

BLESSED EARTH

Serving God, Saving the Planet

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When the music starts, a star is born

For the most part, the Amish are more aware of pop culture than me. I still play vinyl records, and use an amplifier with tubes that glow in the dark like an enchanted city. But I want to tell you about a pop phenomenon that a young friend showed me on YouTube. It was a segment of "Britain's Got Talent" featuring the first performance of a woman named Susan Boyle. This is probably not news to most. The performance has been viewed by 60 zillion people.

Miss Boyle comes out before the judges and audience looking every bit the part of a self-described 40-something-year-old, dowdy spinster who's "never been kissed." Central casting couldn't have done better. The judges laugh and the audience laugh at Miss Boyle. The camera even catches one young woman openly sneering. Everyone is having a good time feeling superior to Susan Boyle.

The music starts, and then Miss Boyle begins to sing. Anyone with a drop of human kindness running through their veins finds that they are weeping for joy. Why? I believe that we cry because the event embodies an analog of the Christian story. It's the story of the dorky little uncredentialed carpenter's son from a nowhere-ville place called Nazareth. The vote on Jesus wasn't even close. When it came time for the audience to cast their ballots, Jesus got the thumbs down. He was voted off the island--put to death, dead buried, and soon to be forgotten. But on the third morning the music began to play, and the birds and the stars began to sing, and it has never stopped, although sometimes we get so busy we can't hear it.



Pictured above: Dr. Matthew Sleeth

One of my favorite lines from Isaiah is a physical description of the Messiah: "For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2 NRSV).

There was nothing "cool" about Jesus. He was like a little green plant, and we humans don't tend to pay them much attention.

I was recently in Atlanta at the Flourish creation care conference. On several occasions, I was asked how I thought the Green Christian movement was going. I think

it's like Susan Boyle--the singing hasn't even really begun, but I have great hope. Just wait and see what happens in the next few years!

With every blessing,

Dr. Matthew Sleeth
Executive Director



Creation Care Scripture

"Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast."

Psalm 119:90

Green Tip of the Month

Take a picnic with your family and friends. Not only will you be in the middle of God's creation, but you'll be able to enjoy in-person fellowship and great food!





Letters from you: The greening of Graves

By Jack Graves

My conversion to environmentalism began in late June 1969 when I watched an evening news report about the fire that had been burned that day on the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio. It was the summer before my junior year in high school. I became involved in the first environmental group and helped organize the first Earth Day clean up in my home county in southern Indiana. We cleaned up about a mile of state highway near our school that day and filled six dump trucks with effort. Salt Creek, which flows near my high school, is to this day one of the seven most polluted streams in Indiana. For someone who loved the outdoors, Indiana in 1971 was a cross to bear.

Unfortunately for me, I was as drawn to environmentalism by my hatred of humanity in general as much as my love for nature in particular. Neither is a good basis for healthy environmentalism. In the fall of 1971, I enrolled at depression. Like me, most of my environmentalist friends were a self-absorbed lot. We weren't really friends at all but rather just allies in our war with humanity. We loved nature, even if we knew little about it, and would have been happiest if the population would just leave us alone to enjoy it in peace.

Early in the summer of 1971, a friend asked me to read Hal Lindsey's Late

Great Planet Earth. The title resonated with my view of the world but the book only served to convince me that not only did this life hold little for me, but I was lost and didn't have much to look forward to in the next life either. I began to search for God but wasn't having any luck finding Him.

God reached out to me in the form of a student I had never met who asked me a question I had never been asked. My conversion to Christ upended and transformed my life. The discipling I received essentially ended my preoccupation with the environment. I knew I had truly been converted when I discovered that I was not only interested in people but actually concerned about them. Jesus had created within me a love for others. So profound was the change for me that by 1976 my wife and I were missionaries to the island of Java, Indonesia -- the most densely populated island on the face of the earth.

I began to love my neighbors but found myself losing patience with environmentalists. I recognized in most of them what I had discovered in myself -- disaffected, maladjusted, depressed loners who were always looking for the worst to believe and the person to blame.

In the intervening years, little I have read or heard has convinced me that environmentalists have improved on their motiva-

tion for their activism. So reading the Sleeth Trilogy has been a spiritual encouragement. Approaching the environment from a basis of stewardship and compassion for the poor meshes not only with my Biblical understanding but also with my experience in missions.

The Sleeths have refreshed my love for the environment by relating it to serving God and loving the lost. As Nancy has put it, "One by one, the whole family became believers. Suddenly, we had a clear purpose: to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. One way that we could show our love for the Creator, and for our global neighbors, was to start taking better care of the planet."

We may never become environmentalists of the caliber of the Sleeth family but we have been making some major changes in the way we live and we're finding joy and other rewards in the process.

We are thankful to the Sleeths for the encouragement their ministry has brought to our lives and their encouragement to remember our stewardship responsibility. The Graves are not green, but we are getting greener. We are blessed. ☺



Prayer & Praise

Praises

- Emma safely returned from India and has settled in nicely at home for the summer.
- Amanda Sims, a recent Asbury College graduate, will join us as a summer intern during the month of June. She will be a big help, especially during the Ichthus Music Festival.
- Chuck Colson endorsed our approach to ministry on his radio program, which marks a substantial step forward for the creation care message.
- Several major Blessed Earth projects and initiatives are in motion. As we secure projects with broader reach, Matthew will be able to travel less, and we can be more strategic with our efforts.

Prayer Requests

- Continued discernment of God's next steps for our ministry as we rapidly grow.
- Vigilance and wisdom for being good stewards of new opportunities we are receiving as a ministry.
- Positive fruits from the 700 Club interview (will be filmed on June 2).

MEDIA & SPEAKING EVENTS

We were featured in the following media during May 2009:

Print/Web

- BreakPoint - "Common-Sense Environmentalism" by Chuck Colson
- The Other Journal - "For the Beauty of the Earth" by Nancy Sleeth
- The Women's International Perspective - "My Family's Journey to Reduce our Carbon Footprint" by Nancy Sleeth

TV/Radio

- The Bob Dutko Show. Nancy Sleeth
- WLEX, Afternoon Show. Nancy Sleeth

Follow us in June with these upcoming press appearances in June:

- June 4, 2009 Lexington Herald-Leader Nancy Sleeth's interview with Sharon Thompson about buying local foods and cooking green.
- June 2009 Interview with Christian Broadcasting News/700 Club

If you would like to schedule an interview with Dr. Matthew or Nancy Sleeth, please e-mail us to share your inquiry. ☺

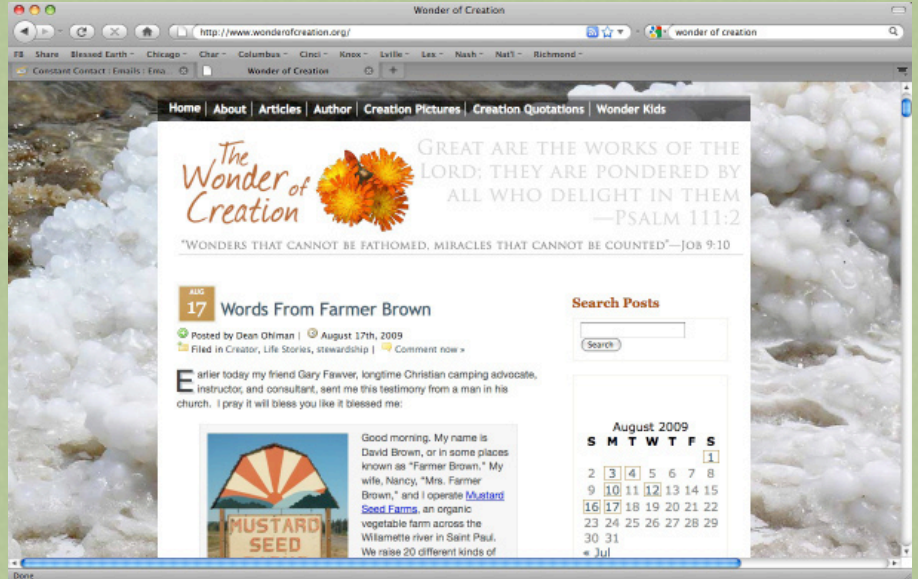
THE WONDER OF CREATION



WonderOfCreation.org (WOC) is a blogsite that seeks to explore the majesty of God's creation and celebrate its beauty and wonder. Through creation, God's invisible qualities-His eternal power and divine nature-are clearly seen and serve as a motivation for our worship and for acknowledging our responsibility to be good stewards of His good creation (Romans 1:20).

This beautiful Web site authored by Dean Ohlman features regularly updated entries about God's creation, along with amazing pictures Dean himself has taken. Each entry is written with a warm, inviting style. Warm your hearts and awaken your minds to the joys of God's creation. Visit The Wonder of Creation site today!

www.wonderofcreation.org



Stock Image

OUR MISSION

Blessed Earth is an educational nonprofit that inspires and equips faith communities to become better stewards of the earth. Through outreach to churches, campuses and media we build bridges that promote measurable environmental change and meaningful spiritual growth.

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