



Care for the Earth

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I had to be up and out of my house this morning early. We grabbed our gallons of milk and everything from the freezer (including those things I'd honestly forgotten were in there!). Like a caravan, we left the house while the line of trucks waited outside our driveway, with their grinders, cherry-pickers, and saws. It's been a long time in the planning, but today was finally the day for our dead ash trees to come down. We Energies was on site to shut off our electricity for the day and take down the overhead power lines – lines that have been threatened by the creaking, swaying trees. Fourteen trees will be chopped down today, leaving only stumps, a few logs, and a barren landscape.

Happy Earth Day! It's the 50th anniversary of our formal celebration of Earth Day. In 1970, a 25-year-old graduate student named Denis Hayes organized the first Earth Day, sparking a national and now global interest in environmental protection. As Christians, our call to be stewards of the Earth long predates this organized event. Native peoples tended the lands we now call home before our arrival, honoring the gifts of the planet and its resources. Care for the Earth is not a new phenomenon, but our attention to it grows even more important.

In the Amazon, more than 20% of the rainforest has been cleared for farms, logging and more living space. Rainforests are critical to our survival. They help to slow climate change by removing carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in trees. The destruction of the rainforest not only contributes to carbon emissions, but it takes away the beneficial effect of carbon absorption.

The loss of natural habitats, like forests, is also being linked to an increase in disease from animals. Research reported by earthday.org suggests that from 2003-15, for every 10% of forest the Amazon lost, it gained 3% more malaria cases.

The Canopy Project and 8 Billion Trees organization hope to preserve or plant nearly 8 billion trees in the coming year, one for every person on earth. Whether you donate to a charitable organization, take advantage of local government tree planting offers, or buy and plant a tree for your own yard, you are contributing to the sustainability of our planet. I'm certainly going to need to do that at my home, if they ever let me back in.

For this Earth Day, take time to breathe and observe how the seasons have changed. Longer term, earthday.org has offered some ideas on [how to care for the earth during a pandemic](#). It has some fun ideas for kids, too, in case you have young ones at home.

Thanks be to the Creator for a world that is intricately and beautifully fashioned! May we treat it lovingly.

