

## Sustainability: Practical Spirituality That Heals

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By Rachel Crandell

Let's begin by defining sustainability. It can mean different things to different people. I am thinking of it as the ability of a resource or an ecosystem to provide services today without losing the ability to provide those same services for future generations. We could be talking about soil, a forest, a stream, the ocean, or a farmer's field. Today we are confronted with enormous waste and exploitation of our planet's resources, often without regard to the future. So this is a very important topic to consider prayerfully.

First let's play a game called Tragedy of the Commons so we can find out for ourselves how sustainable use works. You will develop strategies for harvesting a common resource with mutual benefit. We'll get in groups of 4. Each group gets 16 peanuts. The tragedy of the commons dilemma is based on a historical practice in England where a town pasture, or commons, was open to everyone with livestock to graze. Over time, it was in the best interest of an individual to graze as much livestock as possible to get the most profit, even though the shared resource, or commons, was eventually destroyed and could no longer benefit anyone. The benefits of overuse go to individuals, but the loss of a common resource is shared by everyone.

We will take turns "harvesting" in four 20 second rounds. We will pretend this common is a rainforest. The peanuts will represent resources from the forest. The object is to take as many peanuts as you can without destroying the rainforest. Four peanuts are worth one imaginary dollar. The more you harvest, the more you receive. But for each peanut remaining in the "common" at the end of the 20 second harvest a new peanut will be added. If four are left, four will be added. The total number can never exceed 16 because that is carrying capacity for this forest. Each person has 20 seconds to harvest some, none or all of the peanuts. Keep track of how many peanuts each one in the group harvests each period.

At the end we will find out which individual and which group got the most points. We'll ask why peanuts are replaced only if some are left. This models natural reproduction. What was the best strategy for harvesting from a common resource? (We will discover that harvesting 8 peanuts each round is the best strategy because we can replace 8 and keep a constant replenishment forever. That is sustainability!! You will probably discover that the two biggest problems in gaining a sustainable solution are the overcoming of greed and blame.)

To quote Edward O. Wilson in his book *The Future of Life* he begins, “The totality of life, known as the biosphere to scientists and creation to theologians, is a membrane of organisms wrapped around Earth so thin it cannot be seen edgewise from a space shuttle, yet so internally complex that most species composing it remain undiscovered.”

Scientists have described almost 1.7 million species on our planet, yet it is predicted that there are anywhere between 10 million to 100 million species, almost all of which are not known, named or studied. The web of interconnectedness is so complex and not yet understood that we need to be careful not to disrupt or eradicate them before we know their function.

Felix Houphouet-Boigny, former president of the Ivory Coast, once said, “Man has gone to the moon, but he does not yet know how to make a flower, a tree or a bird song. Let us keep our dear countries free from irreversible mistakes which would lead us in the future to long for the same birds and trees.”

The world has need of our prayers. People of faith have much to contribute to the healing of our planet. Earth Day is a good reminder to recycle, plant trees, pick up litter, feed birds, restore stream banks, etc. But the real solution for the sustainability of our planet is a spiritual one, turning to the power of prayer to heal and restore.

We are going to talk about healing, not just people, but nature, plants and animals, the biosphere, resources and how we can pray effectively to see what God already knows about all this. I love to think of prayer as changing things into thoughts, that is, spiritualizing my thinking about whatever presents itself as out of whack, unwise, diseased, violent, polluted, unjust and seeing through the problem to the truth of being.

As a Christian Scientist, I turn often to the Bible for spiritual answers to problems.

There are a couple of verses in Genesis that are key to understanding sustainability. Let's look more closely at the often quoted statement about creation, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” These verses have been used over the centuries as theological justification for exploiting creation for man's profit. In her book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* Mary Baker Eddy gives this spiritual insight. “Man, made in His likeness, possesses and reflects God's dominion over all the earth. Man and woman as coexistent and eternal with God forever reflect, in glorified quality, the infinite Father-Mother God.” (S&H 516:20) As the image of Father-Mother God, we reflect God's dominion. What would Father-Mother God's dominion look like? Wouldn't it be loving rather than destructive? Wouldn't it be supportive rather than exploitive? Wouldn't it be eternal rather than short term? Sustaining rather than depleting? Didn't the manna and feeding the 5,000 demonstrate God's dominion for man?

When a situation arises that seems to be evil or wrong, we can see it in a spiritual light and gain a totally new perspective, the view that God would have of the situation. In Genesis the Bible tells us, “God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.” How do we view the situations in our environment? Are they “very good”? I have found that when I view everything as truly mental, when I change things into thoughts, I can see things from a spiritual perspective. I can best explain this by sharing some experiences I have had.

Early one spring morning I noticed that the fresh new leaves on all our trees were coming out wrinkled. They had an unnatural, deformed look. I began to investigate my neighbors’ trees and theirs looked the same. One neighbor remembered seeing the farmer across the road spraying his field the week before. His field was exactly the length of the yards where the trees were effected. Two of us went to visit the farmer. He was certain that these unnatural, withered leaves had nothing to do with the herbicide 2-4D he had sprayed earlier. However, the conservation department man who came to investigate didn’t agree. He said that if our trees died, he would testify that the 2-4D sprayed by the farmer on a windy day was indeed the cause, and we would be able to get reimbursed for the trees. When he said that, I was shocked. I wasn’t interested in getting reimbursed. I wanted those trees to live.

We had lived in this house for eight years and there wasn’t one tree in the yard when we moved there. We had planted, watered, pruned, fertilized, mulched and loved all our new trees. The conservation department man predicted that the big trees planted in our neighborhood back in the 50s would probably weather this herbicide treatment, but the young trees would be vulnerable.

All my trees were young! Some were **very** young and had only been planted that fall or the spring before and were tiny seedlings, not even as high as my knee. I began thinking about the words “vulnerable” and “victim”. There are a lot of world problems that claim to leave victims, whole populations of people in war-torn or arid regions, where the young ones, the children, are the most vulnerable. I also thought about poisons, which is what 2-4D is, an herbicide intended to kill unwanted weeds. The world is full of toxic wastes and hazardous materials that pollute our water and air and make life unsafe and unhealthy.

I prayed to know how to think about this predicament. I decided that neither I nor my trees would be victims. Nor could anyone else in the world be a victim since God is Love and sustains and maintains all of us as His/Her creation. The opposite of victim is victor. That is what we really are, and we can see it and demonstrate it when we acknowledge who we are as God’s creation, the loved of Love, and stop believing in anything else.

As the days went by, I was able to stop looking at the wrinkled leaves and keep my sights set on God. I loved the verse in Revelation 22: 2,3 “...and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse...” It helped me to see my prayer as a way to lift world belief from victims to victors. In the Christian Science

textbook, *Science and Health*, Mary Baker Eddy writes, “The divine Mind maintains all identities, from a blade of grass to a star, as distinct and eternal.” (S&H 70:12-13) I trusted that truth, realizing that the spiritual concept of a blade of grass, a star, or my trees, was unchanging, eternal.

If I were going to see the effects of this metaphysical truth, I realized I couldn’t harbor any resentment. I couldn’t blame the farmer for doing something harmful if I was going to be trusting God that no harm could come to His creation. I had to love the farmer as much as I loved the trees. I had to let Love govern my thought if I was going to see the effects of Love. I needed to forgive, and that reminded me of one of the Bible’s great stories of environmental disaster overcome.

You might know the story of Joseph being unjustly attacked by his brothers, thrown into a pit, and sold into slavery. Later he was falsely accused of rape and condemned to prison. During Joseph’s hardships we never hear anything about him holding vengeful thoughts or wanting to get even for the injustices done to him. He was known in the prison as a revealer of dreams, and that became his ticket out of prison. Pharaoh had had a disturbing dream about fat and skinny cows and good and withered corn that none of his wise men could explain. So Joseph was brought before Pharaoh to interpret the dream. But Joseph claimed no wisdom of his own. He said, “It is not in me: God shall give an answer of peace.” He was able to interpret the dream as a warning of impending environmental disaster in the form of 7 years of drought and famine. He eventually became the second in command in all Egypt solving the problem and feeding the people.

I love to think about Joseph’s experience as a model for me to follow. He began by asking God for answers, not blaming anyone. When Pharaoh heard the meaning of the dream, he thought Joseph was wise and put him in charge of solving the problem. What Joseph really was was willing to listen to God. And because of this guidance or wisdom, Joseph was given the opportunity, authority and ideas to solve a huge problem which not only would benefit the people of Egypt, but all the people in that part of the world including Joseph’s own brothers that had wronged him so badly years earlier. Joseph was able to hear God’s voice because he had loved and forgiven his brothers, and because he had not given into the temptations of Potiphar’s wife. He had been meeting the moral and spiritual demands made upon him, and so he was ready.

“How about me?” I thought. “Was I ready? Did I love enough, trust enough, listen enough?” Joseph was able to meet the environmental crisis by listening to God. He had the Egyptians build barns and collect grain for the first seven good years and store it for the seven years of famine, ready when the need came. Those were human actions, but divinely guided ones, and they enabled Joseph to provide food and save lives. I asked myself, “Could I learn from Joseph’s experience? Could I forgive the farmer’s poor judgment, spraying on a windy day? Could I trust God so completely that I could stop fearing for my trees?” That became my prayer, to forgive and trust God completely.

Well, as the weeks went by those curled up leaves dried and fell off and all new leaves grew back. Not one tree was lost! Not just the big ones, but even the seedlings, and in all our yards, not one tree was lost. Victors!

It seemed to me like a microcosm of the world, a peek at how the Truth applied could sustain even the forests, the oceans, and the skies.

I think about our world a lot. I belong to lots of environmental organizations and read articles about threats to the viability of the planet, fears of what global warming could bring, deforestation, soil erosion, displacement of indigenous people, overpopulation, introduced species invading native ecosystems. It can get discouraging if I accept that there is another power apart from God, but I have learned firsthand to trust the statement when God says, "I am the Lord, and there is none else." I believe in one omnipotent Father-Mother God, loving and sustaining Her creation.

One night though, I was struggling, almost overwhelmed with a burdened feeling that our planet was moving in a headlong, hopeless decline as long as people continued to be so wasteful and careless of the natural environment. It seemed so many wanted to do what was convenient or cheap without regard to the future or to the environment. I was so troubled in fact, that I couldn't sleep. I knew the only way to find my peace was through prayer. So I got out of bed and began to listen for some better, higher ideas to guide me in my prayer about these problems instead of just worrying about them. Worry doesn't heal. I decided to get out my dictionary and look up words like "environment, endangered, extinct, habitat, home and atmosphere."

The first one surprised me – "Environ – to form a ring around, surround, encompass or encircle"

Immediately I thought of a hymn which begins, "Everlasting arms of Love are beneath, around, above...from earth's fears and vain alarms, safe in His encircling arms, He will keep us all the way, God our refuge, strength and stay."

This was a more spiritual, helpful and hopeful view of the environment than I had been thinking about before. That reminded me of a sentence I had memorized long ago in Sunday School. It is from *Science and Health* also. (S&H 269: 14) "Metaphysics resolves things into thoughts and exchanges the objects of sense for the ideas of soul." I reasoned that since God is Mind with a capital M, and Mind's creation is all ideas, then we and all God's other ideas, the plants, the animals, water, and air are really spiritual ideas. You, me and all of creation are spiritual.

Over five generations my family has had hundreds of healings by turning wholeheartedly to God. Some healings were instantaneous. Some took longer. Some I'm still praying about. Some were childhood diseases, some claimed to be incurable, some were broken bones, some healings of lost articles, finding a new home, a new job, a tumor dissolved, deafness, blindness, blood poisoning, natural childbirth and many healings of pets from birds to horses to dogs to rabbits. As I thought about the healings I have seen

of animals by understanding their relation to God, “I thought why not change things into thoughts for all the species of the world? For all the plants and animals of the world?”

This was a big idea for me!

I also looked up “endangered”. We hear a lot about endangered species of plants and animals. That is the belief that life might not be sustainable, that these organisms may perish, may go extinct. The dictionary said it meant, “to bring to danger or peril.” But that definition reminded me of just the opposite when Noah took all the animals that were in danger of being flooded into the ark where it was safe. Mary Baker Eddy’s book *Science and Health* has a second part called the *Key to the Scriptures* which includes some very helpful explanations of biblical terms and passages. In her glossary she defines ARK as “Safety: Science showing that the spiritual realities of all things are created by Him and exist forever.” Those words “exist forever” are the opposite of the awful word “extinct”. So I looked extinct up in the dictionary too. It means “No longer living or active, quenched, destroyed, annihilated”. Mary Baker Eddy never uses the word extinct. But she did write, “Mind and its formations can never be annihilated.” This is an absolute statement which I held to as the truth of my being and all being.

All these thoughts had been like a flow of angel messages early in those dark hours of the morning which had given me new light and a clearer view of how to pray about all God’s creatures as ideas, as safe, not endangered, as encircled in Love’s arms. I found a sense of peace, free from vain alarms,” and I was able to go back to sleep.

Well, I can tell you I was sure grateful I had all of those ideas fresh in my thought the next day, because I sure needed them. I am a school teacher, and I got a phone call at school from the police department. The officer told me that our horse, Blue Eyes, had been frightened by a noisy bulldozer on the construction site next to his pasture. Blue had bolted through a barbed wire fence cutting himself badly, and then he had crashed down a rocky cliff, and galloped across the new subdivision and out onto a busy highway. I could only imagine how frightened he must have been. One of the workers caught him and tied him safely to a tree. The police officer told me Blue was injured and asked if I could come right away.

As I drove home to my horse that was “in danger” I found myself starting to think a lot of alarming thoughts. Here are some of them:

1. I was afraid of how badly Blue Eyes might have been hurt.
2. I began to be angry at the bulldozer driver for scraping away the hillside so close to Blue’s fence and scaring him so badly that he tore through the barbed wire.
3. I was especially mad at the contractor who had already knocked down the good wooden fence the week before and carelessly replaced it with cheap wire which was sharp and dangerous.

So far none of those thoughts were healings thoughts! I had to stop and make some needed corrections in my thinking. It was then that my early morning flow of angel messages came flooding back into my thought giving me new light and a clearer view

of all God's creatures as ideas, as safe, not endangered or in danger, as encircled in Love's arms. I began to see Blue Eyes and his pasture as a tiny version of the world. It dawned on me that this horse (species) in his pasture (habitat) in danger (endangered) by the bulldozer (forces of man on the earth) was a microcosm of the problems of the whole earth. All the good ideas, these angel messages about God's universe, that had come to me that morning when I reached out to Her in prayer would help me heal my own angry thoughts about the contractor and the bulldozer man and my fearful thoughts about Blue Eyes.

I was immediately more at peace. I discovered I wasn't gripping the steering wheel so tightly anymore. I knew I could understand whatever I needed to know. The idea came to me to stop and get a rope so I could lead Blue back to the stable. Then I drove on to the construction site. I wanted to be grateful for something, for anything. I knew that gratitude brings healing. I decided to look for the man who had caught Blue and tied him safely to the tree, so I could thank him. That was the start. I realized that Love's encircling arms had been protecting the horse as well as the people driving along the highway. No one ran into him and he didn't cause any wrecks. That was good.

Blue was awfully glad to see me. There were lots of cuts from the barbed wire, but I was quick to change my view of a physical thing – an injured horse- into thought – God's spiritual creation. I could not protect or help heal Blue if I saw him as an animal somehow separate from God, his Creator. But I could help if I saw him as a spiritual idea. So that was my prayer, to acknowledge the spiritual fact about him.

Wouldn't that work for the whole world too? Instead of praying for animals to have better worldly conditions, I could know the immunity of a spiritual idea from all the elements whether polluted water, dirty air, contaminated soil, scarcity of food and habitat. Weren't these just other versions of "earth's vain alarms" like I remembered from the hymn that morning?

Bless his heart, Blue Eyes listened to me as I prayed out loud, sharing my thoughts with him on the walk back to the barn. He was so receptive as I sang hymns to him. He followed readily, and I put him safely in his stall. I cleaned his wounds and went home knowing he was safe in Love's encircling arms.

I stayed at home for a little while until I could get past the desire to blame someone for this accident. Blaming doesn't heal. I also needed to look beyond blaming people for the wider mistakes in the world. It seems that many decisions that impact our environment and make life unsustainable are based on greed. How can we make a fast buck? How can we meet our bottom line? How can we exploit this land to the hilt? I understand that money is a helpful tool in exchanging value for service or products, but the love of money can motivate wrongful actions that hurt our planet.

I realized that if I could separate the erroneous belief in the power of greed from the man of God's creation, I could lift my thought above a degraded mortal willing to exploit, and could see God's unselfish creation. If I could fill my thought with selfless love, love for

God, love for my family, my neighbor, love for my students and their parents, I could make a real healing impact. So I began my love list.

Then I also asked **myself** if **I** expressed greed on occasion. I examined my own thought to see if I ever did things motivated by the love of money or the fear of lack of enough money. That took some soul searching. It would be a profitable search for each of us to think about our decisions and see if they are based on a fear of lack of money or love of money. The aggressive greedy thought of always wanting more feeds on the belief that man is an unfulfilled, empty, needy, fearful creature. We are not! God satisfies.

I saw that if I attacked the error of greed instead of attacking the contractor or the bulldozer man, I would see healing instead of anger. And that is exactly what happened. Blue Eyes had a wonderfully quick healing. The very next morning my daughter who always fed him came over to the barn with me. She said, "Mom, Blue acts like nothing bad ever happened to him." We both laughed because that is exactly what we had been praying to understand, that nothing bad can happen to God's idea. That next day he was well enough for my daughter to ride him and take him over his jumps like she did every day. All the cuts on Blue's face, chest and legs closed up and his hair grew back leaving no scars.

Very shortly a new wooden fence was put up replacing the barbed wire. Blue's fear had been replaced with dominion. My fear and worry about our world has been replaced with a confidence and dominion allowing me to give my best thoughts and prayers to becoming a spiritual environmentalist.

These two experiences are examples in individual ways of plants and animals being restored through prayer. It seems to me that if two and two is four, then the same principle can be applied to two million and two million equals four million. If we use our own individual experiences as opportunities to put into practice the spiritual principles of being, then we are practicing the principle that can be applied to any experience, no matter how big. As we prove God's sustaining love in our individual lives, we improve the whole world's experience. It is like the ripples on a pond. God's love reaching out, upholding and sustaining everyone and everything.

Speaking of ripples, I read in the weekly *Christian Science Sentinel* (Feb 21, '94) a wonderful account entitled "Environmental tragedy is not inevitable". A few years back an oil tanker broke up off the Shetland Islands in the North Sea. "The crude oil-cargo discharged into the sea to form an oil slick many miles in length." Birds, seals, salmon, people were all at risk and the news was full of the tragedy. An English woman tells how she and her friend prayed to stop looking for a change in the outward and start to gain a spiritual view of God's love and care for his entire creation. This turning point from a belief in material law to God's law brought healing and harmony to the whole situation. She felt the warmth and love of God's presence. Two days later the reporters and scientists were amazed when they could find no sign of the oil. It seemed to have disappeared. Birds in perfect condition were being released back into the sea. The local



marine life remained healthy and not a single sea mammal death was attributed to the spill. WOW! An all powerful, spiritual God was acknowledged and look at the results in the human condition and the ecosystem.

There are many human activities that I think can be classified as angel messages in action. They are examples of sustainable activities motivated by caring people to restore and protect our world. These angel messages make me smile.

When I read that the trumpeter swan has returned from the brink of extinction and that a conservation organization paid the lease for the timber rights on 200,000 acres of tropical forest in Guyana to keep it from being logged, I smile.

When I find out that legislation has passed to grant fishermen a fixed percentage of the total catch that scientists determine can be sustainably harvested each year so the fisheries can recover, or that another law has encouraged the biggest fleet of express transport trucks in the US to replace 45,000 vehicles with diesel-electric hybrids that will cut tailpipe pollution by 90%, I smile.

When I am told that a federal district judge ruled that it was correct to restrict the flow of irrigation waters to save endangered salmon, or that a lawsuit now requires limits on pollution in impaired waterways that have been unsafe for fishing or swimming, I smile.

When I discover new magazines that are focused on reporting positive, constructive things that are going on like Yes! Magazine and Hope, I smile.

When it is reported that jet skis are no longer allowed in national park waterways and that a major coffee company is committed to working with coffee farmers in the third world to establish fair trade for shade-grown, organic coffee grown with social, environmental and economic standards, I smile.

When I hear of a friend going to Central America to a Spanish Language school that provides jobs in a village that was a former logging community, or that another friend has signed up for an eco-tourist trip where sustainable principles guide the socially and environmentally responsible travel, I smile.

When I read about land title gained by indigenous people to their ancestral lands, or read that volunteers have given their time, money and labor to build homes for families in need, I smile.

When I get a letter from Africa with reports on the hard work being done by guards to protect and conserve the habitat of gorillas, or a new certification of Smartwood which can identify wood products made from lumber grown in sustainable forests, I smile.

When I get an email telling me that another country has killed plans to open their spectacular coastal waters to oil drilling, and that citizens all over our country are emailing their congressmen and senators to demand a strengthened clear air act, I smile.

When I learn that schools are incorporating nature landscaping into their outdoor classrooms with butterfly gardens and restored streams or teachers are going to conferences about eco-literacy, teaching a sense of place education, I smile.

When I hear that vacation trips are organized to build schools and clinics and libraries in remote villages, and micro-enterprise lending is making it possible for women to receive small loans that enable them to become entrepreneurs and send their children to school, I smile.

When a newsletter tells me that junior high kids are doing service learning projects like tree planting and restoration of habitat, or high school kids are monitoring air pollutant levels around their school in an effort to find solutions, I smile.

Now that I have bought a gas/electric hybrid car that gets over 50 mpg, and I remember to use rechargeable batteries, I smile.

When I read new books that alert our citizens about the destructive nature of factory farms and the efforts of some companies to patent seeds for crops that farmers around the world have grown for thousands of years, I am glad to know.

I am grateful for courageous authors and activists that keep me informed. We need to know what to pray about and see where our prayers lead us to take action.

By World Bank estimates there are some 3 billion human beings (half the citizens of Planet Earth), who must subsist on less than \$2 per day. Of these, 1.3 billion, (mostly mothers and their children) survive on less than \$1 per day. Former President Jimmy Carter says that the growing disparity between the rich and the poor is the greatest problem in the world today. We have plenty left to do, don't we?

The World Summit 2002 in Johannesburg struggled with who would pay for the needed improvements in our world. They worked on arriving at plans of implementation with concrete timetables and targets. As citizens of the world, all of us can pray everyday to support the best thinking of heads of state, lawmakers, scientists, business leaders, teachers, parents, everyone in making decisions that will help our Mother Earth be a good home forever.

It is a mutual relationship. When we are good stewards for the Earth, the Earth provides our air, water, food for us. This sustainable condition is vital. If we get bogged down in looking for solutions solely from governments, businesses or the land, it won't be enough. We must turn to God. We are inseparable from our spiritual Source. We "dwell between His shoulders." That's as close as you can get. We are the very thoughts of God. He/She is thinking us. So we can know what is right to do if we listen to God.

Here are some words to ponder, the deplorable de's and the regenerative re's. We can choose which ones to focus on, which ones to magnify in our thought, to realize in our experience.

death	deplete	ready	reinstate	resolve
debase	deplore	reality	rejoice	resort
decay	deprave	reason	release	resources
decease	deprive	reassure	relief	respect
deceit	derange	receptive	relinquish	respond
decline	deride	reclaim	rely	rest
defeat	desert	recognize	remedy	restore
defile	despair	recompense	renew	resuscitate
deform	despise	reconcile	reopen	resurrect
defraud	despoil	reconstruct	repair	retain
deforest	destroy	recycle	repent	reveal
defy	deteriorate	redeem	replace	revelation
degrade	devil	reflect	replenish	revere
delay	denude	reform	reproduce	reverse
delude	deny	refuge	require	revive
		regain	rescue	revolution
		regenerate	resist	reward
		realize		

When we realize that there is no power apart from God, we can deny what these de words represent and we can rely on what the re words stand for. They are spiritual resources. Mary Baker Eddy wrote, "Soul (God) has infinite resources with which to bless mankind, and happiness would be more readily attained and would be more secure in our keeping, if sought in Soul." (S&H 20:29-31)

"More secure" sounds a lot like sustainable doesn't it? As I have endeavored to ask God to show me ways to reach out using spiritual resources, I have found they don't get depleted like physical ones since Father-Mother God is an infinite source. Another great word to consider at length is "enough." The influx of ideas of how to help is endless. Mrs. Eddy writes, "Divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need." (S&H 494:10-11) and so it has been proving true in my life.

Opportunities to help ecosystems and communities become more sustainable have exploded in my experience. In the last dozen years I was asked to serve on the board of the Wild Canid Survival and Research Center and the board of the St. Louis Rainforest Advocates. I have gotten to study in tropical rainforests of Central and South America and Borneo, to work with conservation organizations in these forests, to support their efforts through contributions and grants, environmental education, delivering slide talks about the forests, leading eco-tourism trips, creating village libraries and sending mountains of school supplies, taking my sabbatical to live with Maya Indians, setting up

a scholarship fund to send Maya kids to high school, getting a children's book published *Hands of the Maya*, that feeds the scholarship fund, setting up a non-profit sister organization in the US to help receive funds for conservation projects in Costa Rica to create corridors between native forest reserves, building a nature center inside the International Children's Rainforest, launching the Earthkeeper program at Principia Lower School in St Louis and at the Quaker Friends School in Monteverde, Costa Rica.

John Muir, father of conservation in America, wrote "When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world." How true, and not just the plants and animals that John Muir was talking about, but the impact our actions and choices have on the rest of the planet.

Did you know that the average food item in America travels 1,300 miles to get to us. Barbara Kingsolver in her new book *Small Wonder* reports that:

Mr. Average eats ten or more items per day or more. In one year his food will have traveled 5,000,000 miles by land, air or sea. Picture a truck loaded with apples and oranges and iceberg lettuce rumbling to the moon and back ten times a year just for you. Then she challenges her reader to picture a flotilla of 285,000,000 trucks on their way to the moon and back and then asks if we don't think its time to revise the scenario. Eat things grown locally and in season. Shop at farmer's market and reduce packaging and transportation costs. Food and transportation are the two biggest causes of global warming. Can we **afford** to keep doing it the same old way?

That brings me to one of my favorite definitions. The first time I looked up the word "afford" I was surprised not to find words like money, cash, bank, check, salary. The dictionary said - Afford: to bear without detriment  
Then I asked myself "To whom?" Just because we might have the cash in our pocket to pay for a tank of gas or a basket of strawberries in January doesn't mean that the planet can afford it for long, sustainably. What about the jungles of the South America that have Amazon crude oil spilled and spewed through the forest and into the rivers and onto the gardens of indigenous people while Texaco didn't clean up because it would raise the cost of our gallon of gas? They wanted to remain competitive, but the Amerindians couldn't afford it, couldn't bear it without detriment. This sort of thing is repeated all over the world in thousands of ways that we are completely oblivious to.

The rate of extinction today matches 65,000,000 years ago when the dinosaurs went extinct. A comet crashed into the earth and changed everything. Kingsolver says "It looks like Rome is burning. And plenty of people are fiddling as it burns." Let's resolve to say "Not us! We won't fiddle, we'll pray today and every day to understand more clearly the spiritual nature of creation and our Father Mother God as the Source of all good. I would like to leave you with a statement by Mary Baker Eddy that was an inspiration to me. Speaking of God as Spirit with a capital S, she writes, "Spirit diversifies, classifies, and individualizes all thoughts, which are as eternal as the Mind conceiving them; but the intelligence, existence and continuity of all individuality remain in God, who is the divinely creative Principle thereof." That is spiritual

sustainability, “existence and continuity remain in God” and are therefore manifested in His creation.

I’d like to close with a prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, with an interpretation by a colleague of mine from Principia College, Dr. David Cornell.

Our Father which art in heaven,  
*Our heavenly Father-Mother, Spirit,*

Hallowed be Thy name.  
*Unspeakably precious is your name.*

Thy kingdom come.  
*We know that you are totally in control.*

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
*Let your infinite providence be evident in human experience, even as it is in our consciousness.*

Give us this day our daily bread.  
*Help us to be keenly aware that your energy is ours.*

And forgive us our debts,  
*Forgive us for behaving selfishly,*

As we forgive our debtors.  
*As we learn to put our neighbor before ourselves.*

And lead us not into temptation,  
*Illuminate so brightly the reality of Spirit, Love, joy and brotherhood,*

But deliver us from evil:  
*That the temptation for material rewards shall vanish.*

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.  
*Your allness guarantees the victory of Spirit over all else, yesterday, today and for ever.*

Amen!  
*So be it! Amen!*