

Environmental Stewardship

The Piedmont Project was critical in the reformation of my proposed course for the Candler School of Theology, fall term, 2006. Candler is in the process of designing and constructing a new theology building behind Bishops Hall. If plans remain on schedule, construction would begin the summer of 2005. Peggy Barlett raised the possibility of having students and faculty follow that design and construction with environmental concerns guiding their observations, critiques, and lobbying efforts. John Wegner offered to accompany such a group of concerned campus citizens, being a professional “translator” and “interpreter” of the construction process. This is how the course was born.

It would then be easy to take these same interested students to visit churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples which have been built with similar environmental concerns shaping the actual construction, heating/cooling, and building use. Undergirding the actual construction would be the theologies of environmental stewardship which inspire alternative designs. These theologies have implications for our day-to-day lives, not only for the design and construction of our homes, universities and schools, office buildings, and religious facilities. They represent a challenge to our culture, as well as to the religious practices which have been shaped by the culture.

The Church and Environmental Stewardship (CC601)

Candler School of Theology, Fall Term, 2006

Dr. David Jenkins

The **purpose** of this course is to expose future pastors and lay leaders to the theologies of environmental stewardship which can serve to transform our way of life, resulting in the practical re-design of all of the buildings in which we live, work, play, shop, and worship, as well as to the reformation of the day-to-day habits of our lives as faithful stewards of God’s good creation.

This course would meet once a week for a three-hour block.

Site Visits: Throughout the semester students would visit the construction site of new Candler theology building being built behind Bishops Hall, as well as meet regularly with the university architects, John Wegner, and the Candler faculty committee overseeing the plans for the building. We would also take regular field trips to visit church buildings (i.e. Ed Arnold and the Unitarian congregation) and other religious houses of worship in order to learn about the many possibilities for constructing and redesigning buildings to be environmentally friendly. Students will also have the opportunity to work in small groups to research related topics such as environmental racism, traffic/public transportation and the impact on land use, water, and air quality in regional Atlanta, etc. Related site visits will be developed to support this research. We will also meet with the Georgia Interfaith Power and Light group, headed by Carol and Woody Bartlett, which advocates for faith-based co-ops to develop, buy, and distribute green energy. Linking environmental stewardship to the nurture of community will also be a key theme throughout the course.

Theology and Bibliography. During the semester students will read from a select bibliography concerning theologies which engage us in environmental stewardship. Some of the following texts will be recommended:

The United Methodist Book of Discipline and Social Principles (which makes claims about our denomination's stand on environmental issues and the correlative way of life which can sustain these environmental goods);

The Ecology of Place, Tim Beatle and K. Manning;

Living by Surprise: A Christian Response to the Ecological Crisis, Woody Bartlett;

Voluntary Simplicity, Duane Elgin;

Noah's Garden: Restoring the Ecology of Our Own Back Yard, Sara Stein;

The Body of God: An Ecological Theology, Sallie McFague;

Still Following Christ in a Consumer Society, John F. Kavanaugh;

Freedom of Simplicity, Richard Foster;

The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices, Brower, Leon, et al.;

Environmental Ethics, R. Elliot;

Ministering with the Earth, Mary Elizabeth Moore (Candler faculty);

The Careless Society, John McKnight;

Sprawl City: Race, Politics, and Planning in America, Robert Bullard, et al.;

What Are People For? Wendell Berry.