

Chapel Talk
Ed O'Donnell
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Land, Water and Trout (and All the Other Creatures)

Good evening. My name is Ed O'Donnell. For the last several years, I have served as St. Andrew's Land Use Coordinator. I want to thank you for inviting me to talk with you tonight.

In anticipation of Earth Day, I want to share with you tonight some reflections of the importance of protecting the environment – more specifically, the interrelationship of land and water and the impacts upon the living creatures which inhabit both. You can gauge the health of the land by the quality of water into which it drains. I learned at a very early age the importance of this relationship through my lifelong passion and pursuit of fly-fishing for trout. Trout and the insects they feed upon are very sensitive to water quality. In essence, they serve as excellent indicators of a stream's overall health. In the art of fly-fishing, there is an element called "reading the water" – that is, where is the best habitat for trout? Since most of the time you are wading in the streams, you gain an entirely different perspective of how the land and the water are interrelated. You can see where unwise land-use practices, such as erosion, chemical spills, etc., have directly impacted the stream. Over time, you can begin to recognize the cause and effect of man's actions on water quality, due to land-use practices in a watershed. These effects include increased siltation, decreased water quality, algae blooms, loss of desirable macroinvertebrates, increased water temperatures, and changes in the Ph are but a few of the signs of a stream's being stressed by land-use practices.

Recently you read in the Wilmington newspaper the story regarding fish consumption advisories. These advisories are linked to the decline in surface water quality due to a long history of neglect. It also points out the need for regional solutions, i.e., pollution does not respect state/county boundaries. The northern part of the state is at the lower portion of the drainage area with the majority of the flows and land area located in Pennsylvania. Thus, no matter what we do in Delaware to improve water quality, it needs to be linked with a coordinated effort in Pennsylvania or it will fail. An important point to remember: What we do on the land is mirrored in the quality of our streams, rivers, lakes and ponds.

You have the opportunity to learn and do something about this interrelation right here at St. Andrew's. The faculty and staff are highly dedicated people who are attempting to impress upon you the need to protect the environment. Efforts such as the Environmental Club, Recycling Amigos, Organic Gardening, The Sustainable Living Group, are all important activities which help to teach the

importance of promoting a sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle. You will need this knowledge because your generation will be dealing with the issues such as global warming, a lack of drinkable water, loss of habitat, loss of both flora and fauna, and the legacy of man's past environmental errors (land fills, chemical spills, etc.). For better or worse, your generation will need to grapple with these problems.

You need to become informed about environmental issues and, more importantly, how to take effective action to solve these issues. The St. Andrew's campus and surrounding lands provide you with a wealth of opportunities to learn about the environment. You need to get out into the field and experience the life around you in the Pond, the forest and surrounding fields. In your pews there should be a map showing the lands of St. Andrew's. Use this map as a guide to explore the many possibilities that surround you for learning about the environment and the interaction between man, land and water. You need to get out and explore the land!

On a final note, St. Andrew's is embarking on a program which will rethink how we approach sustainable management of our lands. You need to be a part of that effort. Your participation in research projects/efforts, such as water quality monitoring, the surveying of flora and fauna, organic gardening, use of biofuels, energy conservation, recycling, contributing articles to the *Environment Matters* newsletter, are a few of the possible ways you can learn and contribute at the same time. In addition you may also have the opportunity to do research work with other groups, such as the University of Delaware's Department of Agriculture, the Water Resources Agency, and the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control.

Make a difference – get involved and leave this world a better place than what you found it!

Thank you.