

New Community Project

As we like to say, we're a small nonprofit with a big goal: to change the world. And since not even NCP can do everything, we focus on changing the way we relate to God's creation—every part of God's world is under stress—and we look for ways to bring fairness for God's children. And we add a third dimension to our work—changing ourselves. We regularly see the changes: a congregation moving from disposables to reusables in the kitchen or a person off the street finding a sense of peace and purpose working in the gardens at our Sustainable Living Center in Harrisonburg, VA. And there was the Amish boy who followed me out the door after a Children Around the World presentation in a small Kansas grade school. He held out a \$5 bill, saying only "It's for the children." The other adults were shocked, not knowing where he could have gotten the money *and* knowing he's not always the most attentive, well-behaved kid in the class.

We don't find such things all that surprising. In our experience, people respond when they have a compelling reason and are given the opportunity. In fact, a book reviewed on our website (*Switch* by Heath & Heath) deals with bringing change in ourselves and our world. We *were* a little surprised to see that NCP is doing many of the things this book suggests—

- connecting with folks on an inner, feeling level through experiences, stories and photos;
- offering specific but manageable goals and calling for measureable changes in behavior;
- inviting people to catch a larger vision of the better world we're working toward;
- helping them feel that they're part of a new community where others are working at these same goals.

Thank you for your support in our efforts to do these things—and for your own efforts in this direction.

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God's earth is having an identity crisis—it can hardly recognize itself in the mirror. Oceans without fish—especially the ones we like to eat. Rainforests without rain—the Amazon has had two "100 Year Droughts" in the past five years—thanks to a warming of the North Atlantic due to climate change, which in turn affects rainfall patterns in the Amazon. Mornings without bird songs, as songbird populations have declined 80-90 percent over the past few decades—thanks to habitat loss, pesticides (which kill some 65 million birds in the US every year), and prowling house cats.

NCP makes dozens of presentations every year in schools, colleges and churches on what we are doing to God's earth and what we can do better. Our Sustainable Living Center promotes organic gardening, energy efficiency and bicycle advocacy. We take Learning Tours to the Arctic and the Amazon to experience the wonder and intricacy of the creation—and the threats to it. We purchase and preserve threatened portions of the rainforest, and along with it, its medicinal plants, biodiversity and ability to capture our excess carbon dioxide. We support reforestation projects in Burma, Ecuador and Sudan.

Of course it's not just for the good of the planet that we need to practice creation care—as in Genesis "adam" was made from the "adamah"—human from the humus—so our destinies are likewise linked to the well-being of the rest of creation.

We're in this together—us and God's earth—it's time we starting acting like it. Thanks for what you are doing, and helping us do our part.

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One of the goals of NCP is "peace through justice"—giving all God's children a decent chance for a decent life. Here again, the challenge is immense, with over a billion people trying to live on less than a dollar a day. We are especially interested in empowering girls and women—who are regularly not allowed to have an equal place in society; standing by the poor, who often feel they have no voice in society; and helping native communities maintain their land, culture and voice.

We work through our partners in Burma, Sudan, Ecuador, Central America and the Caribbean, Nepal and the Arctic to carry out our work. And we try really hard to be respectful and responsive to these neighbors, recognizing that they have much to offer us, as we may have things to offer them.

On a visit to El Salvador, our partner had us working in a mountainside community to help build small cinderblock houses for families headed mostly by single mothers. Other groups from the US and Canada had been working there as well. But as always, we knew our real “work” was to learn to know the people and their reality. So we asked a single mom of four to give us a walking tour of the coffee groves where she makes her living—if you can call it that: she earns \$3 for picking 100 pounds of coffee, which takes all day. At the end of the day, this poor campesina seemed to have been gratified to be able to tell her story—to be the “teacher” to a bunch of visiting gringos. Later that afternoon, we asked to have a meeting with community members to learn about their struggles, challenges and opportunities. Partly as a result of that meeting, we worked with our partner over the coming months to set up a micro-loan program to give women other income-earning options.

The next morning at our devotion, our Salvadoran leader Joshue said, “I was so proud of you yesterday.” When we wondered why he said, “No other group that’s come here has ever asked to talk to the community. They come, do their work, take their pictures and go home. Especially the women—they said no one has ever asked for their ideas.”

There’s lots to “do” in this world to make it a better place—and we send \$90,000 a year to our partners to support girls’ education and women’s development. But just as important as what we do is how we do it—respectfully, relationally, and ready to listen as well as speak. Thank you for helping us do this.

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NCP—just who are we? We are a network of some 10,000 people across the United States and several other countries. We have six full- and part-time employees. Our annual program budget is around \$95,000 a year, which covers all our salaries, our travel, as well as printing, phone, financial services, and fund-raising. We have Special Funds for girls’ education, women’s development and reforestation: all contributions to these funds go directly to the projects themselves; we don’t keep any of this money for administrative costs. We have partners in five countries and the Arctic—usually small grassroots groups—that host our Learning Tours and receive our grants. Speaking of Learning Tours, we offer 5-6 trips a year to the areas of the world where we have partnerships: Sudan, Burma, Nepal, Central America, the Arctic, the Amazon. These aren’t mission trips or workcamps, but opportunities to learn to know our neighbors and God’s creation in an up-close-and-personal way—and to see how our lives and lifestyle choices are related to their situation. And we aim for intergenerational groups—not all old, not all young, but a healthy mix of both.

Our Sustainable Living Homestead in Harrisonburg, VA works at sustainable agriculture, ministry among the marginalized, energy efficiency and bicycle advocacy, and regularly hosts visitors, volunteers and interns.

We have a special interest in youth and young adults—both for what they have to offer us and for the opportunities we offer them to make a difference in our world.

We are a registered nonprofit organization with an 8-person Advisory Board that meets twice a year.

We have a regularly updated website with more than you ever want to know about any of these things.

We are a small nonprofit trying to make a difference by offering resources that challenge us, experiences that change us, and a community that gives us hope. Join us.