

COMMON GROUND

Newsletter of United Campus Ministry

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From the office:

There are certain words and phrases used almost exclusively within the Christian community. One such phrase is "the world". When I first began to surround myself with other believers, I found this phrase positively irritating. It seemed Christians used it constantly as a way of disregarding ideas, beliefs, and even whole professions outside the strict mold of "traditional" Christianity.

I understand what the phrase "the world" refers to—humanity fallen away from God and ignorant of his commandments. What I don't understand is how certain things got lumped in with "the world". I think that we have given certain important issues—such as environmental concern and the arts—over to the world. The attitude I have often encountered that perplexed me is, "I don't need to think about that. That's just the world." I believe every issue needs to be addressed by the Christian community.

In refusing to respond to a given issue, we do ourselves great misfortune and, I think, we fail to live up to the call Jesus has given us, to be the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). When we ignore an issue or an idea, the world adopts it. Consider environmentalism.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (Genesis 1:26)

I believe that the biblical view of ecology is of humans as stewards, but we the body of Christ have all too often displayed selfishness and apathy instead; in response, unbelievers have made ecology their own issue. Can we really complain that under their supervision environmentalism has lost the biblical principle of man's authority over the earth?

Similarly, the arts have been all but abandoned to the world. In *Walking on Water: Faith in Art*, Madeleine L'Engle declares that all true art is Christian, not necessarily in its subject but in its nature. Art is intended for the glorification of God. In art we mirror God's own glory as he shows it to us (Psalm 19). But when we fail to give God his due praise in every expression available to us (art), the world will take art and use it for its own ends. Can we complain?

Christians *are* making efforts to reconsider what many taboo ideas and issues mean to us. Popular Christian music has done wonders toward putting self-expression in its proper context: for the purpose of exploring and thinking about our relationship with the Lord. The Evangelical Environmental Network was formed in 1993 in order "to articulate and promote a 'biblically grounded and scientifically informed' approach to today's environmental crisis". Habitat for Humanity has taken and is taking action against poverty housing in the U.S. and around the world, including here in Fairbanks.

God is sovereign over all creation. No issue, no idea, no problem is outside His control. We are the body of Christ on this earth, and we have a responsibility to seek out the biblical response to each and every problem in this world.

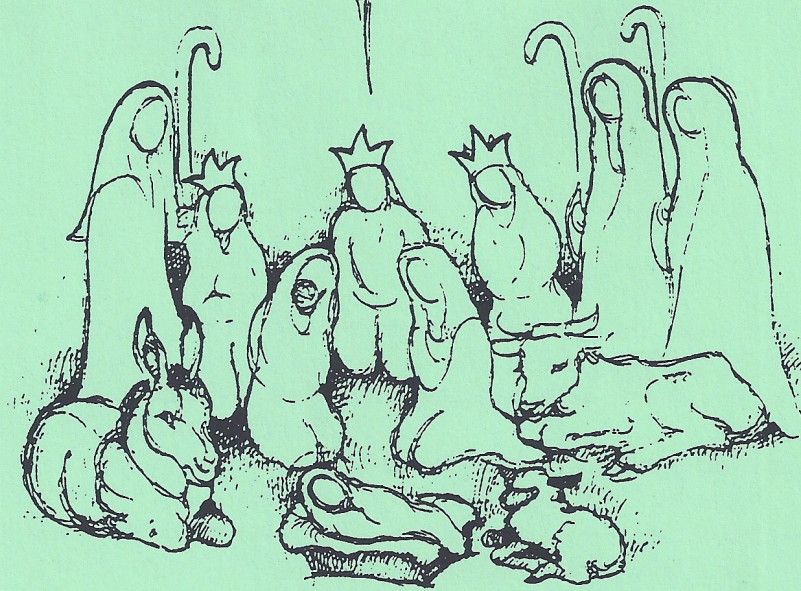
What does this have to do with our everyday lives? Closing our eyes to the relevance of any question reflects much larger sins on our part: desire to avoid uncomfortable ideas, unwillingness to change old attitudes, and fear of standing out both in the world and among believers. My own view is that Christians have wrongly held the opinion that the words Christian and environmentalist are contradictory. I don't think you need to have the exact same view of environmentalism as I do, or music, or the arts, or any other similar issue, but I think we all must admit that we have "given up" on certain areas of concern.

What is our response to these ideas? What should be our response? If we are to be the salt of the earth, we must cede nothing to "the world".

Peace,

Charlie

Charlie



WEEKLY EVENTS

- MONDAY:** "Ra-Mon-Day"--Have a free Ramen lunch with friends in the UCM office (306 Constitution Hall). Drop in anytime between 12 and 1:30 PM.
Music Practice--Come to the office at 4 PM to sing, play guitar or just listen as we practice the music for Tuesday's Vespers service
- TUESDAY:** Vespers--Casual worship service, Upper Lola Tilly Commons, 7:30 PM
- THURSDAY:** Lunch Bunch Bible Study--Bring your own lunch; we'll bring snacks. 307 Gruening @ 1 PM. This semester we are discussing 1 Peter.
- SUNDAY:** Leadership--Open to anyone interested in planning UCM activities. 307 Gruening @ 3 PM.

SPECIAL UPCOMING EVENTS:

Christmas Party! We will meet at the office at 6 PM on Friday, December 10th for a great evening of singing, fun, and fellowship. After visiting and caroling at the Pioneer Home, we will gather for a white elephant gift exchange and good food. Please bring a wrapped, inexpensive gag gift to donate to the exchange and be creative!



Finals Care Package Prep. will take place on Sunday, December 5th. Please meet at the office at 5 PM to help assemble our packages and enjoy a pizza snack. Many hands make for light work, so we'd appreciate your help and company.