

Servantship not Stewardship

The word 'stewardship' is mentioned three times in this issue: in the report about Sustainable Brampton (p.11) and on page 17 in the report of the Shrewsbury Ecumenical Green Group and by Peter Owen Jones (see p.6).

Many of us have felt for some time that 'stewardship' is the wrong word to express our relationship with God's creation. Peter Owen Jones is very clear when he challenges us to consider that the concept of stewardship is evidence of how far we are from communion with our brothers and sisters of creation. 'Would you say God is a steward of humanity, that Christ was a steward of his disciples? It is a madness

because it is so dry and completely without love'.

The thesaurus offers interesting alternatives for 'steward': custodian, superintendent, supervisor or guardian. It is language which suggests a sense of superiority over creation. Language is very powerful. Christians have been using the idea of the stewardship of creation for a long time and while we may say that we do not mean any kind of dominance by using the term, as this issue again reminds us the consequences of our 'stewardship lifestyles' shouts otherwise.

Peter Owen Jones suggests we use the

word communion. We are in communion with the more-than-human community. Others have suggested the word 'partnership'. But before we start to use new language we had better consider what kind of relationship we really believe we do have with creation.

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Fisher, the eco-psychologist, insists we need to 'come out' as human beings? 'To come out is to say: "Yes, this is what I am: no apologies." A human being is a servant of nature, a plain member in the community of all life'.¹

But take a moment, how does this make you feel about those texts, which refer to humankind as the 'crown of creation', only 'a little lower than the angels'? Does it make you want to object (well, somewhere deep inside, at least) that humankind is different. Humankind is, well, sort of higher than the rest? Humankind is different, made in the image he created them, male and female. Humankind is different, made to be like God and his Son and the Holy Spirit. God, who loves his creation; the Son, who did not come to be served but to serve; the Holy Spirit who comes alongside loving, serving and inspiring the energy in us to serve.

Humankind is different: imaging the Servant Lord, we are the very pinnacle of the creation, the crowning servant of all the more-than-human community.

While I do not intend to criticise the authors of any of the articles in this issue may be we can agree with Peter Owen Jones, and very many others, and change our language. We are not superintendents, custodians, guardians or stewards. We are not on a stewardship campaign. We are more than partners and need to be in communion with creation. We are servants of God's creation.

The good news for the more than human community is that we are servants unto death. ■

Chris Walton

1. Fisher, A. (2002). *Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life*. New York, State University of New York Press, p.193.

NEW FEATURES

There are two new features in this issue. *Finding the Still Point* is an opportunity for readers of *Green Christian* to share their experience of quiet, or as one of the eight year old children after being alone in the natural world here at Ringsfield EcoCentre wrote of her experience:

Bumpy, Soil, Twigs, Stinging nettles, Bugs, Trees, Quiets.

So if you have experience of 'Quiets' you may wish to offer a contribution to this page in the future. Up to 500 words, in the form of an article, a meditation, a story or maybe a poem.

I like the idea of *Quiets* so much it inspired a poem.

You taught us how to be motivated by how much you would sell. We loved what you offered: your digital war, collaborating with the entrepreneurs of cash, carrying your marketing of two for one; your virtual living through sophisticated screens, your fantasies of small horizons.

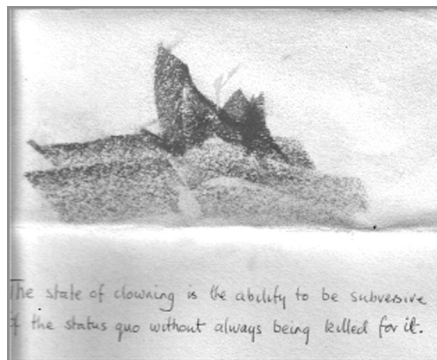
You taught us how to live this way, we learnt there was no other way. It is the only way the world works you said.

But you never told us about the quiets, the epiphanies of connection about discovering the secret that is only heard in silence. Why? It would have made so much difference.

The Still Point won't always bring us to gentle, tranquil thoughts.

In Transit again gives the opportunity to readers to offer an article. This time it is to share a transition process in your thinking, believing, practice. Articulate your journey, not to a settled, resolved place, but your present journey. Up to 1,000 words, again in the form of an article, a story, or maybe even artwork. In a Clowning workshop years ago I made a transition from acting the prophet's message with despair, to living it with hope. This clumsy artwork tried to catch the moment. The only colour in the picture is the tiny green shoot coming out of the rocks.

Sharing these transition moments is an encouragement for others. ■



The state of clowning is the ability to be subversive of the status quo without always being killed for it.