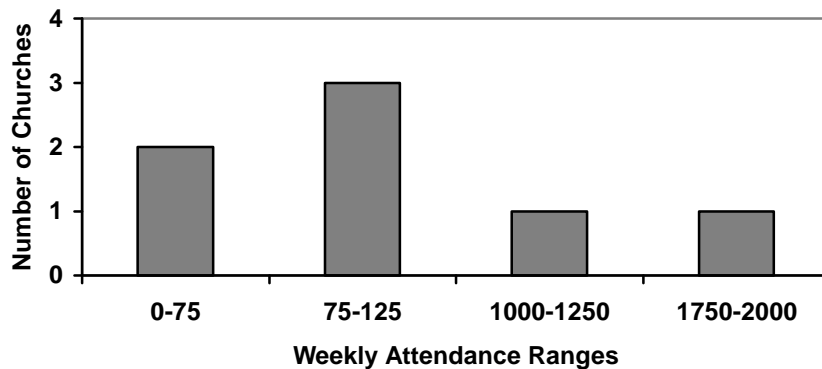
People in the non-pastoral category are classed as those who were not a priest or minister at their church. However, some of them did have official roles, such as deacon, music director, member of a church board, etc.. Only two churches (Mennonite Brethren and one of the Catholic parishes) did not have at least one non-pastoral member among the people interviewed. However, one of the pastors from the Mennonite Brethren church had been a part of the congregation before being hired in an official capacity.

### 4.3 CHURCH CHARACTERISTICS

It was desired to have a mix of urban and rural areas taking part in the thesis research, so the churches interviewed were located in three different parts of the province. Five were located in Halifax, the largest city in the province (Statistics Canada, 2008b). One church was located in the much smaller city of Sydney on Cape Breton Island. The final church was located in the town of Berwick in the Annapolis Valley.

The churches varied in size. The Catholic parishes were by far the largest, with one having a weekly attendance of about 1000-1200 people and the other having 1800-1900 people. The Protestant churches were much smaller, with weekly attendances ranging from 40 to 120.

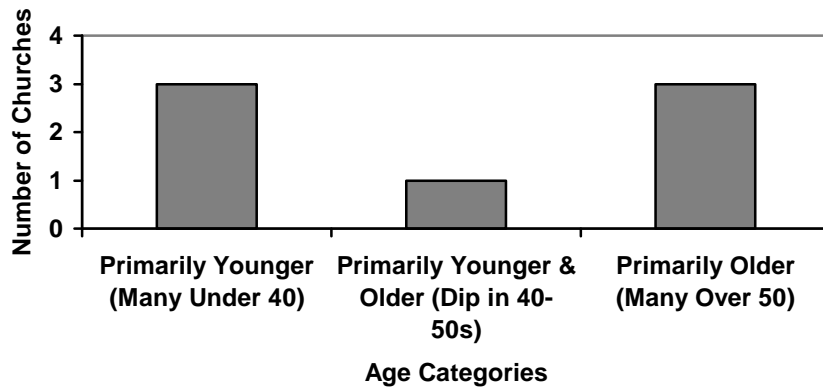
**Figure 3 Church Weekly Attendance**



There was no real trend among the answers when pastors were asked about the age profile of their churches. Some reported younger congregations, with children and people ranging from university age to their 30s and 40s, and not many seniors. Others reported older congregations with not many young people. One church reported a diverse age scale with a dip in the 40-55 age range. As a result, there was not a characteristic age range for the churches interviewed.



**Figure 4 Church Age Profile**



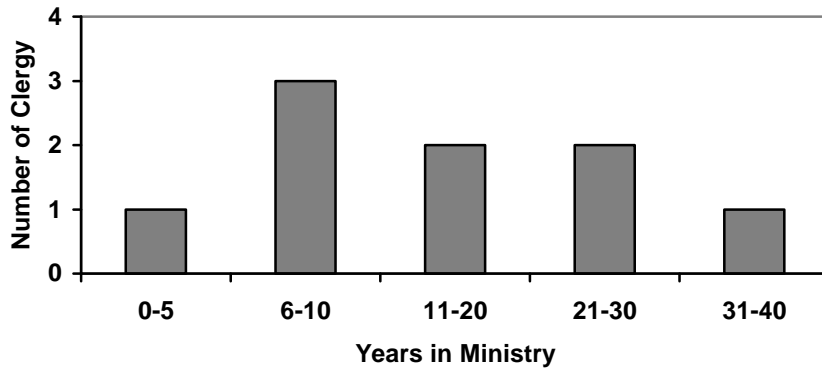
#### **4.4 PARTICIPANT PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

The first two parts of each interview were focused on finding out a bit about the participant, and their views and activities, before concentrating more on the activities happening at the church.

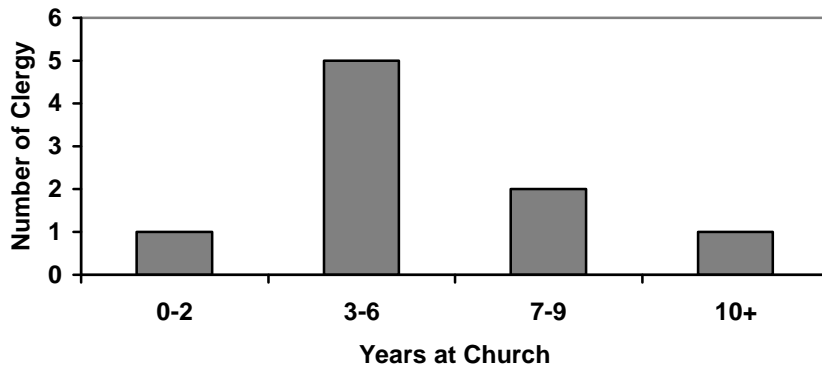
##### **4.4.1 Clergy**

The clergy interviewed varied in how long they had been in ministry, ranging from less than two years to almost forty. Over half of them had more than ten years experience, and there was not a significant weighting in any particular time category (Figure 5). The amount of time they had been at their current church was less varied, with most answers being in the four to seven year range. The shortest time was one year, and the longest was eleven years (being the only pastor who had been present for more than seven years).

**Figure 5 Clergy Length of Time in Ministry**



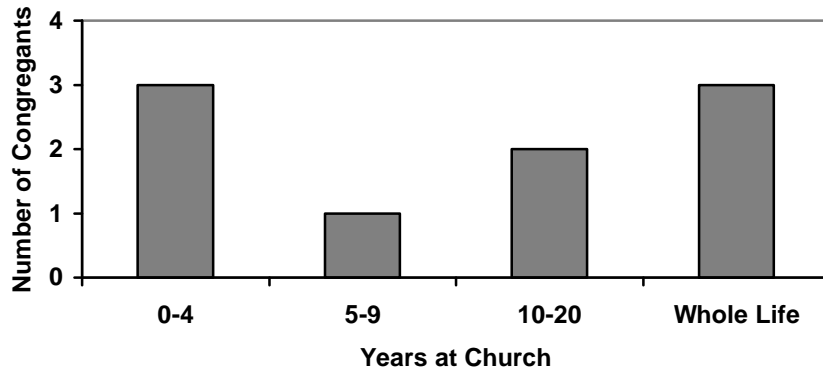
**Figure 6 Clergy Length of Time at Present Church**



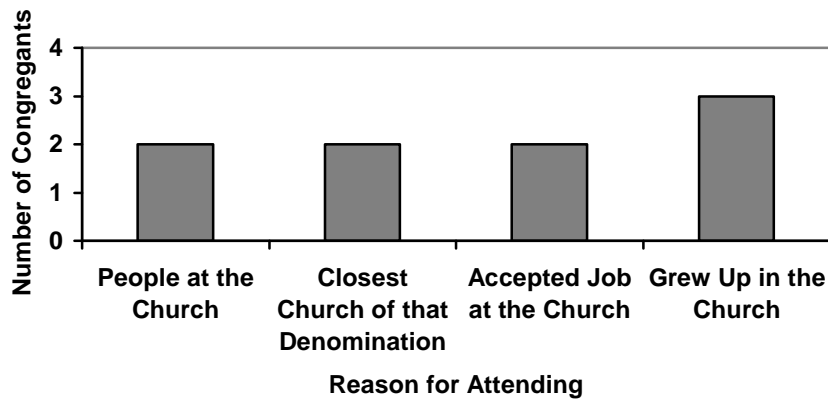
#### 4.4.2 Congregants

The congregation members interviewed varied in many ways. Their length of time at the church ranged from just over one year to 63 years, with one-third of the people mentioning they had been attending since childhood, and one-third being there less than five years. For those who had not been going to the church their whole life, the longest time in attendance was seventeen years. Their reasons for choosing to attend fell fairly evenly into four categories: it was the closest church of their denomination, they had grown up attending the church, they decided to attend because of the people they met there, or they had accepted a position at the church.

**Figure 7 Congregant Length of Time at Present Church**



**Figure 8 Congregant Reasons for Attending**



#### 4.4.3 Initial Exposure to Christian Environmental Concern

The amount of time since people had first heard about environmental concern being raised in a church or faith context varied greatly. Five of the participants listed things that had occurred in the previous five years, while six stated the connection had always been part of their thinking (however, two of these people also provided a more defined context of external exposure, and thus were not placed in the “Always part of thinking” category in Table 5 and Table 6). Comparing clergy and congregants, two thirds of clergy members reported being aware of it for over fifteen years or it always being part of their thinking, compared to only one third of the congregants. The source of exposure, for those who had not always considered it, could be categorized by one of four areas:

their current church, activities in a previous church, personal reading/awareness, or a university/seminary course.

**Table 5: Time Since First Exposure to Environmentalism in Church/Faith Context\***

<b>Time Since Exposure</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>
0 – 5 Years	2	3
6 - 10 Years	0	1
11 - 15 Years	1	1
16 – 20 Years	2	1
Over 20 Years	2	0
Always part of thinking	2	2
Question not answered	0	1

*\*Sometimes the time was not explicitly stated and was estimated from other things said.*

**Table 6: Source of First Exposure to Environmentalism in Church/Faith Context**

<b>Source of Exposure</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>
In current church	1	3
In another church	2	1
Personal reading/listening	2	1
University course	2	1
Always part of thinking	2	2
Question not answered	0	1

#### 4.4.4 View of a Christian’s Relationship to the Earth

When asked about the relationship between Christians and the earth, people sometimes had more than one opinion. Stewardship was the most common theme, being mentioned by half of the participants, and responsibility related to the environment was mentioned by just over a third of the people. For example, “I believe that we are called to be stewards of creation. I believe that we have a God-given responsibility to care for, in the best way possible, those resources and environmental contexts that have been entrusted to

us” (P6, 2008). “[Jesus’] idea of having dominion over the earth was to come and serve. And to me that’s a very analogous approach to how I view humanity. Humanity, the greatest of God’s earthly creations. [...] In the same way we should be here to serve in that way. Being great is a responsibility, in the most wonderful sense of the word. And again, responsibility, I think, is a word which often is viewed with sort of a sigh. ‘I have this responsibility to do.’ But responsibility is, in fact, a great honor, and a great privilege” (P11, 2008).

Being connected with nature and/or needing to coexist was mentioned in almost a quarter of the responses, and other views expressed included environmental concern being important, dominion being exercised with justice and mercy, and having Christianity inform people’s attitudes about nature.

**Table 7: Personal View of a Christian’s Relationship to the Earth\***

<b>Viewpoints</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>
Stewardship / Care for the earth / Protector	5	4
Have responsibility to nature / Act responsibly	3	4
Interconnected / Respect and coexist with nature	2	2
Attitude informed by Christianity	2	0
Dominion exercised with justice and mercy	2	1
Environmental concern is important	0	1
Question not answered	0	1

*\*Some participants gave replies that fit into more than one category.*

#### 4.4.5 View on the Physical - Spiritual Relationship

Almost two-thirds of participants expressed a view that the physical and spiritual worlds were closely related. One person stated: “I think there’s a very close connection, and I think often what you see in this physical is a reflection of what’s happening spiritually” (P1, 2008). Another person expressed the connection as matter and spirit being two sides of the same coin. Two people tied the incarnation of Christ into the physical and spiritual

being united. “I think the heart of Christian faith is that there is a connection between the spiritual and physical. That’s the whole meaning of the incarnation. The whole significance of it is that God took on flesh. I mean, that’s one of the most radical concepts that exists” (P4, 2008). Other responses on the topic mentioned God’s creation of the world, God caring about creation, the created world praising God, and the physical creation giving insight into God. No participants stated that the physical and spiritual worlds were unrelated and separate.

**Table 8: Personal View of the Relationship between Spiritual & Material World**

Viewpoints	Clergy	Congregants
Very connected / Can’t be separated / Integrated	6	5
Physical and spiritual were united in the incarnation of Christ	2	0
God cares about the physical world	1	1
Creation praises God	0	1
Creation gives insight into God	0	1
God is love and created the world	0	1
Not answered	2	2

#### 4.4.6 Personal Environmental Activity

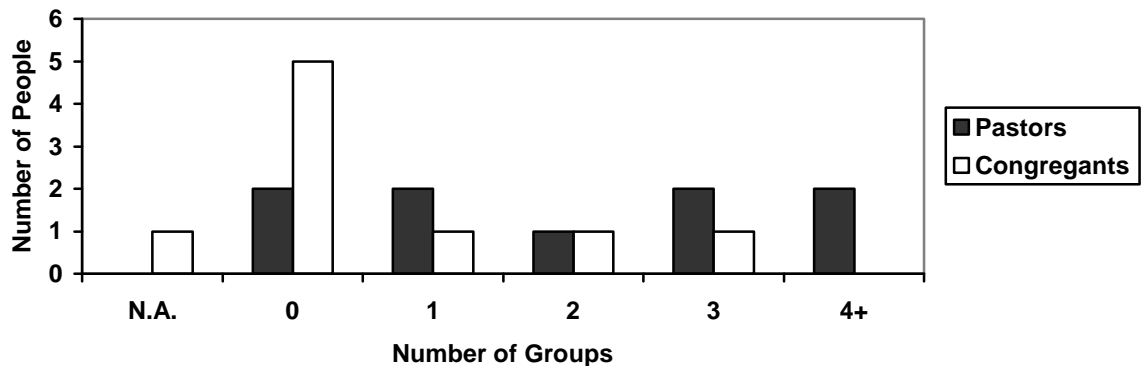
When participants were asked about personal involvement in groups with an environmental focus, many organizations were mentioned, both local and international, religious and secular<sup>1</sup>. However, only two groups were mentioned more than twice, and they were categories rather than individual groups. A social justice group at their church was mentioned by four participants from two different churches, and a church group with environmental concern as a related cause was mentioned by three people. A few groups mentioned (such as a quilting group) were excluded from the results because it was felt

<sup>1</sup> For the complete list of all environmental groups mentioned, please see Table 20 in APPENDIX B.

that while there was an environmental aspect to what they did, it was not a key focus in their existence.

The definition of involvement was flexible, and ranged from active participation to simply being a member or financial supporter. Clergy were found to be much more active in this area, with less than a quarter stating no past or present involvements compared to over half of the congregants. Clergy also tended to have been involved in a larger number of groups (Figure 9). When looking at the groups mentioned by interviewees, the only overlap in the involvement of both clergy and congregants was one church’s social justice group; all other groups were mentioned only by clergy or only by congregation members. However, lack of involvement in groups does not necessarily indicate lack of concern. One participant said: “I’m not really involved in an environmental committee of any kind. But we all should be, you know, personally. You don’t really need to belong to a committee to take responsibility for it, I don’t think. Should be part of who you are” (P8, 2008).

**Figure 9 Number of Environmental Groups Interviewees Participated In\***



*\*Includes both past and present involvement. When the participant stated involvement in an unspecified number of groups where environmental concern was a related issue, it was counted as one group when inside the church and one group when outside the church.*

The roles participants played within what was happening at the church varied, but there were some distinct differences between the clergy and the congregants. Most of the clergy mentioned raising awareness, speaking about environmental issues, or showing the faith connections of concern, compared to only a third of the congregants. Two thirds of the clergy also saw part of their role as being a catalyst and facilitator for others to do things, while no congregants mentioned this. On the other hand, most of the congregants were involved in some aspect of hands-on work at the church (such as taking care of the recycling or turning off the hot water heater during the week), while almost none of the pastors mentioned such activities. Other activities however, such as encouraging people to be environmentally responsible, involved approximately a third of each group. Being part of a group or committee with activities related to environmental concern weighted more towards the congregant side (five people compared to three clergy), while being a role model leaned a bit more towards the clergy. Other roles included being an initiator of new activities, taking a subtle leadership role, and being available to provide help where it was needed.

**Table 9: Role of Person**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>
Speak about environmental issues / Raise awareness / Show faith connections of concern	7	3
Part of church group/committee with environmental responsibilities	3	5
Hands on help (e.g. take home compost)	1	7
Encourage people to be environmentally responsible	4	3
Catalyst / Facilitator / Supporter for others with environmental interests	6	0
Role model / Set an example	2	1
Initiator of new activities	2	0
Oversee the ministries happening / Ensure coordination and harmony between causes / Act as a moderator	2	0



<b>Role</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>
Ensure church is not being environmentally irresponsible	1	0
Provide help where able	0	2
Subtle leadership role	0	1
Work with youth	1	0
Administrator / Manager of building-related activities	0	1
Consider environmental aspect of church activities	1	0

#### **4.5 SOURCES IN THE CHURCH’S FAITH FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN**

The third section of each interview began with asking about the sources in the church’s faith for environmental concern. A common response was that it was seen to have Biblical relevance; most people who answered the question mentioned stewardship and/or the Bible as a component. One person stated, “if you have any Bible study experience, it’s there. For anybody who wants to see, it’s there. You take care of the earth. God created it, for us to use. You look after it. You’re... you be a good steward. It’s not just something pretty to say, or a suggestion. You know, it’s a demand, really. If you’re gonna follow the way of the cross, that’s what you do” (P8, 2008). Social justice and bringing peace (shalom) were also mentioned, but only by two participants with regards to the stated question. Given several of the churches had justice and peace groups, it was interesting this source of concern was not mentioned more in people’s replies, but the fact that the social justice groups were not excluding environmental issues would indicate the connection was there, and links between social justice and environmental concern were mentioned elsewhere in the interviews.

People were cited as a source for awareness growing, and not just theologians, Christian saints, or the leadership of the Catholic Church (mentioned in one, one, and three responses respectively). People within the church with concerns about the environment, and it being a relevant concern to people in society, were brought up by four participants.

The church pastor’s knowledge and experience were also seen as a source in three interviews.

**Table 10: Faith Sources for Church Environmental Concern**

<b>Faith Source</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>
The Bible	6	3
Stewardship	5	3
Something people in church concerned about / Emphasis in society	3	1
Pastor’s knowledge and experience	2	1
Catholic Church leadership (e.g. Bishops, Popes)	3	0
Financial reasons	0	3
Improve things on the planet / Protect the earth	0	2
Social justice / Peace and things working together	1	1
Baptism	1	0
Communion	1	0
The Holy Spirit	1	0
Christian Saints (e.g. Saint Francis of Assisi)	1	0
Theologians / Christian Writers (e.g. Abraham Kiper, Herman Dooyeweerd)	1	0
Learning institutions (e.g. Calvin College)	1	0
Concern for current and future generations	0	1
Local environmental problems	1	0
Question not answered	0	2

Financial considerations were raised, but only by three people. Concern for current and future generations, and wanting to improve things on the earth, were also mentioned. The potential for local environmental problems to have been an influence was mentioned in one interview, though the participant said they did not know for certain it was the case. The majority of answers however related to church-centric ideas. Besides the sources

mentioned above, Christian learning institutions, the Holy Spirit, and traditions like baptism and communion were included.

A source of uncertainty in this question could be group versus personal opinions. One pastor stated she knew her own sources for concern, but could not say they were necessarily those of the church. A congregant replied with what he considered to be the church's chief reason, which was not the main connecting point for himself. Others stated their views, but they might have been personal as much as (or more than) corporate opinions. Thus, the results from this question should be considered as sources of both individual and group concern.

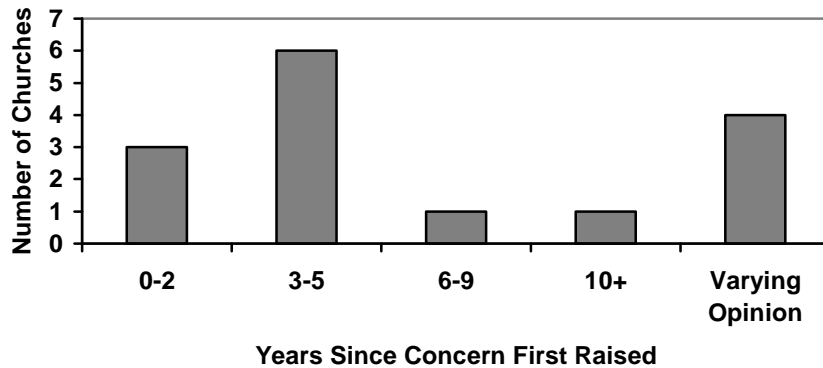
#### **4.6 HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN AT THE CHURCH**

Participants were asked about the history of environmental concern at their church. Sometimes opinions and information differed, which could partly be explained by people who had been at the church longer knowing about events that occurred before other interviewees had started attending. However, other questions relied on the person's opinion, and opinions can vary.

##### **4.6.1 How Concern was First Raised**

Active concern in the participating churches is relatively new, in most cases occurring in the last five years. Even those churches who mentioned things happening further back seemed to have become more active in recent years. Differing answers on when environmental concern started being raised were noted in four of the seven churches. In some cases, this could be tied to newer church attendees only being aware of activity growing since they began attending, and not knowing about events that occurred in the past. In other cases, it could be people recalling different events, or simply having different opinions on what signaled the start of more active promotion.

**Figure 10 Length of Time Since Environmental Concern First Raised at Church**



The early signs of concern varied between churches, and there was not a single initiating factor that stood head and shoulders above the rest. Activity by the current pastor, a group or committee at the church, or simply individuals in the church were the most common causes mentioned. Sometimes an event, like showing *An Inconvenient Truth* or having a Sunday School class focused on the environment, were not the first thing to occur but helped bring environmental topics more to the forefront of the church’s thinking. A few people mentioned there had been awareness among people that preceded a defining formal action. As one pastor put it, “in informal ways, I guess it’s been around probably for awhile, because there’s a number of people in our church who I think it’s important for them. So then it just naturally, kind of, it’s part of the life of the church” (P2, 2008).

**Table 11: How Environmental Concern was First Raised\***

Source	Clergy	Congregants
Raised by a group/committee at the church	1	3
Brought up by current pastor (e.g. sermon)	2	2
Raised by person/people in the church	3	0
Around informally for some time / Gradual awareness	2	1
Sunday School class	1	2

Source	Clergy	Congregants
Showed Inconvenient Truth at the church	1	2
Brought up in talk by guest speaker	2	0
Have not heard it raised as straightforward environmental concern	0	1
Raised before person started attending church	1	0
Raised by leaders in the church other than the pastor (e.g. Deacons)	1	0
Activity related to the church building	1	0
Question not answered	0	1

*\*Some churches mentioned 2 or 3 early contributing events, so these are all included.*

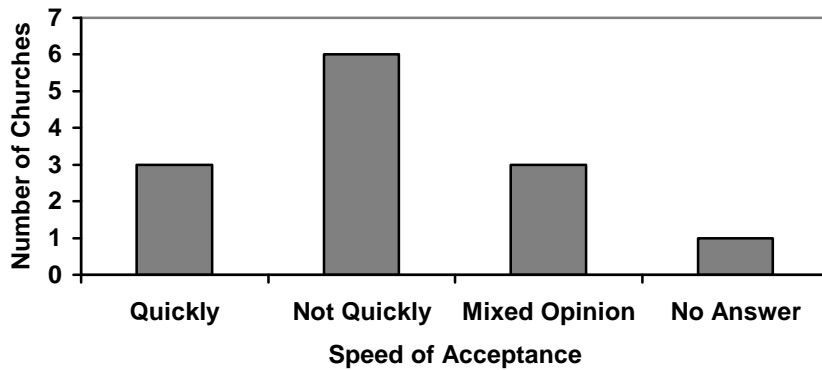
#### 4.6.2 Speed of Acceptance and Level of Interest

Slow change characterized the rate at which environmental things happened among the churches interviewed. A few respondents felt things had caught on fairly quickly or were just accepted, but others from the same church felt otherwise. Some people did not answer the speed question explicitly, but said things that implied it had not been a quick process. However, a slow speed does not necessarily equate to apathy; it can be tied to challenges the churches face. One congregant, while answering the question, said: “One thing I would say about A.N. in particular is they do an awful lot of good things, and they’re stretched very thin. And I think you’ll find that actually in a lot churches [...] I wonder how it will catch on simply because you have people who, really good and talented people who are doing really good and wonderful things, but whom, I’m not sure how much more they can do and still be effective at it” (P11, 2008).

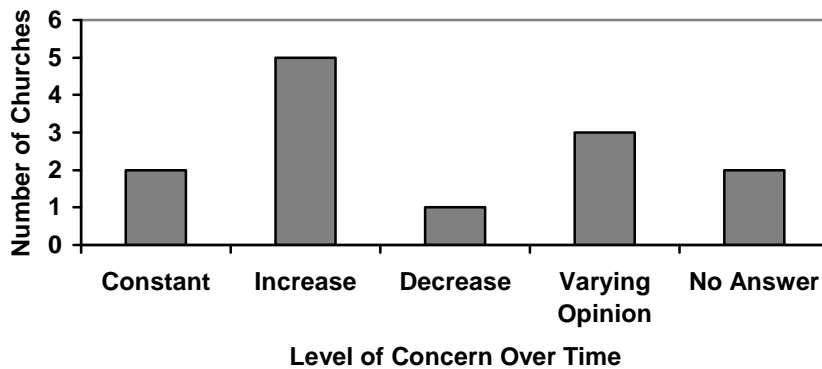
While growth in concern may not have happened quickly, interest in the topic had not disappeared. When asked about the level of interest over time at the church, most people reported an increase, with a few stating it had remained about the same. One person felt interest had changed a bit, and though she did not explicitly state up or down, her answer implied a slight decrease due to people not wanting to hear too much about one thing, and

the need to be careful and aware of that. “But maybe now we need some other kind of an emphasis, right? So that, even though it’s still under the environmental sort of umbrella, because people do kind of start to resent, I think a little bit? Like, I think some people feel like we’re flogging a dead horse” (P12, 2008). However, she also later stated she thought it was a topic that was starting to become more important for people.

**Figure 11 Speed of Acceptance of Environmental Concern at Church**



**Figure 12 Environmental Concern Variance over Time**



#### 4.6.3 Deciding What to Do

The method of deciding what issues would be acted on varied between churches, and some people cited more than one way. A committee or group being involved, such as a Parish Council or Social Justice cell, was mentioned by most churches. Building-related issues being involved was the next most common answer. Response to concern from

congregation members, or the initiative of individuals, also ranked highly. “I think that generally [how we choose] stems from individuals’ initiative. If someone is interested in looking at our carbon footprint, or doing an energy audit, that will happen. If someone is going to make the effort to do a recycling campaign, that will happen [...] a person’s passion might drive them to do one thing or another thing, and then everyone else can get on board” (P6, 2008). Saving money, response to external factors (such as province-wide composting), and doing what can be easily done were also brought up, and people in two churches stated that decision making was not a formal process.

**Table 12: Method of Choosing Environmental Focus\***

<b>Method</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Number of Churches</b>
Committee/Group at the church (e.g. Parish Council, Micah Group, Social Justice Cell)	8	5
Individual initiative / Champion	3	2
Not a formal process	2	2
Related to building (repair, operation, construction)	4	2
Response to church member(s)	3	2
Response to external events (e.g. provincial composting)	2	1
See what can easily do	3	2
Things to save money	2	2
Question not answered	2	1

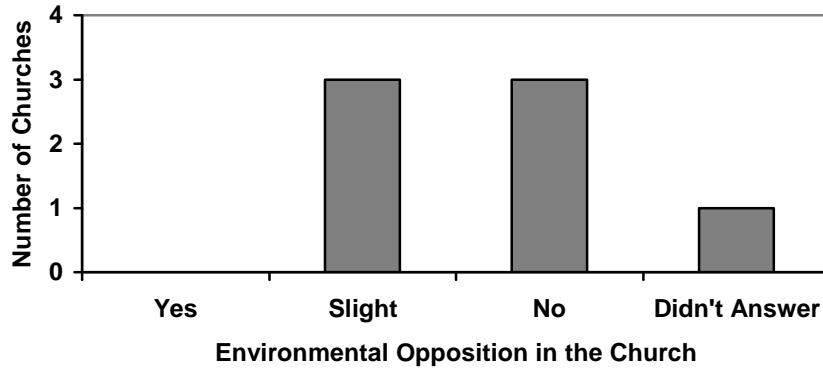
*\*Some churches include more than one method based on different participant answers.*

#### 4.6.4 Obstacles to Environmental Concern

The churches interviewed did not report significant opposition to the environmental things happening in their congregations. The responses seemed to indicate slight opposition in about half of the churches, but even in most of those the opinion was not

unanimous. However, many of the obstacles to what was happening that came up during the interviews were related to people and their attitudes.

**Figure 13 Opposition to the Environmental Concerns of the Church**



The challenges being faced by churches could be seen to fall into several categories<sup>1</sup>. The largest was people-related, with the main obstacle mentioned being people who were lazy, comfortable, or did not want to change their actions and lifestyle. Close behind was the related challenge of communicating change to the membership in a positive way and trying to get people to change their behaviour. Apathy, lack of participation, lack of interest, lack of understanding and awareness, and getting people to use facilities like composting and recycling were brought up, and again, they can be seen as related to a lack of motivation. Another issue mentioned in half the churches was trying to get groups using the church to use it well by doing such things as properly composting and recycling, and turning out lights when they were done.

People also came up in relation to operation, and the fact that lack of volunteers and lack of time is a challenge to doing things. The church can be viewed as a volunteer organization since many jobs are done by unpaid people, and this introduces challenges in terms of how to enforce environmental policies. The difficulty to share equally the work required to see environmental things happen was also brought up in such forms as

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<sup>1</sup> For the complete list of challenges mentioned during the interviews, please see Table 21 in APPENDIX B.



not everyone wanting to wash dishes when disposable cups were not used. On the “things” side of operation, financial constraints were mentioned by almost every church. The lack of free compost and recycling pickup for churches was commonly raised, as well as the challenge of using reusable dishes that needed to be washed instead of disposable ones.

Buildings and infrastructure were another challenge. Many congregations had large old buildings to maintain and heat, and they were sometimes limited in what environmental upgrades could be done affordably. There was also the challenge of people’s attachment to their church building, which made considering things like merging with another church to share a building more difficult.

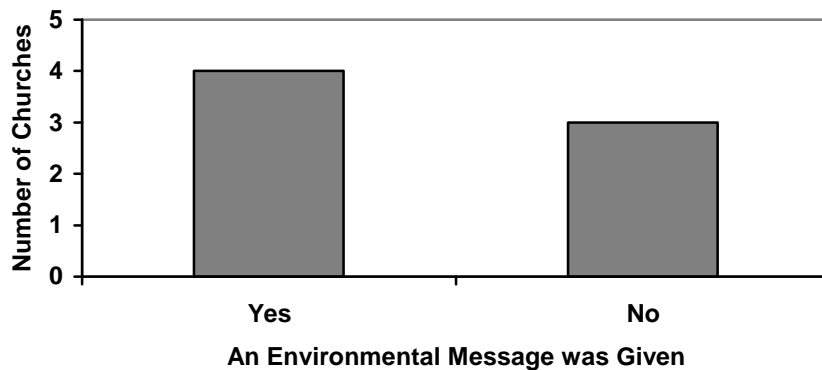
Teaching and education were a further area of challenge mentioned in some churches. Issues such as environmental concern not being as clearly laid out in the Bible as some topics and the lack of a well developed theological framework were cited. Other things mentioned were the need for more resources, a lack of resources from the denomination, the need for teaching to convey the information required by congregations to make decisions, and that churches can sometimes place more focus on other issues that (in the participant’s view) are not as important.

Several challenges did not seem to fit into the general groups. These included liability issues if someone was hurt in a green area left on the church property, a lack of an implementation plan to do things, and that promoting specific environmental issues can lead to disagreements. In one case, a church was preparing the groundwork for merging with two other churches, and so they were not sure where their current environmental initiatives would be after the merger, or what building they would be in. In another case, the church had gone through a period of financial troubles, and so they were just reaching a place of health where they could look at issues beyond survival. As many churches face shrinking and aging congregations, these last two challenges will likely be faced by more congregations in the future.

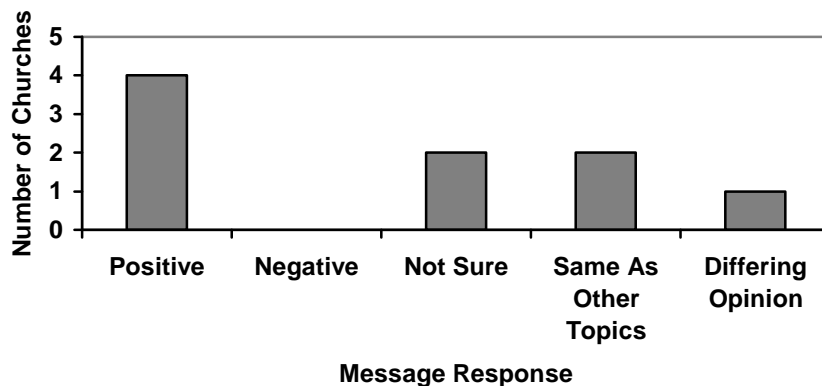
#### 4.6.5 Church Response to Environmental Messages

Four of the seven churches had had at least one sermon given related to environmental concern, and two of the others mentioned it had been a focus in another context (either a Sunday School class or a night in their youth ministry). Half the churches mentioned the response as positive and none reported it being received badly. Two of the churches felt the response was the same as for other topics, and two mentioned that it was difficult to say how others received it. Only one church seemed to have a differing opinion between responses, but that was with one person feeling the response was positive and the other person not being sure how it was received.

**Figure 14 Message about the Environment was Given at the Church**



**Figure 15 Response to Message about the Environment Given at the Church\***



*\*Some churches where specific sermons had not been given had had other events (e.g. a Sunday School class) that allowed an opinion to still be voiced.*

## **4.7 ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITY AT THE CHURCH**

The fourth section of the interviews focused on what was happening at the church and the person's role in it.

### **4.7.1 What Has Been Done**

The churches involved in the study have undertaken numerous activities<sup>1</sup>. It was found that many were related to their building and property, education and teaching, or their church operation.

Building-related activities mentioned often focused around efficiency. Having a building assessment, adding insulation, covering windows (either permanently or just in the winter), switching to low energy light bulbs, and installing programmable thermostats were the most common things mentioned. The congregation that was involved in the construction of a new church was using elements of the LEEDs standard for environmental buildings, and they intended to use geothermal heating. Other churches were looking beyond their building to the property where it was located. One church hosted a community garden, and another was building a prayer garden on their property, which the pastor hoped to expand until they no longer had a lawn that would require mowing.

Teaching about environmental issues was happening in all the churches. Most had had a sermon where environmentalism was either touched on or the main focus. Over half the churches had addressed environmental concern in other church programs (such as their Sunday School or Youth Ministry), and many had also done some form of education around environmental and justice issues like mining and bottled water. Methods of education included presentations, speakers, posters in the church, resources (likes books

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<sup>1</sup> For the complete list of environmental activities mentioned during the interviews, please see Table 22 in APPENDIX B.

and videos) that were available for borrowing, and electronic means such as information in church e-mails or on the church website.

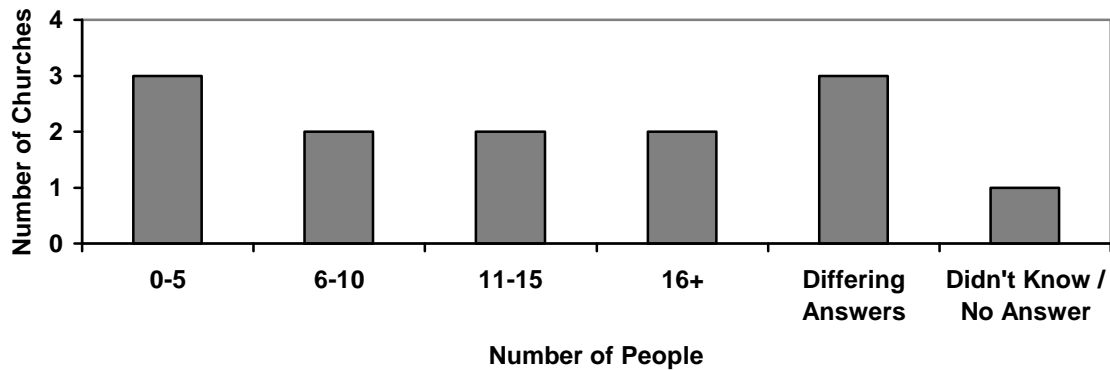
Almost all of the churches interviewed made note of standard composting and/or recycling occurring in their churches, and two provided battery recycling. Energy and oil reduction took on various forms, such as turning off lights during the day, monitoring oil use, having energy efficiency as a standing item on the church council agenda, keeping the thermostat turned down, and modifying hot water use. Half of the churches mentioned instructing people who use the building to be environmentally conscious and do things such as use the composting and recycling bins and turn off the lights before leaving. Some churches had reduced or eliminated their use of disposable dishes and cups for their functions. Two churches also showed innovation in their desire to be greener. One church had the idea to replace their plastic coffee stir sticks with fettuccini noodles, so they could be composted after they were used. Another church with a rodent problem did not want to use pesticides or a pest control agency, so instead they adopted two cats from the SPCA to deal with the situation.

Other activities were mentioned by the churches participating, such as reclaiming and reusing items, involvement with Kairos, trying to make changes in their denomination, lobbying their local government, and community involvement. Despite all these actions though, the churches in general had very little knowledge of other churches in the province that were trying to incorporate environmental concern into their operations.

The number of people involved in promoting concern in each church was generally small, and what constituted promotion was a matter of interpretation. When asked about who else was involved in environmental issues, interview participants sometimes mentioned groups like a Property Committee, for whom environmental issues would be part of what they dealt with but were not their sole focus. Only two churches mentioned having more than fifteen people involved, and in both cases there was someone from the same church who had indicated fewer. In one case, the person who stated there were over fifteen included an extra group in their tally, and gave a different figure for how many people

were involved in another group. In the other case, there was a serious difference between the two people interviewed; one person said there was no active environmental team working on issues, while the other felt there were over twenty people doing things. The difference might have been caused by differing interpretations of what the question was asking.

**Figure 16 Number of People Promoting Environmental Concern**



#### 4.7.2 Teaching and Materials

Most of the churches interviewed had a group that was involved in some way with education around environmental topics. In some cases it was a social justice group that also covered topics concerning the environment, while in another case it was a group responsible for the use of the building that instructed other groups how it should be used. Presentations or sermons in the Sunday service that focused or touched on environmental issues were mentioned in over half the churches, and several churches had included eco-tips or announcements in their church bulletins and/or e-mail lists. Using posters to help promote environmental concern were mentioned by almost half the churches, and as many had had people from external organizations come in and give presentations for their members. Over half the churches had also looked at environmental topics in their Sunday School or youth ministries.

**Table 13: Ways of Teaching**

<b>Teaching Method</b>	<b>Number of Churches</b>
Group at the church involved (e.g. social justice cell, Board of Stewards)	5
Sermon/Talk/Presentation with environmental focus in Sunday service	4
Sermon/Talk/Presentation where environmental topics are touched on in Sunday service	5
Kairos services	2
Mentioned in services (e.g. children's time, prayer time, hymns with nature theme)	3
Announcements / enviro tips in e-mails/bulletins	4
Announcements in church service	2
Workshop given for church members by external organization (e.g. Citizens for Public Justice, Environmental Depot, ACAP)	3
Attending environmental talks outside the church	3
Sunday School / Youth Group mention environmental concern	4
Sunday School class specifically on environmental concern	1
Posters in the church	3
Watched Inconvenient Truth in the church	2
People talk to each other about environmental issues/concerns	2
Information available on church website	1
Information given at committee meetings	1
Skits	1
Mentioned in stewardship retreats	1
Support summer camp for youth	1

The primary sources of materials were Christian in nature, either coming from their own denomination or a group like Kairos. Sometimes churches developed their own resources, drawing on both secular and Christian sources. Books and posters were two popular resources for teaching, and two churches made mention of watching The Inconvenient Truth and using it to raise awareness. Not many churches directly

mentioned the Bible as a teaching material, but given how many mentioned it as a source in their faith for environmental concern, it may be assumed that it not being mentioned by respondents was more a focus on other materials than scripture being absent.

**Table 14: Teaching Materials Used**

<b>Teaching Materials</b>	<b>Number of Churches</b>
Materials from Christian organizations (e.g. Kairos, Inter Pares)	4
Materials from denominational group	3
Resources developed by church or other churches in the denomination	3
Materials from secular organizations (e.g. WWF, Clean Nova Scotia)	2
Books (e.g. Christian environmental concern, green living)	3
Posters / Newspaper articles	3
Videos (e.g. Inconvenient Truth)	2
The Bible	2
Information on light bulbs & gave out bulbs	1
Lenten calendar of environmental things to do each day	1
Green Bucks to put on the windshields of idling cars	1
Community garden physically promote enviro concern	1
Own experience from past	1

#### 4.7.3 Influence of National Denomination

As shown in Section 2.7, the denominations included in the research work have been making statements and providing resources related to environmental concern. However, the trickle-down effect to the people interviewed, especially congregants, has not been significant.

Over half the clergy interviewed were aware of their denomination, or a group within their denomination, promoting environmental concern. In contrast, two thirds of the congregants either did not answer the question or were not aware of what direction was

being put forward by the denomination. When asked about initiatives the denomination has begun, only two congregants mentioned things happening at the regional or national level. Clergy on the other hand were more aware; three mentioned Kairos campaigns that were being promoted by their denomination, and three mentioned promotions coming from the denomination itself. Specific things being done included examining and reducing travel, energy audits of offices, providing funding for environmental initiatives, and providing resources. When asked about resources provided by the denomination, a third of the clergy and almost half of the congregants stated they knew or thought that resources were available, but they either had not looked them up or had not used them. A third of the congregants were aware of environmental topics being covered in denominational publications, and a third of clergy were aware of issue-based resources being provided (on topics such as water). Regarding the usefulness of the resources, five people mentioned they were useful or had been used in their church, but the majority of the people interviewed had not used them, had not looked for them, or did not provide an opinion.

**Table 15: Direction from Regional/National Denomination**

<b>Direction</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>
Promoting environmental concern	5	2
Broad statements but not very challenging / Not much being said	2	1
Direction given through Kairos	1	0
The church is farther ahead than the denomination	1	0
Not Sure / Have not heard anything / No direction	0	4
Question not answered	0	2



**Table 16: Environmental Initiatives by Regional/National Denomination**

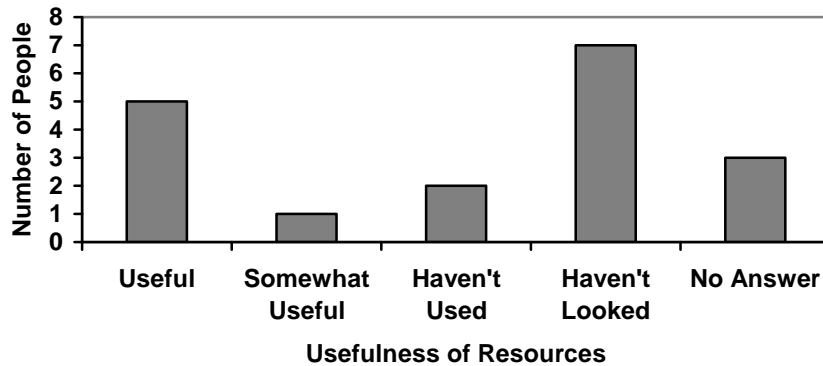
<b>Initiatives</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>	<b>Denominations</b>
Campaigns through Kairos	3	0	3
Advocacy / Education campaign with environmental component	3	0	2
Evaluating amount of travel use (e.g. car, air)	1	1	2
Providing information (e.g. website, booklets to send for)	1	1	1
Energy audits of offices	1	0	1
Environmental Steward church classification with criteria list	1	0	1
Grant money available for churches making green changes	1	0	1
Person hired to look at environmental issues*	1	0	1
Not sure / Do not know of any / None	1	4	4
Question not answered	2	3	4

*\*The respondent that mentioned this stated it had gone from a dedicated position to being combined with another portfolio.*

**Table 17: Environmental Resources Provided by National Denomination**

Resources	Clergy	Congregants	Denominations
Knows/assumes resources are available but have not accessed/used them	3	4	5
Some information available (e.g. denominational magazine articles)	0	3	3
Issue related resources (e.g. water)	3	0	2
Resources from Kairos	2	0	2
Online information	1	1	2
Papal encyclicals	1	0	1
Church service materials	1	0	1
Resources from other churches	1	0	1
Sunday School materials	0	1	1
Did not know / Has not looked	0	2	2
Question not answered	0	2	2

**Figure 17 Usefulness of Resources from the National Denomination**

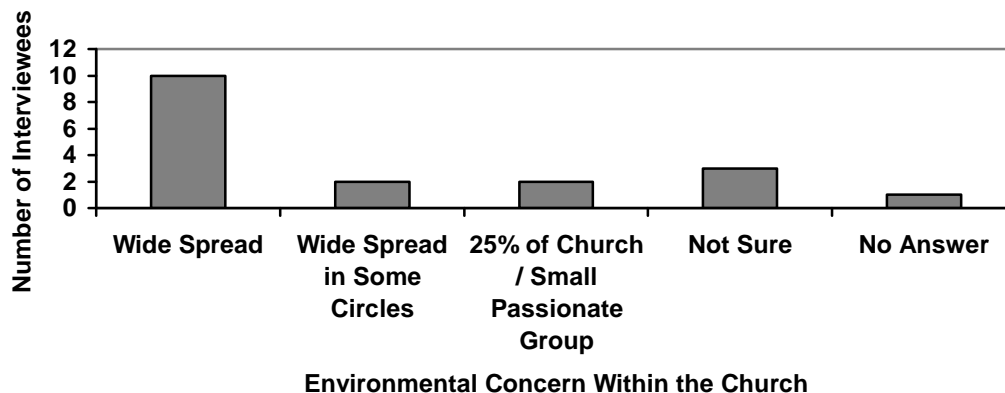


#### 4.7.4 Concern in the Church Body

Over half of the people interviewed felt that environmental concern was wide spread within their church. However, several answers brought out the fact that “concern” is not a precise term, and can be present without inciting action. One respondent stated: “I

think it'd vary from person to person. I think most people, as in most people outside of the church, would say that it's a concern. I mean it's probably within the top 10 list of concerns. Where it would appear in that list I think would depend on who you were speaking with" (P4, 2008). Another person said: "If you ask anyone, they will say 'oh yeah, it's a problem'. And they know it's a problem. But how deep that concern goes, whether it goes deep enough that they would make personal sacrifices for the environment, is another question" (P5, 2008). The level of concern of the interviewee could also affect their view of the depth of concern within the church. In one case a clergy member felt the members of the church were doing what was typical for Nova Scotians, like composting, but going a step further he felt that only about a quarter of them were actually environmentally conscious.

**Figure 18 Amount of Environmental Concern within the Church**



When asked about how the churches decided how much emphasis should be put on environmental issues, it became apparent that individuals were a key driver. The most common response was that it was the pastor or an individual at the church that helped set the importance. It was also common to hear people mention that it was not a formal process or that there had not been a formal decision. In other cases it was a response to the concerns of people within the church or within society, or tied to the importance of social justice issues. Sometimes people from the same church gave different reasons, reinforcing the idea that it was not a formal decision.

**Table 18: Decision Making Process for Environmental Emphasis in Church**

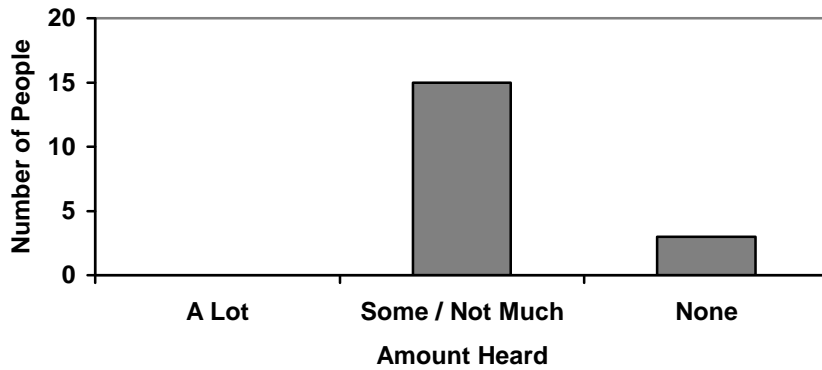
<b>Decision Making Process</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>	<b>Churches</b>
Pastor / Individual initiative / Leader moving things forward	1	2	3
Connection with societal interest / what is happening in the world	2	0	2
Not a formal process, simply part of what the pastor does	2	0	2
Not a structured decision / Not prioritized	1	1	2
Connected to social justice but less emphasis	1	1	2
Decided by a group at the church (e.g. Social Justice cell)	1	0	1
Response to concerns of people in church	1	1	1
Influenced by topic for the week in the lectionary	1	0	1
Part of stewardship obligation	0	1	1
Placed in a priority list with other issues	1	0	1
Have not really decided	1	2	3
Not sure	0	1	1
Question not answered / Answer ambiguous	0	2	2

#### **4.8 ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITY IN NOVA SCOTIA CHURCHES**

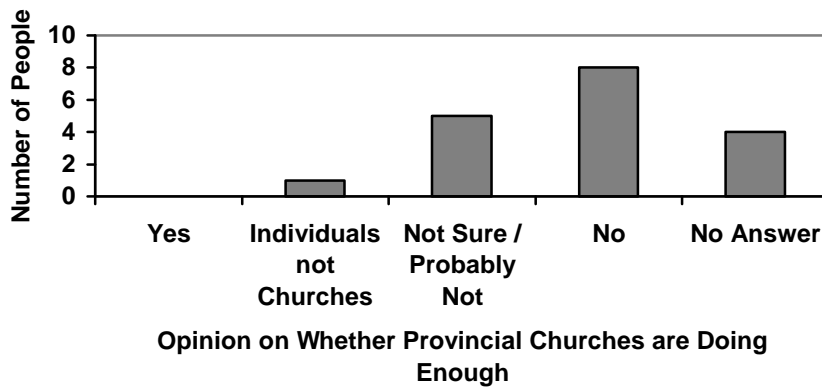
Participants were asked about their knowledge of what was happening among other churches in Nova Scotia with regards to environmental concern. In general, their knowledge was low. Some people had heard about other churches through Kairos, or had visited churches for meetings and seen evidence of activities like recycling. No one indicated they had been hearing a lot about other churches in the province acting on

environmental issues, and several stated they had not heard anything. It is not surprising then that when asked about whether churches in Nova Scotia were doing enough, no participants answered with a resounding “yes”. Almost half answered no, over a quarter of interviewees were not sure or did not know, and almost a quarter did not answer the question. One person replied he felt it would be more individuals being active rather than their churches, and another stated that while he was not sure he would guess some churches were doing nothing while others were putting a lot of attention on it.

**Figure 19 Amount Heard About Other Environmental Churches in N.S.**



**Figure 20 Are Provincial Churches Doing Enough about the Environment?**



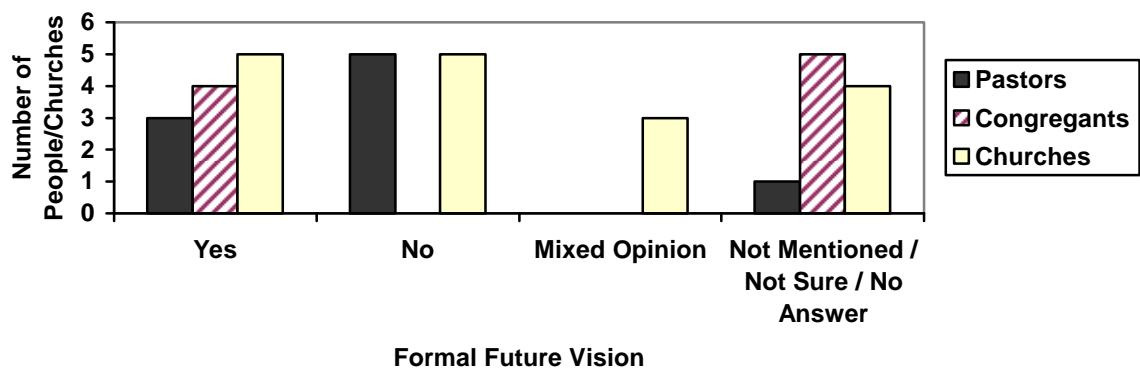
## 4.9 FUTURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITY IN NOVA SCOTIA CHURCHES

After finding out about the past and current activities of the churches taking part, participants were asked to look to the future and give their thoughts on where their churches, and churches in Nova Scotia, were headed with environmental concern.

### 4.9.1 Thoughts on Their Church Programs in the Future

Participants were asked about where they saw their church programs being in five to ten years time, and if there was a vision for where things were headed. It became apparent that while personal visions or hopes for the future may exist, a formal corporate vision was often lacking. Only the joint interview with two people from the congregation involved in building a new church seemed to express a common vision, which was for the new church to be built and operated in an environmentally responsible way. In the other churches, where one participant might express a vision or hopes, another would either state there was no formal vision or simply not mention one.

**Figure 21 Presence of Future Vision for Environmental Programs\***



*\*Where people did not directly answer the question but expressed hopes for the future this was treated as a yes.*

Many of the ideas brought up for the future were only mentioned in one church, though there were exceptions<sup>1</sup>. Three churches mentioned wanting to connect with their local community and environmental groups more over environmental issues, and the same number wanted their church to have a better grasp of the relationship between Christianity and environmental concern, while two churches expressed the desire to see concern become more ingrained in their congregation. Other things mentioned included taking more of a leadership role on environmental issues, developing resources, being more vocal outside the church, and making further changes to their churches and properties. Three churches mentioned a desire to be in a new building that was environmentally friendly, but only one was actually moving in that direction; a person from one church thought it would be a good idea as they were preparing for an amalgamation, and someone from another church stated it as a wish if they moved out of their current location. Thus, it became apparent that the things being mentioned were in some cases being worked on, but in others were still just hopes for things that would occur.

#### 4.9.2 Role Interviewees Want Provincial Churches to Play

Participants were asked about the role they wanted churches in the province to play concerning environmental issues. Clergy had more opinions on the topic than congregants, and the three most common answers (each being mentioned by three clergy members) were for churches to work together more, to interact with government over the issues, and to develop and share resources and help each other. The only idea that was expressed by more than one congregant was to have churches think more about the environmental and social costs of the things they do and purchase, rather than focusing just on the financial cost. Other hopes expressed for churches included working more with their communities, reducing their ecological footprints, encouraging their members to be more environmentally aware and responsible, increased prayer for the environment, having a church within each denomination champion environmental awareness within its

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<sup>1</sup> For the complete list of future goals, please see Table 23 in APPENDIX B.

denomination, and for clergy to be speaking about environmental issues and their denominations to be encouraging and challenging them to do so<sup>1</sup>.

#### 4.9.3 Role They Want Their Church to Play

The last formal question of the interviews was to ask what role participants saw their church playing in making a difference or setting an example. A third of the participants expressed that they wanted their church to be an example of environmental concern, or they felt they already were with what they were doing. Almost a quarter of the interviewees expressed ideas relating to working more with others (their communities, environmental groups, and/or other churches). Other ideas expressed included demonstrating to others that there are churches that care about the environment, developing resources and educating people, encouraging change, and being a leader on environmental issues. One pastor, when talking about potential roles, brought up the point that it was not just about what the church might want to do; it was also about what God wanted. “And if we can do more, great. But we need to trust that if God wants us... if God’s going to push us to do more, we need to ask for more people who had these expertises to come forward and be a part of that. And, as somebody who works at the parish, I really feel like my job is to make a place for that to happen” (P9, 2008).

**Table 19: Desired Role of Own Church with Regards to the Environment**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>	<b>Churches</b>
Set an example by doing things properly	4	2	4
More involvement with society / government / other churches / environmental groups (both Christian and secular) to make changes	2	2	3
Educate people in congregation and/or the community about the environment	1	1	2
Be a leader on environmental issues	2	1	2

<sup>1</sup> For the complete list of desired roles, please see Table 24 in APPENDIX B.



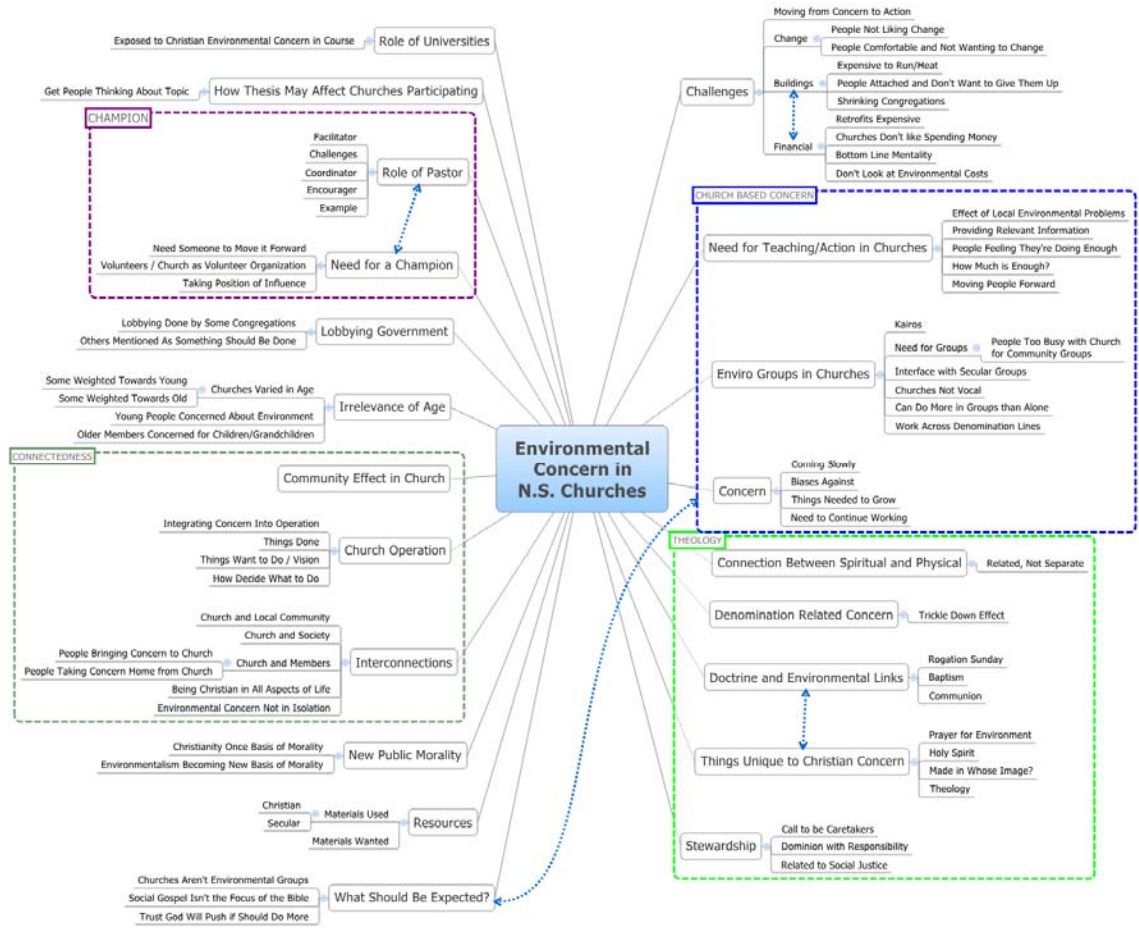
<b>Role</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>	<b>Churches</b>
Demonstrate the church is interested in the environment	1	1	1
Encourage/Challenge people to be more environmentally responsible	1	1	1
Produce resources for use elsewhere	1	0	1
Help people find information/resources concerning environmental topics / Share information	1	0	1
Facilitator to help churches work together and tackle bigger issues	0	1	1
Hope gardens help people think about creation / Gardens one of the few green areas on the street	1	0	1
Encourage more community gardens	1	0	1
Do more open events (e.g. Earth Hour)	0	1	1
Use knowledge/expertise of congregation to make a difference	1	0	1
New church will be an example of environmentally friendly building	1	1	1
Not sure	0	1	1
Question not answered	0	1	1

## CHAPTER 5      DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Will *we* satisfy creation's expectation? Are we worth creation's waiting? Will this eager creation – so earnestly looking for salvation through the children of God – be assured and fulfilled by *our* coming? The answer we *must* be able to give is clear. We must not let creation down. We must not forsake the one who never forsakes us. We must pray 'Thy will be done!' And then we must do it! (DeWitt, 1991)

The interview method of data collection was utilized to gather information that goes beyond a simple fill-in-the-blank answer, which provided further insight into the character of what was happening in Nova Scotia churches with regards to environmental issues. As the interviews were read and coded, similarities and patterns began to emerge. Interesting points were tagged, organized, and grouped with other categories, and eventually some overarching themes developed. Figure 22 is a Mind Map created to show some of the interconnections. This chapter will expand upon the data results to provide insight into the main themes observed.

**Figure 22 Mind Map of Emergent Topics**



**5.1 THEOLOGICAL COMPONENTS OF CONCERN**

There are different reasons why Christians can feel compelled to care about the environment from a faith perspective. Section 2.3 discussed a number of potential sources, stemming from ideas such as social justice, a call to stewardship, caring for what God cares about, living simply, and nature being a way to know God better. As participants discussed their personal and corporate theologies and reasons for concern, views similar to those found in the literature were observed.

### 5.1.1 Stewardship

The Bible and Stewardship were the most common faith sources for environmental concern mentioned by participants. Five of the six churches had at least one person who mentioned stewardship directly by name, and one person in the sixth church mentioned a similar concept. This would indicate that it is an area for churches interested in promoting concern to focus on, because it is something that Nova Scotians will understand. One respondent said, “if you have any Bible study experience, it’s there. For anybody who wants to see, it’s there. You take care of the earth. God created it, for us to use. You look after it. You’re... you be a good steward. It’s not just something pretty to say, or a suggestion. You know, it’s a demand, really” (P8, 2008). As shown in Section 2.3.1, the literature also indicates clear Biblical support for the concept of stewardship, and ideas concerning its relation to dominion.

“I guess I’ve had a challenge in how do we look at ourselves as both stewards of, and part of, creation” one interview participant said, “because one seems to have a semi-dominant aspect and the other is more, holistic” (P6, 2008). This sentiment alludes to the tension between the Biblical commands of stewardship (Genesis 2:15) and dominion (Genesis 1:28). Lynn White Jr. saw dominion as the clear winner. “[Christianity] insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends” (White, 1967). John Stott, a well known theologian, sees it differently. “The dominion God has given us is a responsible stewardship, not a destructive dominion” (Stott, 2000). A different author wrote, “if we resemble God in that we have dominion, we must be called to be ‘imitators of God’ (Eph. 5.1) in the way we exercise it. Indeed, far from giving us a free hand on the earth, the *imago Dei* constrains us. We must be kings, not tyrants” (Spanner, 1998). These latter views align more closely with those expressed by the participating churches. One clergy member said: “Genesis, when God asks us to be stewards of the earth, and gives us dominion over the earth, how we exercise that dominion says something about who we are as Christians. If we enslave our environment and abuse it, then we’re not doing what God has asked us to do. Just because we have dominion, doesn’t mean that we exercise it with ruthlessness. We need to exercise it with justice and mercy” (P9, 2008). A similar view was expressed by another clergy member at the same church, and a congregant at a

different church stated: “[Jesus’] idea of having dominion over the earth was to come and serve. And to me that's a very analogous approach to how I view humanity. Humanity, the greatest of God’s earthly creations. Well, greatness to God seems to be tied to actually the service element. [...] In the same way we should be here to serve in that way. Being great is a responsibility, in the most wonderful sense of the word” (P11, 2008).

One participant addressed the argument that the world would eventually be replaced, lessening the importance of caring for the earth (see Section 2.2.7). “The Bible talks about a new earth, and I don’t think it’s this one disappeared. It sounds more like this one, improved. And I think we can be part of making, of bringing that kingdom of heaven to earth. Of bringing that vision to here. Whether we believe that we’ll ultimately be able to fix everything ourselves or not, the argument that it’s all passing away isn’t a reason to do nothing. There’s lots we can do. And it ultimately relates back to our relationship to God and how we care for the things He’s made” (P6, 2008). A similar idea is found in Pirkei Avot 2:16 of the Talmud: “It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task, but neither are you free to absolve yourself from it” (Rabbi Tarfon, 2010).

### 5.1.2 Spirit and Matter Together

The majority view of interview participants is that the physical and material worlds are closely related. None expressed a view equating to the dualism that has contributed to a lack of concern for the environment (as described in Section 2.2.1), but dualism was acknowledged as existing. “I think the church has a lot to be responsible for as far as the disconnect between spiritual and the earth” stated one congregant (P12, 2008). A clergy member expanded the idea further, recognizing the presence in history of a dualistic outlook, but countering that there is integration because of Jesus’ incarnation. The incarnation of Christ being an example of the spiritual and physical world connection is an interesting one, and was expressed by another clergy member at another church. “Well I think the heart of Christian faith is that there is a connection between the spiritual and the physical. That’s the whole meaning of the incarnation. The whole significance of it is that God took on flesh. I mean, that’s one of the most radical concepts that exists,

and it's the, you know, it really flies in the face of our age old tendency towards, kind of a dialectic between the spirit and the physical, this kind of dualism that has existed, principally out of Greek philosophy" (P4, 2008). A similar view can be found in Joseph Sittler's 1954 essay "A Theology for Earth". "It is the heart of the Christian faith that this mighty, living, acting, restoring Word actually identified himself with his cloven and frustrated creation which groans in travail. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:14). To what end? That the whole cosmos in its brokenness [...] might be restored to wholeness, joy, and lost love" (Sittler et al., 2000). Just as the covenant God made after the Biblical flood covered not only Noah but all creatures, showing them to be of concern, Sittler's posit that the whole cosmos will be restored carries the natural implication God cares about it as well as mankind. The incarnation of Christ as a counter argument to dualism was expressed elsewhere by Sittler. "The idea that the Incarnate Word is in himself the unity and harmony not only of men, but also of the entire material universe was a theme that runs throughout virtually the whole of the writings of many influential fathers" (Sittler et al., 2000).

### 5.1.3 Tying Concern to Familiar Traditions

It may be expected that, especially among clergy, people involved with the environmental activities of their church would have a grasp of the theological underpinnings that support concern. Spreading that connection effectively to others who do not have the same understanding might be facilitated by tying it into things that are already familiar.

One church member, while talking about a focus their social justice cell had done in the past on water, said it had not gathered a lot of interest. She felt part of the reason was because it was not an issue people could relate to. "It was kind of interesting, right? I think there's a disconnect for people between... we still have lots of water, so they can't think about people not having water" (P12, 2008). Showing the connection and relevance of environmental concern to existing values and understanding can help bridge this gap. The fact it was a social justice cell in the church that was spearheading the environmental activity, and that it was not the only church where this was the case, shows

that some Nova Scotia churches have made the connection between social justice and environmental concern (discussed in Section 2.3.5), even if social justice was not explicitly mentioned very often as one of the sources for concern (Table 10). One participant summed up the compatibility of the concerns succinctly when she said, “I’d like to see all the churches use fair trade coffee, and drink it out of a glass cup” (P8, 2008).

Hearing about environmental concern on Sunday morning is a relatively new experience in Nova Scotia, as indicated by some literature (O’Leary, 1999) and demonstrated by the interview answers (Table 5 and Table 6). Acceptance of these ideas by congregants may be gained more readily by connecting them with things that are already familiar. One pastor mentioned the emphasis she placed on the environment was influenced by what was going on in the world, and something she liked about Kairos was they focused on an environmental issue that was important and in the news. Then, “because people have heard it in the news, it makes it easier for them to relate. And so they’ve heard it at least twice from different places in their lives” (P3, 2008). She also utilized the weekly theme provided by the denomination to tie in environmental topics. “We use a revised common lectionary, which means that we have lessons that are picked out for every Sunday of the year. Sometimes they have an earthy bent to them, and it’s the perfect opportunity, because I usually preach on whatever’s in the lessons, and tie it in somehow. And so some Sundays you just go like, ‘Well, I guess we’re talking about the environment today.’ ‘Oh, we’re talking about water today.’ We talk a lot about water, because of baptism” (P3, 2008). The connection between water and Christian doctrine was found in the literature as well. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote: “Water is the source of all life, and a primary symbol in religious traditions. Water cleanses, purifies, refreshes and inspires. The Bible speaks of living waters, of becoming a fountain of living water, of longing for running water, and of justice flowing as a mighty river. Yet how can anyone speak about the ‘waters of life’ if these waters can no longer sustain life?” (CCCB, 2003) The Catholic Bishops of the Columbia River Watershed region also discussed the symbolic role of water in Christianity in a pastoral letter, using such

examples as Jesus being baptized in the Jordan River and calling Himself living water (Columbia River Pastoral Letter Project, 2000).

Rogation Sunday is the fifth Sunday after Easter, and in the past was a time for members of a parish to walk their boundaries, asking for God's blessing on the fields, animals, and crops (Diocese of Worcester, 2006; Evans, 2003). One church mentioned having an outdoor service each year on Rogation Sunday, which was the one service of the year that they went out and participated with the environment. Two other days in the church calendar that have environmental associations are Conservation Sunday, the Sunday nearest to World Environment Day on June 5th (Pickering, 2004), and the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi in October (Cones, 2007). Utilizing existing traditions and themes in churches to incorporate environmental concern not only helps participants see how it connects to their faith, it also demonstrates some of the unique aspects Christian concern brings to the environmental movement.

#### 5.1.4 Unique Aspects of Christian Environmental Concern

There are aspects of Christian environmental concern that do not have a secular equivalent, such as feeling closer to God in 'thin places' in nature where the division between heaven and earth seems smaller (Rejesus, 2006), and creation being the book of God's works, accompanying the Bible, the book of God's words (Johnson, 2002; Murphy, 2006; Opening the Book of Nature, 2006; Robinson & Chatraw, 2006). Further examples of uniquely Christian elements of concern emerged from the thesis interview material.

The importance of prayer is demonstrated by Jesus' actions many times in the Bible (e.g. Mark 1:35, Matthew 14:23, Luke 22:40-44). One of the pastors saw prayer as one of the things the church has to offer. "I think that it would be great on an Earth Day for churches to offer their service in a very public way, to pray, and to encourage their members to pray for environmental change. And then take this prayer, and make it lived. Prayer is so key to everything we do. But, the balance between prayer and works needs



to always be conscious. Faith without works is dead, is I think how Saint James words it in his letter. And I think that it's gotta be the both. You need both, both need each other. But you gotta live what you pray, and pray what you live" (P9, 2008). Another person saw the Holy Spirit as playing a role in helping people be responsible. "I'm sure it will progress. And I'm sure that people who care will embrace it, whatever they do that's right for the environment. You know. You can't reckon without thinking about the Holy Spirit, I don't think. And He's the one who created this world, and I believe that He'll help us to take care of it. The people who really want to" (P8, 2008). The Holy Spirit has different roles in theology, such as counselor, advocate, and strengthener (bible-knowledge.com, 2009), and the role of helper is seen in the Bible as well (e.g. Romans 8:26, 2 Timothy 1:14).

Christian theology states that mankind is made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). Lynn White Jr. saw this as another reason Christianity was part of the environmental problem. "Although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image. [...] Man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature. Christianity [...] not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends" (White, 1967). One of the clergy interviewed however raised the problem of image from the opposite perspective. He contended that a person is primarily spiritual, which then raises the question of where images of ecology and self come from. The Christian perspective is that humans are made in the image and likeness of God, but in our present culture people are no longer sure in whose image they are made. Those with power may determine the images, and the images may become whatever is biggest and strongest, with the spiritual being destroyed. He felt that in western civilization people have lost their bearings as to the image they are trying to live out.

Both views raise the important effect personal image can have on actions. White criticized the transcendent image he saw in the Bible, but what are some of the secular images that can be taken? Where does the environment fit if man's view is simply "survival of the fittest"? What importance does wildlife hold if people's self image is

that of an individual and a consumer? Bartholomew of the Orthodox communions stated: “Many human beings have come to behave as materialistic tyrants [...] Excessive consumption may be understood to issue from a worldview of estrangement from self, from land, from life, and from God” (Rasmussen, 2003). Author Chris Goodall said: “I worry all the time that consumerism—the endless cycle of getting and spending—is destructive both to the planet and to the soul” (Goodall, 2007). Christians are not immune, and “like everyone else in North America, Christians have by and large been co-opted by consumer culture” (Neff, 2008). But how might church members’ views of their surroundings change if they decide to take on the image of a steward, entrusted with the responsibility of dominion? How will their actions be affected by seeing themselves made in the likeness of a creator who loved the cosmos so much that He sacrificed His only son (John 3:16), someone who “did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matthew 20:28, NIV)? These are powerful images that Christianity has to offer. White himself said: “Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious” (White, 1967). But in order for these to roles to have an effect, people must be aware of them.

## **5.2 CHURCH-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN**

The environmental movement has been a secular movement in the past, but some now see it becoming a movement based on ethical values and beliefs (Johnson, 1998). Christianity has contributions to make in this area, and concern for creation is arriving in churches, but some feel that it should have come sooner. One interview participant, while talking about the future of their environmental actions, said, “I think it [the church] will start to do more environmentally. I think it’s starting. I think it’s kind of sad to say that it’s starting, you know. It should have been doing it for a long time” (P12, 2008). The documentary “God is Green” said similarly: “As one theologian once put it, sadly, the church often arrives a little late, a little breathless” (Dowd & Sorrentino, 2007).

Some churches have indicated that their members are already in agreement with environmental concern, and one pastor felt he’d learned things on the topic from people

in his congregation. If the church is lagging behind society, the question arises as to what needs to happen for that to change, and what churches should focus on.

### 5.2.1 The Question of Teaching

There are many avenues for teaching in churches, as shown by the variety of things mentioned during the participant interviews (Table 13). However, the clergy of a church typically carry the main teaching role for the congregation. While discussing political influence, Corwin Smidt wrote that clergy were more likely to engage in ideological thinking than congregants, and were therefore able to frame issues within broader systems of thought. “As spiritual leaders, clergy are more likely than many of their congregants to be aware of, and concerned by, the moral dimensions of the problems found in the world around them” (Smidt, 2003). Smidt also commented on the potential influence of clergy.

Each week, thousands of churchgoers voluntarily assemble to hear what pastors have to say from the pulpit. Those who observe and listen carefully get certain messages about what things they should pay attention to, care about, and act upon, and often these cues are not ignored [...] This is especially true when clergy address certain issues frequently and when they address issues that are salient to their congregations and to society. (Smidt, 2003)

While the literature indicates that Christian influence on politics is greater in the U.S. than Canada (Ashbee, 2005; McNally, 2002; Van Die, 2001), the similarities between the cultures would imply clergy still have an influential role on their congregations in Canada. However, societal concern over the environment has preceded large scale concern in Nova Scotia churches. Environmental activity in some churches grew from the concern of members, and over half of the interview participants felt concern was widespread within their church. This resulted in an interesting question emerging: do churches need to be teaching about environmental concern?

One clergy member during his interview said: “I address things that I think that are in need of addressing, and if, you know, 99.9999% are all behind the cause and already agree with it, well what do I need to preach on it for?” (P4, 2008). Another pastor shared, “I have a sense that you don’t have to convince anybody of this, as far as the group that we’re dealing with. You just have to give them permission, and let them know that it is totally scriptural to be able to do what you’re doing. So it’s, all you need is encouragement, not necessarily education” (P1, 2008). And it is true; children are learning about the environment in school, people hear about it from advocates like David Suzuki on TV, almost half of the churches participating had had workshops given by external organizations like Clean Nova Scotia, and theologians are not necessarily scientists.

The question may not be so much whether teaching is needed, but the form, as the second quote alludes to. Wendell Berry said: “What Christians offer is an understanding that the world is not ours, that we are not the ones that give things value” (Sutterfield, 2006). This is a message the church is more qualified to spread than scientists. People need to be aware of facts and issues, and the education on environmental issues (such as water) that is occurring in some churches should not necessarily end. But the greatest education contribution churches may be able to offer is telling their members how concern ties to their faith. The first clergy member mentioned above brought out this point soon after making his initial comment. “I think there’s a need, if anything pastorally, the real need is to give a framework for what people are already doing, for what people already believe. We don’t believe in the environmental cause for this reason, but for this reason over here” (P4, 2008). Conservationist Baba Dioum once said: “For in the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught” (Hoekwater, 2005). Teaching congregations to understand the faith reasons for concern, and what the Bible says about God’s love for everything that exists, has the power to put information from secular sources in a new context and reinforce existing concern in people. Still, response from people will not be universal.

The churches interviewed reported little or no opposition to their environmental initiatives, but clergy were not naïve in thinking everyone was interested. Speaking about the impact of environmental sermons, one pastor said, “it’s very hard to gauge the impact of sermons. The people who are all for it say ‘great sermon’, and then other people don’t say anything [...] [we] hope we’re making an impression, but we never really know” (P5, 2008). Another pastor acknowledged that as with all subjects, some people simply are not interested. “I would say that it’s the same with any topic. That we have those who are engaged, those who are there, and the percentage would be the same pretty much across any specific topic. And really, I think that is the struggle that we will engage in, or be forced to engage in, in the next 10 to 20 years, is how do you speak to somebody who doesn’t want to listen?” (P9, 2008). Despite this, none of the churches interviewed reported an overt negative response to environmental sermons, and the ability of messages to inspire those with concern was shared by one participant. “It was seldom that I heard something that I care about, the environment, being put in context of a Christian message, which I live my daily life by [...] [I think] it inspired a lot of people to consider how environmental concern and their faith intersect. It was probably very helpful for those people who have been in the congregation for years with these concerns and passions, and never heard anything like that spoken, because it was a reaffirmation that those things that they care about, [are] also things that God cares about” (P6, 2008). This demonstrates the potential impact of teaching about the environment from a Biblical basis. “The church has a crucial role to play in developing informed concern for earth community, reverential appreciation for biological as well as cultural diversity, and spirited passion for eco-justice. We can enable each other and those with whom we minister to live into the future in ways that express those spirited characteristics” (Hessel, 1994). Living these characteristics means the knowledge imparted must require a response.

### 5.2.2 Moving Beyond Knowledge

Nobel Prize-winning physicist Max Plank wrote: “Man needs science in order to know; religion in order to act” (Motavalli, 2002). But in order for Christian values to invoke

action, there must be a connection between them and the relevant situation. “Although values may be available, unless they are activated they may have little influence on subsequent behavioral intentions [...] people may not explicitly have their religious values linked to environmental issues in general” (Biel & Nilsson, 2005). The interviews reinforced the fact that concern does not necessarily equate to action. For example: “I think for probably everyone in the congregation, there’s at least some level of concern about the environment. [...] But how deep that concern goes, whether it goes deep enough that they would make personal sacrifices for the environment, is another question” (P5, 2008). The theological teaching discussed in Section 5.2.1 helps build the link between Christian values and environmental concern, but Biblical teaching can focus on action as well as knowledge.

A Christian environmentalist once quoted the proverb “speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves” (Proverbs 31:8) and asked who would speak up for the old growth forests and endangered species. Jesus himself called people to respond to His teaching. “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46, NIV) Teaching needs to move people forward, but be sensitive to where they currently are, and pastoral comments reflected this. “We’re in a very affluent neighbourhood where cost saving might not be a priority for them. So you have to speak to where people are at [...] meeting them where they’re at, and loving them enough not to leave them necessarily where they were. And that’s what we’re really working on, and just slowly but surely engaging them” (P9, 2008). “You have to engage people, meet them where they are, help bring them along a little step at a time” (P5, 2008). Part of meeting people where they are involves recognizing their current knowledge and interests, and providing relevant information to them.

One congregant described some of the challenges in addressing environmental issues at her church and keeping people interested. She mentioned a talk done by an outside organization. “The guy who sort of did the presentation said something about, you know, using a clothes line. And we’re all sitting there going, we all use clothes lines, right? I mean we’re living in the country” (P12, 2008). This reflects the need for environmental

advocates to know their audience and deliver information that is appropriate, and also challenging to people. If people are only hearing about things they are already doing, like changing their light bulbs or using a clothes line, they may feel they are already doing enough. “And no doubt there are some people who say [...] you know, I recycle, I really think I’m doing my bit. And what we want to do is to educate our membership to get a little bit further and say, you know, ‘yes I’m doing that, and that’s good, but what else can I do? And how can I reach out to other people like me and get them?’ It’s not enough just to sit on a pew on Sunday and say yes, I’m doing my bit” (P10, 2008). The church provides a communal venue for this to happen, where encouragement can come not only from the pulpit but other congregants, and the interviews revealed that congregants are involved in encouraging other church members.

Framing environmental issues in a faith context is appropriate for the church to do so congregants see why concern is Biblically relevant. Once Christians are inspired by their faith to act for environmental change, they need a venue to do it. There are often community groups and NGOs that appreciate new volunteers, but the question arises whether Christians will seek out secular venues to exercise a faith-based concern. They may, if it is a strong passion and they do not find opportunities in their faith community, and pastors are concerned this will contribute to more people leaving the church behind. Speaking about concern among the younger generation, one pastor felt “if you don’t address this issue, you’ll be irrelevant and people will just walk away.” (P1, 2008). Another said, “people often leave the church because we’re not environmentally conscious, and join groups that aren’t faith-based, and sometimes these groups aren’t very friendly to a faith environment” (P9, 2008). As discussed in Section 2.2, church people are sometimes wary of the other values present in environmental groups, and the data from the interviews showed that not many congregants were involved in environmental groups outside the church. The hesitation and concern that can result from stereotypes of environmentalists when joining a group, as well as a sense of aloneness knowing that the source of one’s concern is very much a minority view, has been experienced by the author. Such factors reflect the need for environmental groups in churches.

### 5.2.3 Environmental Groups in Churches

The literature has shown that Church activity can foster civic involvement. “Using data from a 1996 survey of Americans and Canadians, Smidt (1999) found that religion has a significant impact on civic engagement, measured by an index of voluntary association memberships and volunteering. [...] Nevertheless, scholars recognize that the role of religion as a source of cultural and social capital varies across traditions. [...] [G. Lenski (1963)] argued that Protestant churches hold an ‘extra-familial orientation’ that weakens their members’ bonds with their kin groups, while encouraging participation in associational activities. In contrast, the Catholic Church stresses a close relationship between church and family, which limits its members’ participation in voluntary associations” (Lam, 2006). Another article stated, “people often learn about secular volunteering opportunities from religious sources; and, as the social movement literature demonstrates, hearing about opportunities for voluntary activity and being influenced to participate by friends, such as fellow church members, are often the most important predictors of voluntary activity” (Schwadel, 2005). However, denomination can affect where civic participation occurs. “[There are] generally lower levels of secular participation among conservative or evangelical Christians compared to liberal or mainline Christians [...] It is not that conservative Christians are not at all civically active; rather, they tend to participate in civic activities within the church instead of outside of the church” (Schwadel, 2005).

The choice of some people to make church activities their primary source of volunteer activity was evidenced in the thesis research. “I’m so busy all the time with all the work that is generated from church, that I don’t really get involved in volunteer work in the community. I’ve talked about that often. There’s certain things I’d like to do, but there’s not enough hours left” (P8, 2008). Another congregant said, “I think [some]times we’re so caught up in our own church stuff that we don’t have time for community” (P7, 2008). Where situations like this occur, there is a need for a group within the church to provide people with environmental concerns a venue to act on them. One congregant described a



similar scenario resulting in the formation of their social justice group. “The social justice sort of started because there were two of us in the church that we’re sort of going well, there’s nothing for us here, right? So I think he [the pastor] was kind of getting worried about us, so he’s sort of well, let’s start a social justice cell. And then that’s how sort of all this stuff has come about” (P12, 2008). The social justice cell had done things related to both justice and environmental issues, and this demonstrates that having a group doing environmental work within a church does not necessarily require creating a new group.

One of the challenges churches mentioned in being able to do things was lack of time. As one person said about his fellow congregants, “they do an awful lot of good things, and they’re stretched very thin. And I think you’ll find that actually in a lot churches” (P11, 2008). None of the churches that were interviewed mentioned having a group with a sole focus on environmental concerns, but some had groups related to justice and peace work that had addressed environmental topics. As discussed in Section 2.3.5, the two areas are connected, and one pastor saw the people who would be involved in one also being concerned about the other. “The people that are interested in reducing poverty around the world, are the people that are interested in the environment, are the people that are probably vegetarian, are the people that would like to recycle more. [...] So I don’t make much distinction between environmental issues and feeding the poor. Simply because you’re encouraging the hearts of the same group of people in slightly different areas [...] and we probably wouldn’t have three separate areas, or four separate areas, because you’re dragging the same people back and forth all the time” (P1, 2008). Thus, while it is important for churches to have a group where environmental issues can be worked on, the solution may be to incorporate it into an existing group with a related concern. This addresses the challenge of volunteer resources being stretched too thin, while widening the range of issues that interested people can get involved in. As one congregant stated, “I’m not totally focused on the environment, and I don’t think that we can be, because it’s not gonna, sort of, get everybody’s interest and tickle everybody’s fancy” (P12, 2008). By the same argument, adding environmental issues to the agenda of social justice groups may attract new members.

Having groups organizing at the local church level lays the groundwork for larger activities. As will be discussed later, the environment can provide new opportunities for churches to put doctrine aside and work together, as well as with their local communities. However, the first step is having the aforementioned church activity. How does this occur? A theme that emerged from the interviews is how the promotion of concern is tied to the presence of a champion.

### **5.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN AND THE CHAMPION**

Environmental concern is not new in society, but as shown, its emergence as a part of Nova Scotian churches is recent. Through the interviews, it became apparent that people with a concern for the environment often drove the concern of their church. This led to theme of the champion.

#### **5.3.1 The Need for a Champion**

Reverend Jim Ball, Executive Director of the Evangelical Environmental Network, said: “I think people are ready to roll up their sleeves with the right amount of leadership. What’s missing is leadership” (Dowd & Sorrentino, 2007). In an article about churches in the U.K. that were incorporating environmental concern, the author wrote: “[The] churches have in common the presence of ‘an initiator’, someone who raised the profile of environmental issues and without necessarily doing the work, co-ordinated activities” (Pickering, 2004). This was evidenced in the churches interviewed in Nova Scotia as well, and one pastor spoke of it as a necessity.

For us, unless there’s a champion, we don’t spend any time and energy on anything. If there’s a champion, then we’ll do whatever we can to come around that person and say ‘OK, go for it’. And often that may mean just giving them a podium, but it also may mean putting resources behind it. But generally, and if there’s not a champion for anything, no matter what it is, whether it’s children’s ministry or whether it’s... whatever happens to be, we won’t put anybody behind

it because you're really wasting your time, because there's no resolve to move it forward, and there's no one to lead it. (P1, 2008)

Pastors and priests are typically seen as the leaders of their congregation, and in many of the churches interviewed the clergy were a prime mover for environmental concern. But this was not always the case. Clergy have many roles to fill which can limit the time they can spend on one issue. "I believe it's my role to make sure that we are doing what is reasonable, under my watch, in terms of being as environmentally conscious and responsible as we possibly could be. Other than that, again, I can't take on personally every single cause. [...] I can't go to everything. And different people at different times feel motivated to work for a particular cause. Well that's why we have a church. That's why we have different people who can engage in different causes all at once" (P4, 2008). The clergy may also feel there are people in the congregation better suited to be the champion. "I didn't think I was the right person to lead the charge, because it wasn't coming from my heart, it was coming from my head. And then people started to show up [...] and that was part of their heart, and you pay attention to that [...] then it's easy for us to say 'go for it, we encourage you to do that'" (P1, 2008).

The interviews demonstrated ways people worked within the structure of the church to bring change, either by using positions they had or taking on new ones. One person who was the church music director mentioned including the occasional hymn with an environmental theme. Another person became the chair of the church property committee to help bring about changes in the church building. In one church, the pastor who was focused on justice and environmental issues was actually a congregant before being hired. This demonstrates an interesting bridge that can be built. But even when the champion is not a pastor or priest, clergy have an important role to play.

### 5.3.2 The Role of Clergy

The clergy of a church are responsible for spiritual oversight of their congregations, and the importance of teaching about the environment has been discussed (Section 5.2.1).

Pastors and priests have a strong say in what occurs at their churches, and if environmental concern is to become a part of things and grow, it will need their support.

The role of clergy as facilitators and encouragers of what happens in a church came up in several interviews. One pastor spoke of her role as “a little bit as a catalyst and also as a facilitator for what other people might be inspired to do” (P6, 2008). Another replied, “my goal is not just to act according to my preferences and the things that I like, but it’s to support the causes that everyone in the parish is involved with, and to make sure that they’re all happening, and that there’s some level of coordination and harmony between them” (P4, 2008). One pastor spoke of being a cheerleader for the person with passion. “There’s a champion, and it’s Biblical, and we can see that it’s Biblical, and we go, ‘Ra ra ra, let’s do this’” (P1, 2008). Encouragement can also be bidirectional. A pastor who was a champion in his church spoke of “encouraging and enabling and empowering other people, the small number of other people in the congregation like P. and A., [..][to] have a voice and make a difference and encourage them. And they encourage me” (P5, 2008).

Messages congregations receive from their clergy are influential (Smidt, 2003), but clergy have a role to play not only in what they encourage, but in what they demonstrate. “As pastor you kind of know you are a bit of a model at times, for example. And, you know, doing a lot of walking or biking or taking the bus, and things like that. I think sometimes it makes a statement when, you know, everyone else shows up to an event in their cars, and I show up on the bus” (P2, 2008). Demonstrating concern does influence others. One congregant spoke of the pastor as “very special. See, she lives what she believes, and that’s her part, because not everybody does. [..] She helps us a lot, and she expects a lot from us. But see, she’s a worker too. And when the minister is a worker and is not afraid to get her hands dirty and come and take part, other people see that and it sort of spreads” (P8, 2008). One pastor expressed concern over what could happen after he left if the next pastor felt differently about the environment. “I may be followed by some redneck person who hasn’t got a clue. I mean that’s the crazy thing. You work, you put your heart and soul into a congregation as a church leader, and then have to hand it over to someone else. And you don’t know” (P5, 2008).

Whoever the champion is, there is a limit to how much one person can do. One pastor said during their interview, “a lot of it is individual incentive as to what happens here because I can’t do everything. I talk about it, and then they’re the ones who have to do” (P3, 2008). A paper discussing churches in the U.K. that were using a resource called the Eco-Congregation toolkit spoke of a parish church whose “environmental ministry has flourished, steered by a parish Green Coordinator, encouraged and supported by their vicar and with the keen participation of parishioners” (Pickering, 2004). Having a champion and the support of clergy was important, but there was another factor that was important for growth: the participation of the church members.

### 5.3.3 The Need for Volunteers

A study of churches using the aforementioned Eco-Congregation toolkit said, “[a recurrent observation] is that the programme initially only appealed to either one or a handful of enthusiastic members, who subsequently rallied others” (Harmer, 2007). For real change to occur in churches with regards to the environment, the champions need help.

In one of the churches interviewed for this thesis, the pastor was an initiator of the present concerns, but more happened once a social justice cell was formed that worked on things together. In another church, lack of consistent help removing recycling from the building was frustrating efforts to have recycling happen. Although some people object to the idea of churches being described as a type of volunteer organization (Parks, 2006; Schmeling, NA), two clergy members mentioned that it could be viewed as such, and lack of time and/or volunteers was mentioned as a challenge in several of the churches that took part in the thesis research. One pastor described people in his church being time poor, while a congregant in another church saw people already being busy with other activities. As church attendance among the major denominations fall (Statistics Canada, 2007), this will continue to be a challenge. However, having a number of people involved in environmental initiatives is not just about enabling

churches to do more; it helps ensure that activity does not hinge on the presence of a single person.

Church congregations are not static entities, and those that do not shrink can still experience turnover. One pastor described his church as being very transient. “People are coming and going all the time [...] [for reasons] like moving, and education [...] some of the people who have an interest about things environmental [...] are just leaving soon. You know? So you kind of always have to be recreating this momentum” (P2, 2008). Clergy themselves move on, as shown by the fact that eight of the nine clergy interviewed had been at their church for seven years or less, and one of them was planning to soon leave. If the champion moves to another church without the concern and work having been spread to others, activity may at best experience a setback, or at worst come to a halt. As the Eco-Congregation study said, “the observation that the responsibilities of maintaining enthusiasm and promoting the programme, and therefore stewardship, are often left to a few committed individuals, rather than them being collective responsibilities, has worrying long-term implications for the sustainability of the programme” (Harmer, 2007). Another dimension is that if environmental concern does not spread beyond the champion, it may be seen as the cause of a person rather than the church.

One congregant spoke about being on the church council, and supporting a motion by a member to use fair trade coffee. “I could’ve put it on the table, right? But I didn’t want it to be ‘oh, that was E.’s thing.’ But if it’s somebody else, so that was S.’s thing, right? Even though I believed it, and I would have liked to have seen it a couple years earlier” (P7, 2008). Likewise, for care of the earth to really influence a church and last, it needs to grow beyond the concern of the champion. Concerns are not likely to become part of the culture of a church if they are only held by a very small minority. Having more people involved provides more avenues for issues to be raised, and also affects other congregation members. “Simply put, what is preached from the pulpit and talked about in the pews influences church members’ activities” (Schwadel, 2005). This community

influence in the church is an example of a larger theme that emerged from the interview data: the subject of connectedness.

## **5.4 INTERCONNECTEDNESS**

People can see their lives as separated into different areas, such as home and office, relaxation time and work, or family and society. Church activity can also become a segmented part of life, something that is done on Sunday but has little relevance to the rest of the week. However, in the Bible, Jesus called followers to a commitment that was all encompassing (e.g. Matthew 16:24-25, Mark 10:21, Luke 6:46-49, Luke 9:59-62). Devout Christians see their faith as affecting more than where they spend Sunday mornings; it affects how they live their lives. Thus, the effect of seeing environmental concern as a faith issue can have far reaching effects as well. How this interconnectedness manifests itself appeared in several ways in the interview data.

### **5.4.1 Environmentalism and Christianity Not in Isolation**

Several times in interviews, people spoke about how environmental concern and Christianity should be integral parts of a Christian's life, affecting who they are and how they live. "We're stewards of the earth, and so what you do in your personal life is what you do on Sunday, what you do on Sunday is what you do in your personal life, you know? You're Christian whatever you do, and I think you have to be a Christian in every situation" (P8, 2008). "I think that we need to live out our faith in every aspect of our life, and part of that is our environmental issues [...] this Pope has really said, you know, we've somehow separated our environmental conscience from our faith life, and the two are so intertwined" (P9, 2008). One participant drew parallels between living in an environmentally conscious way and living as a Christian. "Even in terms of what should we do exactly. It's not as simple as 'here's a list'. I mean, it's a life; it's much like Christianity in that respect. Yes, you can write your general rules [...] but on some level it becomes not just rules. It is a lifestyle, it's a belief, it's a contemplative life is what it is essentially. It is sitting back and saying 'what is the effect of this?' (P11, 2008).

For pastors, an integrated concern for the environment can emerge naturally in their messages. Talking about the amount of emphasis put on environmental issues, one pastor said: “I don’t really think about it. It’s just part of who I am and what I do. And people either see it or they don’t, right? And when I talk about it, I just honestly say, this is what I do” (P3, 2008). Another pastor similarly described it as being an integrated part of what she thought the church should be doing. The activities of congregants can reflect on the church as well, giving it a “green” appearance even though their actions stem from personal decisions. One participant said: “A lot of people drive bikes [...] the primary reason would be to reduce their footprint [...] but that’s not a standard policy in the church. That’s simply who they are. And that’s what they happen to do anyway” (P1, 2008). This raises the interesting question of “what is the church?” In the Bible, the early Christians met in the temple courts and people’s homes (Acts 2:46), and the church referred to the people. Today the word has come to encompass buildings, property, activities, and more, but people are still an integral part. And the concerns of the people can become the concerns of the church. Speaking about the genesis of environmental concern at his church, one pastor said, “in informal ways, I guess it’s been around probably for awhile, because there’s a number of people in our church who I think it’s important for them. So then it just naturally, kind of, it’s part of the life of the church” (P2, 2008). This demonstrates the influential connection between people and their church community.

#### 5.4.2 Interaction Between Personal & Corporate Concern

The environmental concern people practice in their personal lives can influence what happens in their churches. The examples of composting or recycling came up in the interviews, with several people mentioning that since they did it in their homes they felt it should be done at their church as well. This theme of doing the same in both places came out in different ways, along with the recognition that it could reflect a lack of personal environmental behaviour among church members. “For the most part, if they do it right in their house, they’ll do it right when they’re out other places. If they don’t only do it



halfheartedly at home, they'll do it halfheartedly everywhere else, won't they?" (P8, 2008) "There's the issue of behaviour change too, in that if someone isn't used to doing recycling or composting at home, it's not something that they're going to come to church and look to do" (P6, 2008). What people observe others doing at church has the potential to influence their own behaviour, but the amount of impact is relative to the level of participation.

Clergy and fellow parishioners can affect congregation members' opinions and actions, but the level to which people are affected is relative to the amount of interaction. In a study of volunteer participation, one study stated: "It is important to note that church activities other than religious service attendance are pivotal to this relationship between religious activity and civic activity. Church activities other than attending services may provide vital civic skills and the opportunity for church members to learn about occasions for civic participation, while simply attending religious services may not bring the same benefits" (Schwadel, 2005). One congregant spoke similarly about the people in her church who were concerned about the environment. "There are some people who come to church, they just want to come to the worship service but they don't want any fellowship with anybody, and they leave. Their reasons are their own. But the core of the people who come do go out for the fellowship. They do want to talk to each other. You can't really get to know people just by standing next to them for a worship service if you're paying attention to what's going on. So they come out and they just have some fellowship and have their coffee and that's... those are the people who are involved in this. It's not the people who come and go quietly" (P8, 2008). These quotes demonstrate that churches' ability to encourage environmental behaviour depends on more than sermons with an environmental focus. Rebecca Gould, a professor of religion and environmental studies, stated: "It's one thing to have theological arguments, but the average congregation needs to connect those with their own lives" (Motavalli, 2002). Communal interaction is important for the spread of communal values, and having members internalize environmental values is an important step in bringing change. Christian Ecology Link, a group founded in the UK, launched a climate change campaign in 2004 and recognized that none of the goals would be achieved without personal change

(Bodenham, 2005). Similarly, one interview participant said the effect of what the church does will be greater if people receive the message and then go do things at home as well.

#### 5.4.3 Connecting Concern and Church Operation

Churches have begun to see the connection between environmental concern and how they operate. As shown in Table 22, a number of things have been done by congregations to reduce their ecological footprint, and similar examples can be found in the literature (e.g. Cones, 2007; Davies, 2002; Goodall, 2007; Pickering, 2004). Financial savings may influence some initiatives, but that is not the sole consideration. One pastor that was interviewed for the thesis spoke of her church needing a new roof, and so they considered an option that was more environmentally friendly than traditional shingles even though it was also much more expensive. Another pastor spoke of environmental concern being raised at a staff meeting. “It came up as a result of discussions about communitive waste, and rentals, and things like that, and just talking about the environmental impact we’re having as a community. And then talking about, is that a good example, and being good stewards” (P9, 2008). The desire to have their church set an environmental example was mentioned by a third of the interview participants (Table 19), and churches are realizing that not considering the environmental impacts of what they do can impact their credibility.

One pastor spoke about hearing another pastor suggest going to the Halifax skateboard park and passing out bottled water. “My first reaction was, I’m not sure that witnesses to the Christian faith, to hand out bottled water. And I didn’t actually say that [at the] time, it wasn’t sort of pertinent to the discussion, but, I appreciated that he wanted to reach out, and just have sort of a presence, and make connection. And maybe sometimes making connection, we do need to use stuff in this creation, [..][but] if Christians are handing out bottled water [..][I think] we could lose some of our witness” (P2, 2008). Another participant spoke of the challenge to stop using disposable glasses. “You know, it always bothered me that some people didn’t want to wash the cups. So they’d rather use

Styrofoam. I said oh no, you can't use Styrofoam. We're a church. We can, you know, we have to live what we believe. And the Styrofoam is the worst thing in the landfill" (P8, 2008). These examples demonstrate how environmental awareness can change opinions of what is okay to do, and affect how churches operate. Environmental awareness also has the potential to bring new opportunities for churches to work together.

#### 5.4.4 Connecting Across Denominations

Most of the churches interviewed did not have a large number of people involved in their environmental activities, which limited how much they could do. One congregant said, "we're not a large congregation. We could all make it our complete and sole focus, and I'm still not sure it would make enough of a dent" (P11, 2008). To help do more, that church had a person whose position included community networking. "[The church] makes a very active attempt to communicate, to recognize we aren't the only ones working on things, and together we can do more. And I think that's really where any large problem really has to be dealt with" (P11, 2008). One of the clergy participants saw the potential for what could be accomplished with coordination. "I think churches could work together and do some really, really neat things. We could be instrumental. [...] We could do all kinds of stuff, and get the communities around our churches to help us, and really make a spot of difference" (P3, 2008). David Suzuki agrees, and recognized that faith communities in Canada form a huge network that could help bring about change (Philpot, 2007). The challenge is getting people to participate, and have churches get past denominational differences. The clergy member continued: "We could do some really phenomenal things if we had the energy and the people power to do it. I don't know if people are willing enough to do that though. And working together. You know? Churches don't work well together" (P3, 2008). Another participant though saw the environment as a cause with the potential to bridge the gaps that have grown between Christian groups. "I think all churches have a role to play in this, and I think it's an excellent chance for churches to get together ecumenically, and forget their doctrinal differences, but agree that, as brothers and sisters, you know, we should be taking

political action” (P10, 2008). Common action would also be a way for churches to encourage each other, and know that they are not alone in their concern for creation.

A survey of churches in the U.K. that had used the Eco-Congregation program (described in Section 2.4) revealed that 54% of respondents felt there was insufficient publicity about the program (Harmer, 2007). Similarly, the thesis research showed that participants had limited knowledge about other churches in Nova Scotia trying to incorporate environmental concern (Figure 19). This diminishes the ability for churches to gain new ideas and learn from each other. One pastor expressed the value of having churches gather to share what they have been doing. “If around Earth Day we could get together someplace and have [...] presentations by different churches. ‘This works for us, this didn’t work.’ Like it would be really awesome. I mean I’m all a big fan of having churches step forward and say both. This works. This did not work for us, but maybe it could work for you. And be humble enough to say, you know, we failed in this attempt, but we made an attempt” (P9, 2008). Another pastor said similarly, “not that all churches are the same, but there might be some lessons learned in one place that are really useful for another church to try and implement [...] just resource sharing in terms of where you get information, studies, educational materials for the people in your community that are useful, and that have both a faith perspective and talk about environmental concern. I think there’s a lot of sharing that could be done that would probably be really helpful” (P6, 2008). Sharing like these participants described would facilitate the growth of environmental concern in the region, especially in congregations that are trying to decide how to begin. The desire to see this happen demonstrates the value of groups like Kairos.

Kairos is a national ecumenical organization with a social justice and environmental focus, which has 11 member groups from several denominations (Kairos, 2009). Kairos is active in the Maritimes, and the organization was mentioned by five of the seven churches interviewed. Several participants had used Kairos materials in their church or had attended a Kairos event. As interest in environmental issues grows among congregations, the potential for Kairos to act as a conduit between churches will grow as well. Given the apparent lack of knowledge churches have of other churches outside

their area that are active environmentally, there is room for greater focus on communication, publicity, and resource sharing. Increased exposure for churches taking action may also facilitate greater interaction with people outside the church.

#### 5.4.5 Interconnection with Society

Churches do not exist in isolation. Their buildings, like their members, exist in society and can impact that society, and the reverse is true as well. Environmental concern from secular sources has had an influence on churches, and different churches have adapted secular materials for use in their faith communities (Table 14). Several participants mentioned environmentally related activities their church had done in the community (Table 22), or expressed a desire to do so. As previously mentioned, one pastor said: “We could do all kinds of stuff, and get the communities around our churches to help us, and really make a spot of difference” (P3, 2008). Another said, “I would hope that the environmental movement in Halifax knows that there are churches out there that are passionate and engaged, and that churches would be connecting with that community too” (P6, 2008). Umbrella groups like Kairos could help facilitate those connections, and secular environmental groups would gain new allies, as in the U.S. where “nationally and locally, the environmental and religious communities are re-examining their roots, taking note of shared values and missions, and seeking ways to work together” (Johnson, 1998). Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope said: “The environmental movement for the past quarter of a century has made no more profound error than to misunderstand the mission of religion and the churches in preserving the Creation” (Johnson, 1998).

Environmental concern does not exist in isolation. The same way the interviewed participants see the spiritual world as linked to the physical, environmental concern is being seen as linked to their faith and their life. This then raises a final question. If environmental responsibility is one aspect of a connected existence, how much focus should there be on it in faith communities?

## 5.5 THE QUESTION OF EMPHASIS IN THE CHURCH

Different authors have spoken of the role the church can play in the environmental movement, and in some cases, the special contributions churches can make. Several related to theology have already been discussed (Section 5.1.4), but there are others. One is the ability to gather people, which Sister Rita Mary Harwood of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland called the power to convene. “The church has the power to bring people together and not be seen as having an agenda” (Choo, 2006). This capability influences a huge number of people across the globe. “If the statistics are true and one-third of the world is comprised of Christians, what would happen if one-third of the world became serious about upholding the value of environmental stewardship? This would make a difference. This would change the world” (Robinson & Chatraw, 2006). The church can also provide hope to continue on in what can seem a hopeless situation. “In God’s story there is the tension of ‘now and not yet’ – we can work in the ‘now’ and expect to see something of the goodness of God impact our world. We know that we will only fully see God’s purposes achieved with the new heavens and new Earth, so ‘not yet.’ This allows us to work for the coming kingdom without falling prey to inaction (the problem is too big) or despair (nothing seems to work or make any difference), because there is hope for the future” (Srokosz, 2008).

Churches are not immune to criticism, but they are also not as susceptible to the forces that can restrict politicians from pressing for environmental change. Father Sean McDonagh, author of Climate Change: The Challenge to All of Us, said: “It’s the churches [who] should give leadership. Why should the churches give leadership? Because in one way, we’re not dependent on the votes, like a man like Tony Blair is. And so if you get a Right Wing backlash, you’re not going to put on a carbon tax. That’s not the position of church leaders” (Dowd & Sorrentino, 2007). Perhaps for this reason, businesses can see churches as a threat to how they operate. John Wood, a biologist and author of numerous articles on Christian environmentalism, said: “There is great fear of a church dictating how we make our money, especially in a resource-driven economy like Alberta. If a church leader condemns our industry, and, because of his influence in a

position of religious authority, enough people agree with him, we might have to confront a change in how and what we produce. It's easier, therefore, to dismiss what he says because of his role as a religious leader — to simply say there's no room for church and economy to mix.” (Weber, 2009).

The literature and research has shown that Christian churches and denominations have the potential to be an influential partner in bringing environmental change. However, a fundamental issue remains: how much emphasis should churches be expected to put on environmental issues?

References to the idea of environmental stewardship exist in the denominational statements of eight of the largest Protestant traditions, and the image is also common in the literature of both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy (Vena, 2009).

Environmental awareness is also growing in churches at the local level, as shown by the literature and the thesis interviews. However, the focus of the Bible is not to form environmental groups, as pointed out by one participant. “For us, the social gospel, the social consequences of the gospel, are a part of the puzzle. Some churches almost make these issues the primary focus of their work and mission. And I don't believe that's the case. I believe our primary focus is to spread the gospel, the word of God, and that ethical issues come, are secondary. You know, Christianity is not an ethical system primarily. It's not about ethics. We've made it about ethics, or we often tend to make it about ethics. Christian ethics are a consequence of following Christ. But some churches make this the be all and end all of their mission to promote these kinds of causes” (P4, 2008). Another participant, talking about whether churches in the province were doing enough, saw the potential for extremes of environmental concern in both directions. “If I was to guess offhand, I would say in some places, it's a really big deal. Almost bordering on false idol, right? And that can be within the church. In other places, it would be nonexistent completely” (P1, 2008). Finding the proper balance is a challenge churches face, and since the Bible does not say “thou shalt recycle”, the importance of environmental concern is argued in different ways.

When Jesus was asked what the most important commandment was, He replied: “‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29-31, NIV). Some have tied this passage to the importance of environmental responsibility. Sally Bingham, a minister in San Francisco, said “Christians are commanded to love their neighbours, and you can't do that by polluting their air and water” (Motavalli, 2002). Likewise, Rev. Jim Ball of the Evangelical Environmental Network said: “You can't love God without loving your neighbor, and loving your neighbor today means reducing pollution, whether that neighbor lives down the street or in Africa” (Choo, 2006). Another author saw responsibility going beyond neighbourly love. “A growing number of churches have recognized the environmental crisis and the role that human beings have played in bringing about current planetary conditions. There is also a growing awareness that the causes of the problems are spiritual as well as political. Churches have more than a social responsibility as good neighbors; environmental concern is an outflowing—or should be—of Christian faith, a central category of Christian discipleship. The root of the human source of the ecological crisis is, after all, human sinfulness, manifested in patterns of living that denigrate the planet and human dignity” (Vena, 2009). These statements reiterate importance, but not much indication is given on how to proceed with implementation. Some further insight may be gained from a story of the early church.

In Acts chapter 6 of the Bible, Christianity was spreading, but a social issue arose when the Grecian Jews complained that their widows were being overlooked when food was distributed.

So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.’ This proposal pleased the whole



group. [...] They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. (Acts 6:2-6, NIV)

The church leaders recognized there was an issue that should not be ignored, but they also did not divert their attention from what they viewed as their primary purpose. Capable people within the church were chosen to address the problem while the leaders continued on with the main ministry, and the church flourished. Similarly today, churches should not ignore environmental issues, but seek how they can respond as part of their overall ministry. One pastor during the thesis interviews spoke of his church having knowledgeable people who could be used to make a difference, but prayer and seeking God's will was part of discerning what they should do. "We have to be involved in some way, and doing our part, by recycling and reducing our impact on the carbon footprint on the environment, would be great. And if we can do more, great. But we need to trust that if God wants us, if God's going to push us to do more, we need to ask for more people who had these expertises to come forward and be a part of that. And, as somebody who works at the parish, I really feel like my job is to make a place for that to happen" (P9, 2008).

As churches address the question of emphasis, it is unlikely there will be a "one size fits all" solution. Like the people in them, every church is unique; each has a role to play, and each may feel led to different levels of action. Perhaps part of the puzzle solution is the connectedness discussed in Section 5.4, which appeared through participants who saw their environmental concern and their faith being integrated into their life, and examples like the pastor who hoped that concern in his congregation would "become a part of the fabric, the culture, the unspoken assumptions of the community of the church" (P5, 2008). Mike Ferber of the Environmental Studies program at King's University College in Edmonton said: "Our spirituality should be central to our lives and influence the decisions we make. That's why Christian environmentalism is a powerful movement. It shows a keen interaction between our society, the land we live on, and our beliefs at work" (Weber, 2009). It may be some time before evidence of this movement becomes a

general characteristic of Christianity in Nova Scotia, but in some churches at least, the movement has begun.

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Throughout history, Christians have been agents of profound social transformation. Now, we could become agents of a similar environmental renewal. (Harris, 2008)

### 6.1 RESULTS SUMMARY

This research included exploratory work on environmental concern among Nova Scotia churches to determine the theological reasons for concern and the practical results. Eighteen people from seven churches in three areas of the province took part in the research, with an equal split between clergy and non-clergy participants, though some of the non-clergy members had official roles within their church. Six denominations were represented, which were affiliated with approximately two thirds of the provincial population in 2001. Data was collected through face to face interviews, and analyzed using open coding in Atlas TI.

The results of this study will be of use to churches in the province seeking to become more environmentally conscious by allowing them to learn from the experience of other local congregations, as well as providing knowledge about the types of activities that are possible. The research will also be useful to secular environmental groups looking to partner with churches by giving insight into the reasons Christians care about the environment and some of the initiatives they are already engaged in.

Many topics arose out of the thesis data. The analysis discussion focused on five that were considered to be the key themes of interest.

#### 6.1.1 Theology

There are different reasons Christians may become concerned about the environment, such as acknowledging a call to stewardship, recognizing God's concern for the earth, learning about God through nature, the relationship between environmentalism and social

justice, and rejecting a materialistic lifestyle. It was found that the primary reason for concern expressed among the participating churches was the Biblical call to stewardship. The connection between environmental concern and social justice was also apparent given environmental topics were being addressed in several churches by justice and peace groups, and the relationship was mentioned in interviews as well.

Christians may disregard the environment because of a focus on spiritual matters and a disconnection between the physical and spiritual worlds, but the data showed this physical/spiritual separation was not present among the views of interview participants. Evidence also existed of churches utilizing doctrinal aspects that are familiar to their members, such as baptism or Rogation Sunday in the church calendar, to tie in environmental topics. Doing this gives congregants ways to connect their existing faith and what is familiar to the newer idea of faith-based environmental concern. The interviews also raised the unique contributions Christianity brings to the environmental movement. These include prayer, the wisdom and help of God to work on issues, and calling people to bear the image of a steward and servant following Christ rather than a consumer and individual focused on themselves.

#### 6.1.2 The Need for Teaching and Groups in the Church

Information on environmental concern is available from numerous secular sources. The thesis data indicated there is a role for churches to be doing education as well to provide congregants with the theological basis for environmentalism, which affirms existing concern in a faith context while countering misconceptions (such as those described in Section 2.2). This can be inspiring for people who have not heard their concern endorsed by the church before, but it was recognized not everyone will be engaged.

Several participants cited the challenge of motivating people who were not interested in environmental issues, or who may express some concern but not sufficient to make lifestyle changes. The need to be aware of where people are and meet them there to move them forward was raised, which added the requirement of teaching being

appropriate to the needs and level of the congregants, as well as encouraging action. Once people respond, there is a need for church-based groups. The thesis data showed low participation among congregants in secular environmental groups, and people can make their church their primary source of volunteer involvement. Environmental activity can be incorporated into existing church groups, as demonstrated by the justice and peace groups in the interviewed churches that included environmental aspects, and this in turn ties concern into familiar programs and addresses the issue of limited volunteer resources.

### 6.1.3 The Role of the Champion

A common theme in the interview data was the role of the champion. Environmental activity relied on one or more people to make it a priority and push for environmental concern in their church. The champion could be the pastor or a congregant, and they may utilize their position within the church to promote concern.

Clergy were seen to have an important role to play even when they were not the champion. As leaders who can influence their congregation, and who have a large say over what happens within the church, clergy support for environmental activities is important for concern to progress. The ability to be a facilitator and encourager for people in the congregation with environmental concern was demonstrated, as well as the positive effect when clergy are a role model of the environmental ethic being advanced.

For concern to grow within the church, the champion must rally others. Aside from the limitation of how much one or two people can do, the longevity of environmental activity is threatened if concern does not spread. The interview data showed some churches experience high turnover rates, and clergy periodically change pastoral charges. If the champion moves away, activity at the church will suffer if it has not been taken up by others. Further, without a larger support base, it will be seen as the concern of an individual or minority rather than a concern of the church.

#### 6.1.4 Connectedness

The interview material demonstrated the positive effect on environmental concern when people saw it as an integrated component of their faith, which in turn was an important part of their daily life. This connectedness influenced clergy to integrate environmental concern into the messages they gave, and congregants were led to practice environmentally responsible behaviour at home and at church. Communal relationships within the church raised opportunities for people to share environmental values with others, and hopefully spread awareness and change.

The research showed that churches are becoming aware of the environmental implications of their activities and operation. This can lead to changes in how things are done, but generally change has not come quickly. The potential for environmental concern to be used as a way to bridge denominational barriers and bring churches together to share ideas and work on a common issue was recognized, though this does not appear to be happening yet in Nova Scotia. The data also revealed a desire among churches to have more interaction with society. Some have made movement in this area through various activities, such as engaging their local government on environmental topics or hosting a community garden, but it is an ongoing process that in some cases is still in its infancy.

#### 6.1.5 Emphasis

It was shown that churches have unique contributions to make to the environmental movement, but the amount of focus to place on this issue needs addressing. The interview data revealed that in most cases, the emphasis currently being placed on environmental topics by the participant churches is not being decided in a formal way, and a corporate vision for the future of environmental activity is lacking. The unique character and situation of each congregation means that it is unlikely a “one size fits all” answer to the question of emphasis will be found, but it is important for every church to be involved in some way, and to wrestle with the role environmental concern will play in their church life.

## 6.2 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A number of minor themes arose during the analysis that were not further addressed in the discussion section. However, elements of these themes are potential avenues for future research and are expanded upon below.

### 6.2.1 Churches and Political Action

A 2005 poll in the U.S. showed that while almost two thirds of respondents believed clergy should not discuss political issues from the pulpit, about half felt it appropriate for religious organizations to speak out on political concerns (Church & State, 2005). The power of Christians to influence politics was shown in the 2004 U.S. election when “Bush again secured the White House because of ‘a super-mobilization of the Christian right’” (Ashbee, 2005). Two of the churches that participated in the thesis research had contacted their local government concerning environmental topics, and several interview participants felt that lobbying was something churches in the province should be involved in. Christians who have lived in Nova Scotia have held “green” political roles, such as Nova Scotia Minister of Environment and Labour, and leader of the Green Party of Canada (Canadian Christianity, 2007; Kidston, 2007), but Canadian Christians do not have the same influence as their U.S. counterparts. “Not only has the image of a Christian Canada faded into history, but the very thought that religious institutions and beliefs might have a role to play in public life strikes many as archaic, if not problematic” (Van Die, 2001). An area for research is to see what influence churches in the province could have in moving government towards stronger environmental protection, and whether Nova Scotia NGOs lobbying the government on environmental issues have had support from churches or Christian groups.

### 6.2.2 Denomination Related Concern

The thesis research drew from six different denominations, but most only had one church participating. Some denominational influence was apparent in the interviews, such as Papal teachings being mentioned in the Catholic Church, but many congregants were unaware of what direction the national body of their church was giving (Table 15). The situation in Nova Scotia appears to be similar to the UK, where “denominations have produced environmental statements, but among local Christian leaders and congregations the integration of earth-care into mission, theology, biblical exegesis, liturgy and worship is patchy at best” (McKeown, 2007). More research could be done on the trickle-down effect of denominational statements and resources (like those described in Section 2.7) to the local church level, and what their real effect is. There were also three denominations (Baptist, Presbyterian, and Pentecostal) that were associated with one percent or more of the provincial population in 2001, but that did not have a church representative in the thesis study (Table 3). The research goals for the thesis did not require having representatives from every large denomination in Nova Scotia, but future research could investigate how widespread environmental concern is in these three denominations.

### 6.2.3 The Impact of Age

Environmental concern has sometimes been characterized as a greater concern among young people than older generations. The characteristics of the churches interviewed, however, demonstrate that being a “young church” is not a requirement for environmental action. The number of participating churches with a primarily young congregation was the same as the number who characterized themselves as primarily older, and the congregants involved in what was happening ranged from university age to a person in their sixties. Author Tony Campolo wrote, “I suppose that becoming a grandfather has heightened my concern about the destruction of the beauty and ecological balance of our planet. [...] I cannot help but ask myself, what is so important for me to have that I am willing to sacrifice the future of my children and grandchildren in order to get it?” (Campolo, 1992) Similar concern for future generations was seen in the interviews, but older people not understanding environmental issues or resisting change



was also mentioned. A further exploration of the effect of age on environmental concern in churches could provide useful insight into the future of church-based concern in the province, since many traditional churches are watching their congregations grow older and decrease in number.

#### 6.2.4 A New Basis for Public Morality

In the past, churches held much more influence over public life in Canada, and public morality was based largely on Christian principles. An interesting idea that appeared in the interview material was the concept of environmentalism becoming a new basis for public morality. “Moral issues used to be really important, right? Like, how we lived morally. And I think the environmental, I think on degrees, even in society probably, that’s the big one now. Right? It doesn’t matter how you live morally, but how you live environmentally is huge. And I think we see that, kind of in the church too” (P7, 2008). Speaking about environmental concern, another participant said, “this is one of these moral imperatives that seems to have a universal acceptance. So, it’s kind of a public morality [...] for anyone to stand up and say ‘I’m against recycling’, I mean, you’d be an outcast [...] it’s one of the areas of morality where there’s a convergence between what’s politically correct and what is theologically correct” (P4, 2008). The compatibility of environmental concern with Christianity has been stressed by this thesis, but the question of whether environmentalism is becoming another system in secular society for determining right and wrong in how people live would be an interesting topic to investigate further.

#### 6.2.5 Getting People Into Nature

A topic that was rarely mentioned in the interviews was the value of getting people outside to interact with nature as a component of promoting concern. Nova Scotia is generally a rural province, with many parks and wilderness areas, which should provide ample opportunity for people to experience the things described in Section 2.3.3. However, the form of excursion can affect the result. One author has written: “Families who were getting out weren’t doing so in the traditional sense – they were going in

vehicles or machines where they couldn't possibly hear nature and were probably going too fast to appreciate it. I know that what people don't see, they can't appreciate. And what they don't appreciate they won't value. [...] I realized in order for the environment to become a value in the church, it had to be experienced individually and passed on generationally" (Robinson & Chatraw, 2006). Church camps in natural settings are one way this can be done, and several exist in Nova Scotia. An area for research is to explore how these camps affect children's view of nature, and whether stewardship values are being promoted in them.

#### 6.2.6 Environmental Conditions Affecting Concern

One of the churches participating in the thesis research was located in Sydney, and the pastor commented that the people in her congregation were more open to environmental concern than in some of the other churches she had been in. Though she did not know why that was the case, she wondered if the proximity of the Sydney Tar Ponds was a reason, and the fact that people had seen environmental destruction first hand. Likewise, one participant in another church mentioned that a campaign about water did not garner much interest, and speculated that perhaps it was an issue people did not relate to. It would be interesting to explore the connection between local environmental conditions and the environmental activity of churches, and to see if the emphasis on stewardship found by this thesis is related to the rural nature of Nova Scotia, the historical reliance on primary industries, and the effect of events like the collapse of the inshore fishery.

#### 6.2.7 The Challenge of Buildings

Churches mentioned different challenges they faced when trying to green their congregations, and a recurring problem was the buildings they had to deal with. One Catholic writer summed up the problem when he said: "Many of our buildings, beautiful as they may be, are the consumption equivalents of the Hummer H3. [...] We may even need to abandon some buildings that can simply no longer be justified because of their environmental (and financial) cost" (Cones, 2007). The cost of heating and maintaining large buildings, the challenge of getting people to consider changing their building, and

the recognition that hard choices may eventually need to be made were raised in the interviews. Some resources have been provided to help churches (e.g. Dodge, 2006), but it was apparent that there are no simple answers, such as when a participant might feel that sharing a building with another church would help reduce their overall cost and environmental impact, while a congregation that was doing so then faced the challenge of trying to coordinate changes with a second congregation that did not seem to be as interested in environmental initiatives. More research could be done on how churches are addressing the challenge of their buildings, and what options are available to reduce their ecological footprint.

### **6.3 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

When the thesis work commenced, there was a lack of academic information concerning the environmental activities of churches in Nova Scotia. Several questions were formulated to guide the research (Section 1.3), and the subsequent data collected provided insight into the answers. As may be expected, both similarities and differences were found among the congregations that participated. The reason for environmental concern was often tied to the Biblical notion of stewardship, and connections with social justice were also present. Concern was supported by both the clergy and the congregants, and which group was the main driver depended on the church being interviewed. Change often came slowly, and concern was not equally shared by all church members, but a large number of activities were happening and being tried when the sample churches were considered as a group. The participants wanted to see the things they were doing continue and grow, and to see other churches involved as well, but knowledge of what was already happening in other churches and at the denominational level could be improved, especially among congregants. Data on some topics, such as the effect of location on concern, was not sufficient to draw strong conclusions and constitute areas for future research. At the same time, other interesting and emergent themes, such as the role of the champion in environmentally active churches, did develop from the interview data, and provided insight into how the transition from talking to acting took place.

The emergence of churches as players in the environmental movement is ongoing, and the long term effects are yet to be seen. The research conducted for this thesis has added to the field of knowledge for the situation in Nova Scotia, but more research is needed to determine how environmental concern is evolving in provincial churches, and whether they can be the Christian avenue for change that Lynn White Jr. felt was needed.

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## APPENDIX A INTERVIEW DOCUMENTS

### A.1 INITIAL CONTACT E-MAIL SCRIPT

Hello. My name is Peter Young, and I'm a graduate student at Dalhousie University in the Masters of Environmental Studies program. I received your contact information from *(insert source)*, and they said your church is working on some environmental initiatives. My thesis involves talking to churches that are addressing environmental issues and finding out how their concern and activities came about. Right now I am trying to identify churches that fit my thesis topic whose members would be willing to take part in my study, so I was wondering if I could find out a bit more about what your church is doing with respect to environmental activities. If you would like to chat on the phone instead of through e-mail, please let me know and I can give you a call.

Thank you, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Peter Young

MES Candidate

Dalhousie University

## A.2 PARTICIPANT WAIVER FORM



### **Title Page**

*Title:* Environmental Concern in Churches in Nova Scotia

#### *Local Principle Investigator:*

Name: Peter Young, BSc Gen., BEng, MScE, MES Candidate

Department: School for Resource and Environmental Studies

Department Mailing Address: 6100 University Ave., 5<sup>th</sup> floor, Halifax, NS, B3H 3E2

E-mail: [PJYoung@Dal.ca](mailto:PJYoung@Dal.ca)

Phone Number: (902) 494-1365

#### *Degree Program:*

Supervisor: Fay Cohen

Department: School for Resource and Environmental Studies

E-mail: [Fay.Cohen@Dal.ca](mailto:Fay.Cohen@Dal.ca)

Phone Number: (902) 494-1364

*This contact information can be used to seek information or assistance about the study at any time.*

**Introduction**

We invite you to take part in a research study being conducted by Peter Young, who is a graduate student at Dalhousie University, as part of his Masters of Environmental Studies. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from it at any time. The study is described below. This description tells you about risks, inconvenience, or discomfort which you might experience. Participating in the study will not likely benefit you, but we might learn things that will benefit others. You should discuss any questions you have about the study with Peter Young; his contact information is on the title page of this consent form.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to gather information on how churches in Nova Scotia are addressing environmental issues in the context of the Christian faith and how this concern began. I would like to find out some general information about the church you serve, what activity is happening within your church that is related to environmental conservation (e.g. recycling and energy reduction), and the history of these activities.

**Study Design**

This project involves face-to-face interviews with clergy and people recommended by the clergy to obtain information on the origin and nature of environmental activities happening at the church. The information collected will be analyzed to find the similarities and differences with the stories of other environmentally active churches within the province.

**Who Can Participate in the Study**

You may participate in the study if you are a pastor or priest at a church selected for this study, or if you have been recommended by a pastor or priest as a person knowledgeable about the activities and history of the environmental programs at a selected church.

**Who Will Be Conducting the Research**

Peter Young will be the person doing the research. He is a student in the Masters of Environmental Studies program at the School for Research and Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. This project is part of his thesis research, and he will be responsible for transcribing the interviews and summarizing all the information collected.

**What You Will Be Asked To Do**

You will be asked to participate in an interview that should take about one hour. The interview will cover the subjects listed above with the option to add additional information or touch on other points as you feel appropriate. Should you require more time than the time I have planned for I will be happy to continue the interview or come back later to complete it if time constraints prevent continuing.

**Possible Risks and Discomforts**

I do not anticipate that there will be any risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. Any unexpected risks or discomforts that arise should therefore be minimal.

**Possible Benefits**

There are no potential benefits for your participation in this study beyond the chance to express your views on the place of environmental concern in churches in Nova Scotia. If you are interested in the findings of this research, a summary document will be made available for

download from the internet once the thesis is complete. The website URL will be made available to all participating congregations.

### **Compensation/Expense Reimbursement**

You will not be reimbursed for your participation in this study.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

I will ensure that all information provided during this interview will be transcribed to protect the confidentiality of the participant. The participant will only be referred to by the participant code that will be assigned them during the interview process. However, I would like to add that allowing me to use your name in relation to quotes will add credibility to what is being said. Should you not want your name to be used please do not sign the signature line pertaining to the waiver of confidentiality. The master list of participant codes will be kept by Peter Young and will not be viewed by anyone else. If you are going to be quoted in the resulting study, you will be contacted and given the chance to approve the quoted material. If you feel the quotation does not completely reflect your feelings or opinion of the topic it is referring to, I will work with you to reword the quotation so it does. If reworking of the quote is not successful, and your approval is not given, the quote will not be used.

Churches participating in the research will be assigned a participant code and only referred to by this code or by their denominational affiliation. However, I would like to add that allowing me to use the church name in relation to information will add credibility to what is being said. If you are the pastor/priest of the church and you do not want your church identified by name please do not sign the signature line pertaining to the waiver of church confidentiality.

Peter Young and his supervisor will be the only ones who will have access to the audio recording of this interview and the resulting transcript. He will destroy the audio files after transcription and thesis completion. All handwritten notes, drawings, or diagrams will be kept on file for five years after which they will be destroyed.

### **Questions**

If you have any questions please contact Peter Young by the methods provided above.

### **Termination**

Any new information that might affect your decision to participate in the study will be provided for you as soon as possible. If you do not wish to participate, please let me know as soon as possible. Taking part in this project is voluntary and you can withdraw from it anytime.

### **Problems or Concerns**

In the event you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, you may contact Patricia Lindley, Director of Dalhousie University's Office of Human Research Ethics Administration for assistance: e-mail [Patricia.Lindley@Dal.ca](mailto:Patricia.Lindley@Dal.ca) or call (902) 494-1462.

## Signatures

1. I have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent to take part in this study. However, I realize that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

2. I give my consent to participate in an interview.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. I give my consent for the reviewer to make an audio recording of the interview for research purposes.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

4. I give permission for direct quotes in the report and/or any publications or presentations arising from this project. I agree that these quotes will be presented anonymously (without my name being used unless otherwise specified).

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

5. I give permission for my name to be used in the direct quotes referred to above.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

6. I am the church pastor/priest and I give permission for the name of my church to be used in the report and/or any publications or presentations arising from this project.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Researcher

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Peter Young)

*A copy of this consent form is given to you for your records.*



### **A.3 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CLERGY**

Interview Purposes: The goal the interviews is to find out how environmental concern began at the church, what things helped it grow, where it is now, and where those involved think it is headed.

#### **1. Opening Questions**

Goal:

- Break the ice and find out a bit about the clergy person and the church
  - a. How long have you been serving in ministry, and how long have you been at this church?
  - b. How many people attend the church? How do the ages range?

#### **2. Knowledge of Christian Environmental Perspectives**

Goal:

- Find out their knowledge and views on environmental issues
  - a. When did you first hear about environmental issues being raised within a church or faith context?
  - b. What are your personal views about a Christian's relationship to the earth? What are your thoughts on the relationship between the spiritual and the physical/material world?
  - c. What groups, if any, have you been involved in that have had an environmental focus?

#### **3. Genesis and Growth of Concern at the Church**

Goal:

- Find out how environmental concern began at the church
- Find out how it grew

- a. What are the sources in your church's faith that have led the church to environmental concern?
- b. When did the idea of environmental concern first get raised at the church, and how did it happen?
- c. Did the idea catch on quickly? How has the level of interest changed over time?
- d. How did the church choose what issues to act on?
- e. What obstacles have you encountered as you've tried to make changes?
  - i. If it doesn't arise out of the previous question: Has there been resistance or opposition to the environmental concerns of the church?
- f. Has a message about the environment been given at the church, and if so what was the response? How did the impact (or interest) compare to other topics in general?

#### **4. Current Environmental Activity at the Church**

Goal:

- Find out what is happening now
  - a. How many people in the church are actively involved in promoting environmental concern, and what is being done?
  - b. What ways and what sort of materials have you used to teach people and raise awareness? Would I be able to get copies of these materials?
  - c. What kind of direction have you received from the national body of your denomination concerning environmental issues? Have they begun any initiatives or provided any resources, and if so have you found them useful?
  - d. There are people in every church who are not interested in certain aspects of what is happening. How wide spread do you think concern is within the church?
  - e. How do you see your role in what is happening at the church?
  - f. Given the many social and faith issues out there, how have you decided how much emphasis to put on environmental issues?

## **5. Looking to the Future**

Goal:

- Find out where they see things going
  - a. Where do you see your church's environmental programs being in 5 or 10 years time? Do you have a vision for where things are going?
  - b. What role would you like to see Nova Scotian churches have in the environmental arena? Do you think churches in the province are currently doing enough?
  - c. How much have you heard about other churches in Nova Scotia taking action on environmental issues?
  - d. What role do you see your church playing in making a difference or setting an example?

## **6. Wrap-up**

Goal:

- Give the clergy person chance to address anything they'd like to
  - a. Is there anything you would like to add, or feel is relevant to that I haven't asked about?

## **A.4 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CONGREGANTS**

Interview Purposes: The goal the interviews is to find out how environmental concern began at the church, what things helped it grow, where it is now, and where those involved think it is headed.

### **1. Opening Questions**

Goal:

- Break the ice and find out a bit about the person
  - a. How long have you been attending this church?
  - b. What influenced your decision to attend it?

### **2. Knowledge of Christian Environmental Perspectives**

Goal:

- Find out their knowledge and views on environmental issues
  - a. When did you first hear about environmental issues being raised within a church or faith context?
  - b. What are your personal views about a Christian's relationship to the earth? What are your thoughts on the relationship between the spiritual and the physical/material world?
  - c. What groups have you been involved in that have had an environmental focus?

### **3. Genesis and Growth of Concern at the Church**

Goal:

- Find out how environmental concern began at the church
- Find out how it grew

- a. What are the sources in your faith that have led the church to environmental concern?
- b. When did the idea of environmental concern first get raised at the church, and how did it happen?
- c. Did the idea catch on quickly? How has the level of interest changed over time?
- d. When did you get involved in what was happening, and what role did you play?
- e. How did you choose what issues to act on?
- f. What obstacles have you encountered as you've tried to make changes?
  - i. If it doesn't arise out of the previous question: Has there been resistance or opposition to the environmental concerns of the church?
- g. Has a message about the environment been given at the church, and if so what was the response? How did the impact (or interest) compare to other topics in general?

#### **4. Current Environmental Activity at the Church**

Goal:

- Find out what is happening now
  - a. How many people in the church are actively involved in promoting environmental concern, and what is being done?
  - b. What ways and what sort of materials have you used to teach people and raise awareness? Would I be able to get copies of these materials?
  - c. What kind of direction have you received from the national body of your denomination concerning environmental issues? Have they begun any initiatives or provided any resources, and if so have you found them useful?
  - d. There are people in every church who are not interested in certain aspects of what is happening. How wide spread do you think concern is within the church?
  - e. How do you see your role in what is happening at the church?

- f. Given the many social and faith issues out there, how have you decided how much emphasis to put on environmental issues?

## **5. Looking to the Future**

Goal:

- Find out where they see things going
  - a. Where do you see your church's environmental programs being in 5 or 10 years time? Do you have a vision for where things are going?
  - b. What role would you like to see Nova Scotian churches have in the environmental arena? Do you think churches in the province are currently doing enough?
  - c. How much have you heard about other churches in Nova Scotia taking action on environmental issues?
  - d. What role do you see your church playing in making a difference or setting an example?

## **6. Wrap-up**

Goal:

- Give the person chance to address anything they'd like to
  - a. Is there anything you would like to add, or feel is relevant to that I haven't asked about?

## APPENDIX B    LARGE RESULT TABLES

This section contains several large data tables of aggregated material from the interviews. Due to their size, it was felt they would be better positioned in an appendix rather than in the body of the discussion. It should be noted that since data was collected using interviews rather than a survey with set choices, the answer groups in these tables are based on commonalities between responses, and best interpretation was used to categorize a respondent's answer.

**Table 20: Environmental Groups Interviewees Participated In\***

Group	Clergy	Congregants
Boy Scouts	1	0
Cambina Institute	1	0
Church social justice group	2	2
Citizens for Public Justice	0	1
Clean Nova Scotia	0	1
David Suzuki Foundation	1	0
Ecology Action Centre	0	1
Friends of the Earth	1	0
Greenpeace	2	0
High school environmental group	1	0
University environmental group	1	0
Inter-Church Committee On Human Rights In Latin America	1	0
Kairos	2	0
Mennonite Central Committee	1	0
Micah Challenge	1	0
Nature Conservancy Canada	1	0
New Democratic Party	0	1
PETA	1	0

<b>Group</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>
Ten Days for World Development	1	0
World Wildlife	2	0
Church group(s) where it was a related cause	3	0
Outside group(s) where it was a related cause	2	0
Attended rallies where it was a related cause	1	0
Not part of any groups	2	5
Not answered	0	1

*\*Includes both past and present, and involvement could be anything from active participant to simply financial supporter.*

**Table 21: Obstacles Churches Faced to Environmental Changes\***

<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Number of Churches</b>
<b><i>Building and Property Related</i></b>	
Infrastructure (e.g. types of buildings to maintain & heat, limits to upgrades that can be done affordably)	4
Not a lot of interest to look at building-related environmental issues	1
People's attachment to buildings preventing changes (e.g. not willing to merge congregations and share a building)	2
Share church building so have to work with other church to make changes / do not have full control	1
Had a building assessment done but never got the full written report of findings	1
Need to make sure building is healthy for workers (e.g. lighting conditions, proper air circulation)	1



<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Number of Churches</b>
<b><i>Operation Related - Things</i></b>	
Financial (e.g. cost of building improvements)	6
Lack of free recycling / compost pickup	4
Dealing with a large volume of recycling	1
Disposable versus permanent things (e.g. cups, plates)	4
Feasibility to make operational changes (e.g. ability to wash 300 cups after a large function)	1
Buying what's cheapest carries environmental/social costs	1
Building empty most of week so not put to full use	1
Church in use most of the week so prevents some cost saving measures (e.g. turning off heating)	1
Carbon footprint of travel versus face-to-face relationship building at meetings	1
<b><i>Operation Related - People</i></b>	
Lack of volunteers (e.g. small congregation and people involved in other things)	3
Lack of time / having time to work on things	2
Pastor is the only full-time staff person & has only so much time to dedicate	1
How to be environmentally friendly when dealing with a volunteer organization / can not make people do things	2
Work required for changes not being equally shared by people (e.g. washing dishes to avoid disposable ones)	2
Women do most of work in the church and men not do much	1
Getting people to take recycling/composting home	1
Using committees and having to reach consensus from multiple ideas & views	1

<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Number of Churches</b>
Pastor does not feel it's his place to speak for the church in society	1
When the pastor is the driving force and leaves the next pastor may not have the same concern	0
<b><i>People Related</i></b>	
People are comfortable / don't want to leave their comfort zone / Laziness / Getting people to think about their actions & not just do what's easiest / People not wanting to change their lifestyle/actions	5
Changing people's behaviour patterns / Communicating change in a positive but effective way	3
People/groups using the church building and getting them to use it well	4
Declining numbers / aging congregation in churches	3
Older congregants are resistant / think it's talked about too much / not as important to them	2
Apathy / Lack of participation	2
Have to engage people where they are and bring them one step at a time	2
People are not motivated / concerned by environmental issues / Lack of interest	2
Lack of understanding / awareness among people of the issues	2
People not aware of what they should be doing / people doing things that unintentionally are not helpful	2
Getting people to use recycling/composting bins	2
People not interested in going to an environmental related event	2
People in denial / doubt / do not admit there are environmental problems	2

<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Number of Churches</b>
People not wanting to hear too much about one thing / Tired of hearing about issues	2
People looking on the negative side of things / have wrong ideas that prevent action	2
People concerned about how much money changes will cost	1
Located in affluent neighbourhood where cost saving may not be a priority	1
People wanting the church really warm in winter	1
Church is transient (e.g. people with passion move on, make new people aware, recreate momentum)	1
How to speak to people who do not want to listen	1
People being closed minded	1
Resistance to changing how things have always been done (e.g. replacing paper bulletins with PowerPoint)	1
People feeling "I have a right to..."	1
People feeling they are already doing enough (e.g. changed their bulbs, use a clothes line)	1
People not being able to identify with environmental problems and so are not very interested (e.g. lack of clean water)	1
People not very questioning of what goes on	1
People think there are more important issues to be concerned about	1
People do not see it as their responsibility to do things (e.g. pick up garbage around the church)	1
People too involved with church to do things in the community	1
Question whether environmental action is a Christian witness (e.g. picking up garbage in the community)	1
People do not think about long term goals to accomplish things	1
Churches sometimes do not work well together	1

<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Number of Churches</b>
Jesus is going to return / We are all going to heaven	1
People not wanting to be told what to do	0
People with extreme environmental concern turning others off	0
<b>Teaching</b>	
Environmental concern in Bible not as clearly stated as other themes / Not the focus of Jesus' ministry	1
Lack of developed theological framework for concern	1
Pastor feels he can not say as much as he'd like to from pulpit	1
Being careful with wording and not making blanket statements	1
More concern put into less important issues	1
Church more focused on other issues (e.g. same sex marriage)	1
People need teaching to convey the information to make proper decisions	1
Lack of teaching resources	1
People hesitant to share teaching resources (e.g. intellectual property)	1
Outside organization was supposed to provide workshops and did not	1
Including environmental info in newsletter without it becoming too long	1
Lack of resources / direction from denomination	1
Pastor needs to learn more before he can pass it on	1
<b>Other Challenges</b>	
Liability issues (e.g. having a wooded area & risk of someone being attached there)	1
Many environmental issues and have not been prioritized	1
No implementation plan to accomplish things	1

<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Number of Churches</b>
Promoting specific issues can cause disagreement (e.g. mining practices, bottled water)	1
Church had financial problems so just focused on survival	1
Combining with another church so uncertain future	1
Social groups not friendly to faith unlikely to invite churches to do Christian environmental activities (e.g. interdenominational prayer for the environment)	1
Red tape to do things outside of the church	0

*\*Some challenges were mentioned as potential ones, but were not occurring at the church that voiced them, and thus were included in the table but have zero participants.*

**Table 22: Environmental Activities at the Churches**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Churches Who Mentioned It</b>
<b><i>Building and Property Related</i></b>	
Insulated part of the church (e.g. roof, room)	4
Covered / Caulked windows to cut down on drafts (seasonal or permanent)	3
Had building inspected for problems / checked for heat leaks / building assessment / energy audit	3
Changed light bulbs in church to energy efficient ones	2
Installed programmable thermostats	2
Have locked glass cover over thermostat so people can not turn it up	1
Changed hot water heater thermostat to modify setting and save money	1
Bought smaller hot water heater to reduce energy usage	1
Installed new windows	1

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Churches Who Mentioned It</b>
Church's parsonage has had renovations to make it more energy efficient	1
Closed off sanctuary during winter and held church in smaller area to reduce heating needs	1
Winter fan to blow hot air down from ceiling	1
Environmental upgrades to the church's physical plant	1
Increasing building efficiency	1
Looked at environmental options when needed renovations/repairs	1
Make sure repair contractors will properly dispose of material	1
Plants in the church	1
Prayer garden outside church / More plants to reduce mowing	1
Have a community garden	1
Have a bird feeder	1
Working on switching heating to natural gas to lower environmental impact	1
Applying Leeds approach to new church being built	1
Using geothermal in new church being built	1
Using natural materials in new church being built	1
<b><i>Operation Related</i></b>	
Composting	5
Recycling (e.g. paper, cans)	5
Battery collection for recycling	2
Instruct members using building to be environmentally conscious (e.g. turn off lights, use compost)	4
Instruct people renting building to be environmentally conscious (e.g. turn off lights, use compost)	2

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Churches Who Mentioned It</b>
Had a church clean-up / pick up garbage around the church / took part in neighbourhood cleanup	2
Reduced/eliminated use of disposable cups/plates	3
Use fettuccini noodles as compostable coffee stir sticks	1
Trying to reduce heating costs (e.g. keep thermostat turned down, tried leaving heat at constant temperature all winter to see if more efficient)	2
Keep sanctuary doors closed to more efficiently heat areas	1
Monitor oil use	2
Avoid turning on lights during the day	2
Discussing environmental issues at church council meetings (e.g. energy efficiency, waste)	2
Modified hot water heater usage (e.g. turn off when not in use)	1
People go through garbage after a function and pick out recyclables	1
Reuse items (e.g. single sided paper)	1
Try to not waste food at functions	1
Adopted pair of cats from SPCA to fix rodent problem instead of using poisons	1
<b><i>Education Related</i></b>	
Sermon(s) where environmental topics are touched on	5
Sermon(s) with specific environmental focus	4
Environmental concern mentioned in services (e.g. children's time, prayer time, hymns with nature theme, announcements)	4
Sunday School / Youth Group mentions environmental concern	4
Sunday School class specifically about Christian environmental concern	1

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Churches Who Mentioned It</b>
Educate congregation about environmental issues (e.g. bottled water, mining, climate change)	4
Workshop given for church members by external organization (e.g. Citizens for Public Justice, Environmental Depot, Clean N.S.)	3
Information/environmental tips in e-mails/bulletins	4
Have educational posters / newspaper clippings up in church (e.g. from Kairos, reminders to separate garage)	3
Make comments to people to get them thinking / encourage change (e.g. not idling their car)	2
Promoted Earth Hour (e.g. advertised, held special service)	3
Showed An Inconvenient Truth in church and discussed it	2
Environmental resources for people to borrow (e.g. stewardship books, Inconvenient Truth video)	2
Social Justice group at church that includes environmental concern/activity	3
Liscene group at church that had environmental focus	1
Church hired person to look at social/environmental issues	1
Took part in the Micah Challenge	2
Gave out CFL bulbs / coupons for bulbs	2
Education on light bulbs	1
Gave out green grocery bags donated by local stores	1
Information available on church website	1
Made Lenten calendar of environmental things to do each day	1
Retreats on stewardship where there's been an environmental component	1
Discussion on waste and environmental impact as a church community	1



<b>Activity</b>	<b>Churches Who Mentioned It</b>
Attended workshop on how to make faith buildings more environmentally friendly	1
Church members attended Christian environmental talk outside church	1
Encourage people that environmental concern is Biblical	1
Kairos committee showed An Inconvenient Truth in the community	1
Passed out Carbon Bucks to put on windshields of idling cars	1
Skits about environmental issues	1
Sister church had 10 mile supper to encourage buying local	1
Tried to put together a directory of local producers for buying locally	1
Was going to have a Your Farms, Your Food forum	1
<b><i>Other Activities</i></b>	
Reclaim items (e.g. leftover yarn for knitting, used fabric for quilting, used clothing for charities)	2
Celebrate Kairos Sundays (e.g. water service)	2
Have a representative on Kairos	1
Lobbying local government on environmental issues (e.g. letter writing to change street lights, spoke at town council about Earth Hour)	2
Approached businesses to turn off lights for Earth Hour	1
Received donations from local business(es) for environmental promotion (e.g. light bulbs, green grocery bags)	2
Some people in congregation riding bikes / have moved to be less reliant on cars	2
Tried to get a farmers market going	1
Organized a march in the community open to everyone	1

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Churches Who Mentioned It</b>
People were involved in local environmental activity (e.g. Tar Ponds cleanup)	1
Took part in an environmental meeting at another church	2
Pastor tells other churches what they are doing and that challenges members to stay conscious	1
Acted on regional denominational level to push for environmental change (e.g. replace regional meetings with Skype calls)	1
Regional denomination only invests money in companies being environmentally responsible	1
Church helps maintain children's camp which gets kids out in nature	1
Outdoor service every year on Rogation Sunday	1
Women's group often talks about things related to environment	1
Person appointed as community networker	1
Building relationship with local environmental group (e.g. EAC)	1
Collect bottles and put money towards heating bill	1
Using fair trade coffee	1

**Table 23: Future of Environmental Programs\***

<b>Future Plans</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>	<b>Churches</b>
Connect with environmental groups / local community on environmental issues	2	1	3
Have a better grasp of the relationship between faith and environmental concern	2	1	3
Environmental concern becomes part of who the church is / People become more environmentally responsible / take concern home from church so impact is larger	2	2	2

<b>Future Plans</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>	<b>Churches</b>
In improved building with environmental processes in place for operation	2	2	3
Leadership role / See concern spread to other churches	1	2	1
Install a bench on church property for public use	1	1	2
Trickle-down effect to next generation of church members / Young people taking more leadership in this area	2	0	1
Develop environmental materials/sermon series for churches to use	1	0	1
Do more to make the building more environmentally friendly	1	0	1
Expand prayer garden so less mowing required	1	0	1
Expand recycling to include more (e.g. clothes, eye glasses)	0	1	1
Fight for more green space	0	1	1
Get all the basics in place (e.g. composting, recycling)	1	0	1
Larger community gardens	1	0	1
More bike racks	0	1	1
Partially dependent on next pastor if/when current pastor leaves	1	0	1
Be a voice to speak out on issues in the community	0	1	1
Small group focused on environmental concern and action	1	0	1
Things will not grow unless the church grows and more people are available to get involved	0	1	1

<b>Future Plans</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>	<b>Churches</b>
No car Sunday to encourage walking	1	0	1
Uncertain future (e.g. merging with other churches, rising oil costs make keeping buildings difficult, uncertain ecological/societal changes in next 10 years)	2	2	3
Have not thought about it	1	0	1
Question not answered	0	1	1

*\* The answers provided seemed to include many hopes and desires, and were not all plans that were in place and being worked on.*

**Table 24: Desired Role of Provincial Churches with Regards to the Environment**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>
Work more with other churches / Be a combined church voice on environmental issues / Set group goals	3	1
Lobby government / Help find solutions	3	1
Develop resources / Share resources / Learn from each other	3	0
Have churches think more about the environment and interconnectedness / Move away from bottom line mentality / Recognize there are social/environmental costs not just financial	1	2
Implement green energy (e.g. solar) / Reduce church footprint	1	1
Work more with their communities	1	1
Empower individuals to live in an environmentally responsible way and be advocates / Make people think about the environment more	1	1

<b>Role</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Congregants</b>
All churches have a role to play / Need to be acting on environmental issues	1	1
Be more in the forefront working for environmental change / Be more vocal	0	1
Reach out in Christ's love / Do more practical deeds	1	0
Be the conscious of society / Critique society	1	0
Have at least one church in each denomination champion environmental issues and affect the rest of the denomination	1	0
Make people aware God is speaking about the environment and may be using scientists to do it	1	0
More challenge from denominations on clergy concerning environmental issues	1	0
More teaching from the pulpit about the Biblical basis for environmental concern	1	0
Prayer is central / Churches need to pray for environmental change	1	0
Look at whether need so many church buildings	0	1
Difficult to do much when people are not going to church	0	1
Answer ambiguous	1	0
Question not answered	1	2