

United Nations Sustainable Development Program – Take [Personal] Action

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While I was writing the “Two Percent” series of articles for the Christ Church Cathedral community, the United Nations launched a very comprehensive, yet readable and well-organized, website based on 17 sustainable development goals. The Sustainable Development program was initiated by the well-known Brundtland Commission report of 1987.

I realize 17 is a very large, seemingly counterproductive number of goals, but as you will see, they are closely interrelated and self-reinforcing. Put another way, making progress toward one goal almost invariably has a favorable effect on others. At the individual, household, community, regional, national, and global scales they call to mind what John Muir wrote many years ago (1911). *“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.”* The UN Sustainable Development goals have been debated, implemented, monitored, and modified (as needed) for more than 30 years in order to maximize their effectiveness and address unintended adverse consequences.

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

An especially useful and encouraging part of the website is the “Take Action” tab. As you will see, the observations, ideas, and suggested actions that I presented in the “Two Percent” series are a subset of the comprehensive list compiled by the United Nations team. The incremental, four-step structure is also very practical and encouraging. Simply put, it echoes Wangari Maathai’s advice to “do what you can.” (Although I wish they did not devalue the content with the kitschy titles and cartoon characters, I understand this is what web designers think is needed.) I recommend them to you as a set of principles and practices that advance Creation Care beyond collective anxiety, frustration, and handwringing. The historical record clearly shows that conscious, constructive personal and community actions are ultimately what lead to institutional and governmental solutions. This cause-[political] effect sequence has been the basis for every major environmental law and the associated regulatory and enforcement actions (e.g., Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Endangered Species Act, Wilderness Act ...the list goes on, thankfully).

As Aldo Leopold wrote (1935, during the Great Depression) ...*“Relegating conservation to the government is like relegating virtue to the Sabbath. It turns over to professionals what should be the daily work of amateurs.”*

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction/>