

Stewardship of Creation as Witness in the World Today

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Preacher: A Rocha Canada

[0 : 00] We are very blessed to have Arosha here. Before I know a couple of you spoke to me and said, wouldn't it be great? And I think one of the goals at Learners is to really connect with people within our own congregation who have something to share.

We're all teachers and we're all learners. And so today we have Ed and Bettina Conrad who are members of St. John's. We have Andrew Bayless who is a member of St. John's and also Steve Croker who is a participant in Arosha but he doesn't come to St. John's with us.

We welcome you. And we know that you'll start a learners exchange at your church. But I won't take too much time because I know that they have a big program today and I just want to ask you to join me in welcoming them.

Okay. Yes, thank you for this. This is a privilege to address you. I'm the first speaker and my name's Ed Conrad.

You've probably seen me around. Bettina is my wife and you'll get to hear each of us. So I'll just start in. Oh, I was going to ask. We just would like to know how many people here have heard of Arosha?

[1 : 28] So the majority of you. How many of you have paid a visit to Arosha? Well, I'll say half probably.

Yeah. And so it is an international organization. I can't begin to list all the places because there are probably many and there are different sizes.

But when we're speaking about Arosha, we're at a place, a site that we call Brooksdale, which is 10 kilometers east of our house.

We can get there by bike. We live in South Surrey. So that's where we meet with each other and do what we're doing.

Louder? Yes, please. Okay. Okay. So my name's Ed Conrad and Bettina and I have worshipped here at St. John's since 1987.

[2 : 31] And our son, Timothy, he also worshipped here when he was a young fellow. But in 1996, we left Vancouver and we moved back to Edmonton, which is my hometown.

And we had bought an old heritage property and we thought that was wonderful. But as so many stories like this go, once you find out that you have to maintain that building and improve it, it gets to be quite a different story.

But I have to say it was good, but it was work. And we did have to deal with a beautiful big old house, but not a whole lot of insulation.

That was one of many issues. So an Alberta winter is not a thing to laugh at. And there was one January where we got a bill for the month at about \$2,000 for gas.

That was the heating bill. We had some tenants in the house, but still it was quite a bit. So we had to have a hard think about what was reasonable consumption.

[3 : 52] And the whole word sustainable was starting to get to have a lot of meaning for us. We had to come to intimate terms with the fundamentals of warmth and shelter, two of man's most primal means.

Are you hearing me all right? Yes. Yeah. Okay. As you can imagine, we soon resolved to move back here. We moved back here to the lower mainland.

And that was after nearly a decade in Edmonton. So for me, it was the beginning of my life, moved to Vancouver for 10 years, moved back to Edmonton because we bought this big old house.

And then we moved back here. So I don't think we're inclined to move. We're going to think along before we move from here. In returning to the lower mainland, we became involved in an emerging Fraser Valley eco-village co-housing community.

Here was a whole group longing to find a more sustainable way of living. We believed that our participation and dedication would help this rural community thrive and become something hopeful. [5 : 12] So we invested serious effort and resources in that community. The community held several new and idealistic assumptions and things like consensus decision-making.

Co-housing was a new concept, even still is. Hydroponic waste treatment, the idea of sharing meals in a community common house.

There were many new ideas. So we embraced all this with the fundamental belief that we as human beings can make wonderful things happen.

God was seldom mentioned, nor was God consulted, hence barely relevant in the process of everything we were planning.

Currently, this same matured, now matured community is in painful cross-litigation. We are saddened by these unfolding events, but continue to wish them well as we observe developments from afar.

[6 : 29] So, yeah, we're cheering for them, but I hope things get resolved. While we were becoming increasingly disenchanted with that eco-village community, we heard faint rumor of another community that went by a strange name that I couldn't remember.

It was just hard to get that label going in my head. I heard of it through a young farm intern who chose to readjust her livingness situation from that eco-village to this other place.

And it was a Christian community. And she was moving from there to a rural East Surrey location, and it was wonderfully near to our new South Surrey home, because we bought our home there. In time, we located this Arosha community, I got the name, and found that it promised much more realism, both in its mission and actions.

And so, a good relationship was able to grow. In time, Bettina and I volunteered more and more, until it developed into its present expressions.

[7 : 49] Combined with, we came back to worship here. We had a good, we were fed well when we lived in Vancouver, and we worshiped here.

We left here for those ten years to go, and then we came back here. St. John's was a welcome place. Didn't take us long to come back here.

So, combined with St. John's, our Bible study group, and Arosha Fellowship, and just maturing over time, I increasingly conclude that care for creation is important.

It is our very existence here on Earth. The elements that sustain and uphold us, even as we exploit and extract our comfortable living.

God's creation is life-giving, it is our clothing. It is the very expression of life around us. So, this is what we see and touch and know around us.

[8 : 58] But what about what is unseen and in play? So, what nurtures my faith in God is the notion that I am being saved despite myself.

Grace is at work beyond the care I take for myself. Our human capabilities are not the sum of our hope.

It is wonderful that our salvation was initiated long before we were born, and long before we learned of our culpability to sin.

We have a part to play in this drama, but we will not be able to say that we can save ourselves. Our human folly will carry on as we have always done, but we'll miss the mark again and again and again.

The prowess of our wits is tenuous. The truth that we may not save ourselves or this planet.

[10 : 07] I changed it, my notes, to may, because a lot of people believe that we might, and I'm also cheering for that, but I'm not too hopeful.

So, the truth is that we may not save ourselves or our planet, but God is big enough. He was our creator. He is our sustainer, and he will figure in our future.

We will need faith. We cannot avoid it. Witness today. We have daily bread. We have been the authors of our environmental degradation.

We have enjoyed the comforts of our technological accomplishments, but we own the outcomes. So, as I've said, I have little faith in our human capabilities to find lasting solutions to our growing

environmental and social conflicts, but I will help work for solutions despite the daunting global scale of issues.

I've said, I can explore and study what can be done against our excesses when I'm working at Arosha.

[11 : 39] It's just a place where I can get my hands to read and do something about it. In my participation, I hope specifically and intentionally, as I work alongside others, to actively pursue God's recreational work in the world.

In this, I'm encouraged. So. Okay, I'm going to pick up from there. Am I taking your notes?

Nope, you're not. I'm Bettina, and good morning, and I'm so pleased to be here with you this morning. So, out of all of that, I'm going to ask the question that one might ask, if God is all-powerful and eventually will bring about the new creation, why bother to do anything now?

Why not just go along for the ride and just use and take, you know, just use it all up? It is because, I believe, we are part of God's new creation through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross that I believe we are responsible to love and serve him by caring for his handiwork, even though it is fallen and broken.

For this reason, I am drawn to the work of Arosha. It bears witness to our wonderful God by caring well for the creation that he has put in our trust.

[13 : 21] Arosha engages people where they live to care for their communities, including the people, the habitat, and the creatures who occupy it.

As a Christian organization, Arosha's mandate is grounded in the sure hope that God will redeem, restore, and renew his creation, and that we are invited to eagerly await and participate in his unfolding plan.

This sets Arosha apart from secular environmental organizations who bear the burden of imagining that they must rescue the world on their own steam, and so are left bereft, overwhelmed, and really angry.

So, this is a shot that Ed took a picture of. It was in a school cafeteria done by some art students, and it's a comment from Suzuki.

We're in a giant car heading towards a brick wall, and everyone's arguing over where they're going to sit. So, he's just trying to...

[14 : 32] And that sort of reflects the mindset of the panic, and the anger, and the frustration that's out there. And this is what's hitting young people in the school system.

Ed and I have been teachers for a long time, and this is what hits them. So, Arash's approach is so different because its premise is built on a hope in God's kingdom coming.

It invites participation in their work in agriculture, habitat restoration, and education, in offering hospitality to guests, interns, and other volunteers, and in the maintenance of buildings and grounds.

And this is where our personal stories merge with the practical work unfolding every day at the Brookstil Environmental Center. Here you see me. I am harvesting collards.

It's collards, right? I can't say. Yes, it's collards. For a meal that I make, I'm going to make that day. So, I really delight to create wholesome food from scratch, and like, I really mean from scratch, like right out to you, harvesting, using ingredients which I or others have harvested from the farm on site.

[15 : 50] And I'm especially pleased when I can work with other volunteers or interns and share experiences and hear their stories as we work together.

So, this offering of myself to hospitality at the Brookstil Arachia Center deeply feeds my soul. And so, I feed, and I am fed.

And this is outside, just outside of the main house. In the summertime, we always sit outside, and there's this wonderful sharing of food and good conversation with people from all, you know, different parts of the world, and just, it's a delightful time.

It really is a community of God's people coming together. And I just love being part of it and feeding into that. So, Ed is a practical guy. I'm going to talk a bit about Ed, about what he does at Arachia. So, he'll be the first to say yes to a hands-on barn raising. In fact, when he discovered that there was a beautiful barn on the Brookstil site, he was really quite charmed.

[16 : 57] Perhaps that was the first charm. But that was just the bonus draw. We were no longer pursuing our own big property, our own, making our own kingdom happen for personal gain.

But the idea of working with others to restore and maintain historic buildings for a greater community good, had great appeal. So, the beautiful barn had some welcome modifications in which Ed played a key role to make it useful for events until the time of its complete restoration. But much of his work has been to restore windows and doors of other buildings, to help with some maintenance issues and to renovate spaces to make them more comfortable and useful for staff and interns.

And it gives Ed great satisfaction to work with others together, accomplish something tangible, and then celebrate over a simple community meal and good conversation.

And there he is. So, our primary roles at Arasha have been to serve in practical ways, but we've also received so much of the gift that a God-centered community freely gives.

[18:11] Fellowship, worship, shared prayer, thoughtful conversations, participation in working retreats, access to inspirational literature, on-site presentations by guest lecturers.

Olaf is here and I was at one of his. And many, many celebrations. So, as we serve in this community, it has also impacted how we live away from it.

I get really inspired when I know the food I purchase has been grown in ways that support the farmers, the soil, and of course the creatures who are implicated.

I have a much clearer idea of the work it takes to produce really good food now because I know the farmers that grow it at Arasha. I celebrate Thanksgiving every time I shop and prepare food as I treasured the diversity of God's wonderful provision.

And so, we've also made other changes in how we transport ourselves. Now, none of these things are prescriptive. I want to say that because I'm not telling you what you should do. But this is just something that I have experienced or we've experienced.

[19:24] So, we've made changes in how we transport ourselves to Vancouver most of the time. So, I'm really grateful for the public transit system that we have because every Sunday morning we get to walk just a few steps out of our house to a bus stop that picks us up.

An express bus picks us up, rides us into town, it carries our bicycles when we plan to go a little further and so we read books and just, you know, have a good time on the bus while we go to church.

It's not a hardship at all. So, that, those are, so some of these inspirational ideas and many others I've gotten from a book written by Leah Costomo and Leah is, with her husband Mark Q, are the, established the Christian Environmental Center that's here at Brookstown.

So, I'm just going to read you just a paragraph from this and, because she says it, whoever wrote this back page says it much better than I could.

So, Plant It is not a how-to book, but a how-so book, in which the reader is invited to travel with Leah Costomo on a wild ride of salmon saving, stranger welcoming, and God worshipping, as she and her husband help establish the first Christian Environmental Center in Canada.

[20:44] Avoiding simplistic prescriptions or cliched platitudes, Leah wrestles with issues of poverty, justice, and the environment through the narrative of her own life experience.

The lived theology and humility of voice conveyed in these pages draw readers to new and creative ways to honor the creator as they are inspired to care for creation.

So, I have two copies of this book, my email address in them. If anybody would be interested in borrowing one, you would be most welcome. It is a delight. I've got two hands up. They're taken. There are more. So, I can pass them on after that. It really is a fun read and very inspirational. So, just afterwards I'll get them to you.

So, I am going to just re-say that in no way is her book How to Manual which dictates what you should do to live sustainably. So, and just as a final comment, I found personally in my experience that sometimes living with less is actually, it actually means that I have more of what really matters.

[21:53] less to take care of and manage and more time to invest into friendships, places, and communities. And so, Ed and I participate at Arasha with gratitude in the work knowing that we have a part to play in a bigger story.

It's God's story. And ultimately, we are trusting that He will bring to completion all that He has planned. Thank you. Oh, oh, before I just, just, that's what I am.

You know, I'm a foodie. So, I had to do something from the farm. So, these are some wheat chips made with olive oil and salt. So, I'm just going to pass them around and then you just pass them on and pop yourself to a little bunch if you like and enjoy.

And many of these threats that they're faced with are human-caused, ranging from invasive species that are introduced to an area by humans, and then they take over and reduce the diversity of life in an area, as well as loss and fragmentation of habitat resulting from human development, as well as pollution and contamination by humans of natural areas and water courses.

So at Arasha, we focus on species at risk in conservation science with the hope that by learning about these species and protecting their habitat, we're in turn protecting other species that aren't at risk yet.

[27 : 47] We focus on 11 priority species, which include a wide range of types of animals and plants, amphibians, reptiles, fish, mammals, plants, invertebrates, and birds.

So it's a really wide range of study area, I guess. Our study area is the Little Campbell River watershed, which is right along the U.S. border.

It runs from Langley through South Surrey through White Rock into Semiamu Bay, which is part of Boundary Bay, right on the border. My first priority as a staff member is to support our conservation science interns.

So interns come from all over the world to live at our center for a period of time ranging from three months, sometimes up to a year. That intern on the left is from New Zealand. The one in the middle is local.

And for many interns, their time at Arash is highly transitional. They're often seeking God's guidance and direction for their life. They're often looking for experience that will help them in the next step of their career path.

[28 : 47] By building relationships with these interns, I have the opportunity to have important conversations with them about personal struggles and challenges, where they're at in their walk with Christ, and where they feel they're being called to.

When conservation science interns join our team, they each take on one of our ongoing species monitoring projects. My role is also made up by many other things, including managing all of our ongoing inventory and monitoring projects.

So this involves planning seasons of field work, spending a lot of time in the river like this, training interns, volunteers, and staff, maintaining equipment.

That's a lot of troubleshooting and calling tech support. Managing timelines, writing reports, and giving presentations. I also help with grant writing and budgeting for the program.

And I help with building and sustaining partnerships with other community groups, government staff, consultants, neighboring landowners. So I'm going to move into a few stories that I hope will sort of describe some of the work that I do.

[29 : 50] So one of our biggest success stories is in conservation science at Arasha that sort of put us on the map as a conservation organization is related to endangered freshwater fish called the Salish sucker.

It can grow to be about 30 centimeters long. It lives in deep pools in river systems. It's a bottom feeder, and it's very at risk. It's only found in 11 watersheds throughout the world, and all of those are located in southwestern B.C.

and northwestern Washington. And it faces many threats, including loss and fragmentation of habitat, poor water quality, low water quantity, and predation.

So it's being preyed on by other species. Invasive species are an issue too. So historically, the Salish sucker was found in the area that we do our work, in the Little Campbell River watershed. But in the early 1970s, a bunch of researchers looked for it and weren't able to find it. And so it was established as extirpated, which means extinct in a local area. So it was extinct within the watershed.

[30 : 49] And then in 2011, one of our interns was pulling a bunch of traps in our pond on site at Brooksdale and pulled up this trap with this fish that she didn't recognize.

And it turned out to be a Salish sucker. So it was the first one seen in over 30 years. Oh, 40 years, actually. And so this finding was very significant for Arasha as an organization, as well as just the conservation of the species in general.

We've continued to set traps pretty much every 100 meters along the entire river since then. And we've caught close to 40 of them. So still not many. But it's encouraging to see that they're still kind of spread out and using the area.

So this finding put our organization on the map in the conservation world. It was very significant. And we do believe that this was part of God's plan for Arasha, that just in terms of the impact that it had on building relationships with other organizations and sort of establishing a reputability as an organization as well.

So I'm going to show you a video of me taken by one of my interns that shows us looking at the contents of a trap that we just pulled. And so you'll see me counting and removing some fish that we aren't caring as much about.

[32 : 04] They're not one of our focal species. And then I'll count the Salish suckers that are in there. So it's always really amazing to pull up these traps not knowing what you're going to get. But also when they stay out of the suckers.

It's really exciting. Yeah. I'll get these pumpkin seeds. These pumpkin seeds are there. Two pumpkin seeds. One, they go back.

One, two, three, four, five, six. So not quite that sort of thing. Pretty fun. Yeah. Why?

Why? Why? You put the camera underwater and you get to see the fish. So that's always really, really fun.

I really enjoyed it. Clearly I was excited. Sorry? Was that a question? I missed it. What is that?

[33 : 14] Oh, it's coming. Oh, sorry. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, so I'm going to move into three quotes that I feel gave a bit of a window into some of my work. So this quote is from the head of a community-based conservation organization that we partner with on a lot of projects, a lot of habitat restoration projects.

And she's aware that we're a Christian organization, but she also has the impression that some Christians are responsible for some of the damage done to the natural world.

And so we were working on a habitat restoration project together, and she was describing sort of what Arasha is to someone else who didn't know about Arasha. And this is what she said. She said, They're Christians, but they do good work.

So in some ways it might sound like an insult or a dig, but I sort of recognized it as a compliment because she associates some Christians with a neglect for the natural world, but she didn't associate that with Arasha.

From her perspective, Arasha's work was able to speak for itself in the conservation sector from a non-Christian worldview as well. She recognized that our work was making a difference, and she also recognized that it was motivated by faith in Christ Jesus.

[34 : 25] And so this is an example of how I find Arasha's work bridges the gap between the Christian and secular worlds. This next quote is from the same person.

We went to Main Island to do a shoreline restoration workshop, and we were on the ferry coming back, and I was sort of being intentional about expressing how I enjoyed partnering with them, and I appreciate the work that they're doing.

And she was complimenting us as well, but she sort of responded by saying this. She said, We do what we can. It's not about hope. And to me, Arasha just switches that around.

It's not about what we're able to do ourselves, and it's all about the hope that we have in God. So in saying this, she confirmed my long-established thought that without a faith in God that necessitates the belief that God cares deeply for his whole creation, that it all belongs to him, and that one day he will make all things new, it is hard to find hope in the state of the natural world without that faith in God.

So I hope and I know that by practicing witness with our hands and feet, as we do at Arasha, we open opportunities for non-Christians to experience God in a new and tangible way.

[35 : 38] This last quote comes from a conversation. I always say conservation instead of conversation. So I had a conversation with...

He was the head of a development group, and it was at a stakeholder meeting, and we were discussing an upcoming development project nearby Brooksdale in South Surrey. And I was meeting him for the first time, and he shook my hand, and he said, You work for Arasha? Congratulations! And I had never been congratulated like that before, like for a job that I had for several years. It was kind of strange. But it was clear that Arasha's reputation preceded me, and it didn't matter what I was doing with Arasha, but he knew that whatever I was doing, it was a privilege to represent them.

And so he had an established knowledge of the work that Arasha had done building relationships with members of various sectors and various contexts, and he was aware of our deep commitment to a single place for the long term.

And so again, I think that this speaks to how Arasha is uniquely able to connect Christians and non-Christians involved in environmental work. This last story is about one of our interns.

[36 : 46] So last fall, in the fall of 2016, we had four interns, two of whom were struggling with mental health issues. One intern in particular was definitely searching for this deeper meaning in her life.

She came from a very challenging background, and it had shaped who she was. She had this deep spiritual side to her two-shoes, searching for some sort of spiritual connection with people and with the world around her.

She suffered from a bipolar disorder and found it very challenging to settle in at Arasha. She was kind of trying out different things, but never really felt at home in one particular work area. She was, however, constantly and deeply engaged in relationships with staff and interns and volunteers, and these relationships enabled her to ask difficult questions, learn more about Arasha's mission as an organization, and explore the Christian faith in ways that she hadn't before.

And the day she left, she announced to our team that she had accepted Christ into her life and she had become a Christian. And so this was a really amazing process to be a part of. I feel like all of us, as staff and volunteers and interns, had sort of small conversations with her over the course of her time with us.

And yeah, it was really amazing to see this happen. And she spoke of the key role that Arasha had played in her life and how the team had inspired her to follow Christ. And so I feel like Arasha's history is just full of these kind of stories where people encounter God in a real and deeply personal way.

[38 : 11] So I can't begin to describe how grateful I am to work for Arasha. So I'm going to show you a video now, another video, that hopefully provides a window into some of Arasha's work.

It touched me directly and started to impact how I looked at how I ate, how I communicated, how I transported myself. It connected me to creation and I wasn't connected before.

When I'm in the classroom, I'm thinking in my head, when do I get to go home? But when I'm outside and learning and thinking, I don't ever want to go home because it's so fun.

I was just constantly trying to find something, but I wasn't aware that I'm searching until the day I drove to that gate. We had a large home, high-performance vehicles, ski boats.

Didn't have a big, real vision of the world issues. We recycled, but that was about as far as we went into that world. I didn't become aware of the footprint we had. What I became aware of is my anger towards the issues.

[39 : 30] So about the same time, I met Mark Kukostomo, executive director of Arasha, and he talked differently about the same issues. The hopefulness of creation care, a loving God.

I just started changing. Sold the Mustang, bought a hybrid. And they're all natural actions as a result of a relationship with God. This organization is grounded in real science. And so when they are brought into an ecosystem, whether it's a river or a forest or something, they first evaluate it, they map it, they document it, and then they begin to move forward with science-based change, whether it's new plants, removing invasive species.

And so they're in the river, in the dirt, moving things around, teaching children about it, working with other environmental organizations. And over time, that environment ecosystem thrives.

The Sailor Sucker is a fish that created a shockwave through the community. It's been missing for decades in the Little Campbell watershed. And one of the interns that got up one morning and in her trap, she found it, and it was a big deal.

This creature was thought to have been extinct. And so now there's an opportunity to help research it, bring it back, and adapt the community until maybe it thrives again. But Rasha has an international footprint around the world, over 20 sites.

[40 : 54] And so you have this wonderful flow of international students, scientists, theologians, moving from country to country, doing good science and good community work in each of their environments.

When I'm in a classroom, they're just telling me what it is. I don't get to see it, touch it, or hear it, or even smell. But when I'm learning and, like, touching it or drawing it, I can feel it, see it, I can do it

with all my poor senses, and I feel like that helps me learn more.

My name is Brian Brules, and I'm in grade 7. Kids can experience Rasha by going to summer camps or field trips.

I got to experience going to summer camps, which is very fun for me because I got to explore around and see all the different animals that they have here.

The first thing that I did when I was here is I fed chickens. I also went to the forest. We built a little fort for the twins. We went down to the lake and tried to catch fish to see if one is invasive that doesn't belong.

[42 : 20] Sometimes they can ruin the ecosystem by eating other things and then it's taking over the whole ecosystem. In Arabic, there is a word that says that means you do everything for the love of God.

I never felt that I am more comfortable talking about this or actually expressing it freely until I came here because everyone is doing it. Maybe they say it a different way, but it is the same thing.

In Arusha, the sustainable agriculture is part of their mandate because it just goes back directly to their love of creation. You take care of what the soil needs from you so you plan what to give the soil and the soil will give you back and what it will give you is actually perfect for you in the season. It is just respecting nature and working with it as you are part of it that you are not just want to take a profit out of it. So this is the right way to live anyway.

There is a community aspect here that I think is missing from a lot of people in their lives and when you come to Arusha you plug into this community and very quickly you are sharing your life with people who you have only met over soup and a piece of bread.

[43 : 49] I feel like I have learned a lot and I do have a responsibility to help this planet. So my ultimate joy is when the person in front of me takes the first spoon and they tell me wow the amount of flavors that they get.

This is my ultimate joy I can receive. Arusha has changed me because I love going outside now. I do want to be a person who helps out the environment and that's the right thing to do.

I love this organization and I'm so thankful for the impact it's had on my life on my family and I love that it does what it does and I support it with everything I am.

My love is for Arusha as a whole including the land setting but the land setting is not the main thing it is the people.

Arusha for me is my place of belonging. Love it. Yeah. Truly. That's a great film and hopefully conveys a bit more of some of the different aspects of our work.

[45 : 15] My name is Steve Croker and I'm here with my lovely wife Shai. We bring greetings to you from All Saints Community Church where we worship in South Surrey and yeah we are glad to be here.

I have quite a few connections with St. John's. I used to live in Vancouver often went to the evening service been to a number of youth services and have plenty of relational links here so I feel very welcome here and I just want to first of all encourage all of you thank you so much for coming for continuing to be interested in creation care and what God is doing among you within you and among you.

One of the things that I think has become more and more clear to us certainly to me is that working in environmental conservation work caring for God's stuff needs to be done in community.

That is one of the other things that we're noticing so often that some of the people that come to Arasha whether that's to come and join us for volunteer day or as an intern they often come very depleted and very overwhelmed with the state of the nation so to speak the state of the world and so again my encouragement to you to you 30 people here is continue to do something together whatever that might become for this community what we're hoping with Arasha is that we can connect with even just a small group of people in a lot of different places and encourage possibly resource possibly give opportunity to have a transformational experience come down to Brooksdale and join us for lunch if you're lucky you'll be there when Bettina's cooking but we have plenty of great cooks and obviously it's the cooking and the conversation that happens one of the things I've appreciated about Arasha over time is that the organization globally is able to bring people to the table to talk about things to eat yes but to talk about things people who normally wouldn't be able to come to the same place and talk they're at different sides of some issue and again that's something which I think is important for all of us especially as Christians as people of faith as we're leaning into our own journey our own challenges with what what shall I then do that I know the

some of the information and some of the information is fairly yeah is fairly daunting and so what shall we then do and again I'll just what I want to move to very quickly is our question time but one of the responses that we have I guess embraced with our interns often because they ask all these kinds of questions and this comes from Lauren Wilkinson who many of you will know or at least know of and he's just got some great points of some everyday suggestions so we don't have a to do list you must do these things and some of you may have heard some of these before they're quite extensive here in terms of a bit of a line on each one but again just for encouragement for this morning don't be weighted down by the bad news of a wounded creation that you forget to enjoy the sheer gift and miracle of it

[48 : 53] I think that's an important thing for all of us especially if you watch any of the news this is an important posture don't take yourself too seriously he goes on quite extensively about environmental fundamentalism legalism all that kind of thing we need to be people that are coming alongside each other and those that we come in contact with and find out where they are on their journey of faith particularly and of whatever happens to be important to them in the creation care context and that might not be their language either so trying to learn where are these connection points and as much as possible know where your food comes from and know your food as Lauren Wilkinson has schooled us when we go over to Galliano for retreats there's many people that don't want to be associated as an environmentalist because of all the baggage that it carries conservationists well that's perhaps a bit more trendy something like that that's possibly okay but part of it is that Lauren has reminded us that we're all eaters therefore we all have interrelationship with the environment that we make choices three times a day that can affect what is happening around us that's a very different posture to approach it and then some of the things about knowing where your food goes and this concept of there is no away you can't throw something away so I mean these are all

I'm sure many of you have grappled with some of these things already and different aspects of this and again what I'd like to I guess leave as a challenge and then let's have some question time is what is this community of people going to continue to do because I know there's already plenty of good things happening and how can you again these 30 people and your friends family come and continue to help each other on this journey if that involves coming down to Arasha please do join us for some of our events or volunteer day on that one again I would challenge you bring a friend or three we do need people we've got lots going on but we certainly do need people and of course we also do need your prayers so I know many of you do get our e-news that's sent out that kind of thing that usually has plenty of information for you to take to God in prayer and so again we just want to encourage that as well we know that

I mean you've heard a number of stories that Sailor Supper one being one of them so many spill off stories on that that we can't but think God you are great to use this insignificant everybody thought was lost now found and this transformation in all kinds of different ways even to I'd say be at the core of stopping a truck parking facility to be built right next to the river and so that little fish had something to do with it and again as that story with its many tapestries has unfolded it's been evident that God is at work in so many different ways through that so that's some more encouragement but yeah let's just open it up for some questions again it can be of course beyond anything that we've talked about here just to enjoy learning from each other so yes yeah at the back we don't so our farm is not a certified organic farm but it's the closest thing without that piece of paper so our community shared agriculture program this involves all of the food that's grown there is partly for what we use on site but also in the share program and that touches about well we have about 80 shares that touches about 400 people who are eating food out of this garden and being inspired by all kinds of things discovering good things about God and the recipe that tells you what to do with something that you don't quite know what it is and so there's all kinds of learning opportunities as we reconnect with our soil and environment yeah yeah do you still sell food out of a Russia through the CSA program yes that's our main food serving sharing thing outside of our actual site and then we have just all the food that comes in we've got a small store so people can buy grass fed beef and some of the different animals eggs and some of the different animals that we've raised over different times that's all available so how often is that store open yeah it's currently open only on Saturdays we need more people and that hopefully will become a future area of growth just our site development plans will be expanding a lot so do keep in touch with us over the time these next years are going to be quite exciting as what develops around us and how we

can interact with both the planning and process of that the property next to us but the store is one of those opportunities for public to find out what's happening they literally wander onto the site not knowing anything about Arasha perhaps haven't even heard this creation care stewardship posture either but they come to buy an egg or at least a dozen eggs and their life is transformed by the renewing of their mind and thus it goes so that is one of the key things we want to develop thank you

I have three questions first is what does Arashian mean how do you get this name second is where do you get the funding for the scientific research and the third is what's a public website okay great yeah so the first question was where did the name Arasha come from so thank you for asking it's Portuguese for the rock and there's quite again a fairly lengthy story about how the first Arasha project started it started in Portugal by a couple who were he was an Anglican priest actually from England and they together with another family went down to Portugal why Portugal they're still I think they understand God's leading in that but they're still kind of scratching their heads a bit and that's for the first ten years it was just Portugal that area in Portuguese

[56 : 11] I don't speak Portuguese but apparently Rasha as rock means kind of a boulder and this area that they were setting up a field study center basically where people could come and do some bird watching and study this wetland so again the point there was to take on a place very particularly and just stay there and do what needs to be done learn about it educate people about it all that kind of thing so and the local people referred to that area as Rasha and so Rasha the rock and of course there's the our biblical foundation that Jesus is a rock and that's what we are building the organization on and again it's I love these kind of questions because I can tag off on different things I mean yes Rasha is an organization but there is a movement and you are a part of it and so we recognize our role as an organization but again it really is to nurture other groups of people who are gathered together to care for God's creation in that sense to transform communities into healthy places and by health we really want to drill into that that means not just my health fresh air all clean water all those kinds of things but those things particularly being focused on so not just about me about our neighborhood those kind of things so I'll just answer the

I'll jump to the third question that's just a rasha.ca and I will make that point we do have some brochures just right outside here in this coffee area if you'd like to grab one all the information is there and please get in touch how do we finance some of these things so I mean with some of Andrew's work we've been able to get grants from government from different organizations so again as a Christian ministry we're in a very bridging kind of relationship with so many different things so that we can get funding the problem with some of those fundings are of course they're six months or nine months and if you're monitoring something you need 60 years or more right so some of those help us but then it's always the struggle to kind of get more over 60% of our budget is donor based so just people who recognize that they can help support a note on that is that as you know with non-profits

I mean this is the basic economies when you're a for profit and I've been in one of those for some time when sales go up hallelujah you can hire more people you can produce more stuff for non-profits when production goes up when program expands people just work harder and on top of that some of the people who work very hard are Ed and Bettina who have joined and what a wonderful thing when an organization is kind of going along and some people come on board and they very quickly start to say we they start to own that they're a part of it this is our organization our movement are joining in with this so this was tremendous that Ed and Bettina joined us very early and other people have come alongside too so that's a big part of it we even have some funding from groups like

VanCity and the TD all the banks are kind of getting well on their way they've been doing this for years but now people are and I think they're getting some of their community support happening so we've got some great relationships with ongoing for years VanCity has funded us in a number of particular projects so we hope to continue to build those areas and then of course we have some areas of fees so my wife works alongside a couple other folks on our team that are doing environmental education for children so this is school groups that come down and they're ramping up they've got a great relationship with the Surrey School District many of our schools are Christian schools but many of them are not and so some dynamic programs again of inspiring these kids I mean the video that Brian is just a fantastic really advocate for us because he helps all of us recover this awe and wonder of God's good creation and how we can join in to do something and

just recover that wonder so thank you for your questions yeah well I couldn't agree more about what you're saying to the kids

I worked as a my first year of retirement I worked in an elementary school and I was amazed at what little kids knew you know I mean at lunchtime you find one of them saying Annie that's the wrong box for the water bottle and you know this kind of stuff and they seem to know more than their fathers did I have a question about not what we eat well I guess what we eat animals I like watching Knowledge Network where you see things that I wouldn't want to meet on a dark and long night really you know fantastic things but they tell us that 200 species are disappearing about every year and so is everything worth saving because I could personally live without the mosquito I would join you my wife would join you even more I have sour blood so they take one bite out of me and they carry on so they don't but they go feast on my wife so yeah I mean that's a big question in many ways

[62:12] I mean I think Bettina was addressing some of it in her talk of you know just saying so I mean God has made these wonderful things and our role as we stand in our posture before him is to say sometimes to ask why but then sometimes to say how and just ask that question of how can we care for your creation that you have made and it is intrinsically good so we find the strangest things that's one of the things that I love about the different interns that come in they end up studying all these strange things like there's a fresh water mussel that is in our watershed and somebody's fascinated about this and they come and the things that you like you're saying with the children how much they discover and know and then as we can make links with people on okay how much you're learning and how does that relate to trying to understand your relationship with God and to try to understand more about him so that's there's plenty of links there we'd have to talk more about how particular things that we can do because again

God has called us as stewards to be involved to manage to change things we go and pull out a bunch of invasive species Andrew himself is taking fish that shouldn't be there and we know they shouldn't be there because they've studied them and God has given us opportunity to learn about that so we are supposed to be engaged and I think that's what shifts the thing from well as Bettina asked that question why bother because I mean that has been and even though you might have crossed that bridge as I have I've crossed that bridge yes it does matter what I do now on earth in my relationship with God that matters now and it matters later and later by what I mean later is eternity later so that's going to help me when I do feel overwhelmed by a particular part of our environmental degradation one of the other postures that I think again many of you will be on this page of understanding that we don't really

I mean we have an environmental crisis for sure but really what's behind that is a human behavioral crisis it's our behavior that has transformed and impacted the environment and God still has us here so we can still do something and ask those questions too and we are still here so let's dig in and get our hands involved in whatever way so yes just on the comment on mosquitoes I don't know if it's true or not but I once heard transform my view on bugs once heard that the black fly is instrumental in the production of blueberries I don't know if that's true or not but here's my question do you utilize volunteers to come in for certain amounts of time Saturdays evenings summer time to get the work done of Russia or like when I hear the word intern I'm thinking of students masters PhD students but do you use volunteers as well definitely yeah on all those areas and time slots so our main areas of involvement are with the agriculture sustainable living with the conservation science with environmental education so we have people that came yesterday to help run a kids program a small group of volunteers that helped

Shai and Ruth run our environmental education program so yes to all of those and we'll find something for sure we're also finding there's other opportunities for people to be involved not just at our centre but in other ways as well so that's where as an organization we're hoping to help that so yeah please get in touch yeah yes locally or anywhere in the world do you have any kind of overlap whatsoever with the Catholic world I'm sure there's family resemblance here obviously isn't it yeah I would say even our Brooksdale Environmental Centre here just on the whole front of journey in creation care with contemplative prayer which is certainly part we're all on the sort of awareness thanks to a number of people part of our community to draw us into some of that and I don't know if any particular specific you know

I'll say formalized relationships exist globally but we definitely have a lot of relational connections I mean again that's where that's one of the things that I've often been inspired by and am grateful to

be a part of where there's an organization that can both cross culture cross generational and certainly can be a service to the broader Christian community and then obviously also in that cross cultural there's that opportunity for just finding out what do you believe and those opportunities are frequent so again we're trying to establish more particular roles and again even with the church to say St. John's is a lead church in Vancouver and already St. John's has I think helped in that whole movement of a posture of caring building communities that kind of thing and so that's an important thing and that's what we want to call the church to is to recognize your role if our founder did a study early on which mapped the globe he got some geographer mapper people in and they mapped the globe of all kinds of environmental hotspots whatever that meant they had some particular criteria and lo and behold the next map layer was where the Christian church globally was strong and many of those places matched up so part of the realization for the

[68 : 33] Harris's our founder was wow if we can mobilize the church in these places that are hotspots but also in other places perhaps even places where we can help the hotspots by what we do in how we live there could be a real change and again that kind of perspective well gosh that's hopeful that gets a whole different thing than well gosh I don't know what I would do about the fact that there's some desert that's taking over a particular area and I really don't think I have anything to do it just really shifts you out of that and I think those are important things for us to have yes one other question there yeah the Still Creek river system is it anything like the Campbell I would defer to do you know anything about the okay okay tell us what you know about the Still Creek river system it runs through a very industrialized area a lot a lot of it is covered up but

I understand they now have fish living in these areas to migrate to the open air but they'll go through miles of tunnels to get to it right yeah yeah well one thing that I would comment on that so again not knowing particularly about that river that creek system one of the other things that I think is helpful that we begin to think in watershed rather than in municipality so our watershed that we're focusing on the Little Campbell watershed goes through four different municipalities you've got to be really keen on that because you've got to talk to four different governments and there are different community groups and that's really important but we're thinking beyond that because the river goes all through it so that's often been I mean both in our theological specific theological teaching with our students or when we have other opportunities to engage at different campuses you know a river running through it we live on the river at Brooksdale we know that what we do affects people down river we also know what happens upstream affects us and again lots of good theology there as well as lots of good practical let's get to know the people that live upstream and downstream so that we can work together and again that's a lot of what

Andrew and his team have really been forging relationships it's fantastic for you know again love your neighbor well Andrew gets to go up to our neighbors for no other reason well many other reasons but just to knock on the door and say hey do you know that one of the only western toad species is in your backyard that's the only one in the Fraser Valley let alone our watershed could we please study it and then over years well those people came to the presentation of the interns that were studying the toad some people aren't that welcoming now and so again I mean aside from running away from dogs that are barking or that kind of thing there's opportunity to engage people with something very different and then they it's again an opportunity just to get to know so again I think one of the other things that I've I guess been inspired by is that

Arash has given us this opportunity to creatively engage people with the gospel and that starts by knocking on the door to say can I please come and check the fact that you've got these wonderful little toads out there that are very important and we can begin to tell you why the the fog in its particular role in the ecosystem plays an important role and if we don't care for that and as we're inspired to care for that God is glorified and the benefits flow from that so I'm just conscious of our time should we wrap up or do we have time for I'm just watching the big people okay yes it looks like they're still going into business more questions David's still speaking okay sure I'm a cliff dweller like many people in Vancouver we are rapidly becoming a concrete jungle and living for the last 30 years I have not lived in a place where I could produce any of my own food and we are separated by greater distances all the time even when we shop in stores we can't read the labels because they've reduced the size of the printing could you just comment on that what's going to happen to us 25% of the remaining single family dwellings in Vancouver will be gone right by 2020 yeah I heard that same report we're not anywhere near the garden and that's

Vancouver compared to lots of other places that have that so how do you connect with your food source one of the things that we're partnering with folks at different levels on doing community gardens where people can come out of their home dwelling and find a garden to be a part of of course a balcony garden some people are it's amazing what they can grow on that little piece again you need to know what you're doing but our point with that is start doing something and you will learn so and don't start with some exotic lettuce that you think might be fun to have start with something very basic that you can do and again that will invite other opportunity I know there's some communities that in terms of a complex that will themselves have a community garden a rooftop garden some of these things that again I think you're right we need to lean into that because we are being disconnected from our food and it is difficult to find what are we actually eating and what has been the environmental impact of that particular product such as palm oil which is in a lot of our food our cosmetics things like that my wife and I were recently at a palm oil plantation in in east

[75 : 03] Malaysia on the island of Borneo just devastating what's happened there because of palm oil plantations taking over the jungle so that's another thing yeah should we have maybe just one more David still speaking you're welcome I'm usually quite rigid oh I forgot how to go I'm usually quite rigid when the group they know so I is there one last question great good good well I just want to take this opportunity then to say thank you so much for such an engaging and stimulating and I don't know I feel like it was a banquet of ideas moments I was hungry I'm thinking maybe you could bring a cart of fresh veggies into church every Sunday and we could buy them here there you go but I just want to thank you so much for taking your time and showing us just one more aspect of how applied faith gives us a way of enriching our relationship with

God thank you so much thank you thank you thank you thank you