

Saskatchewan Synod

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

June 15, 2009

To Mr Daniel Perrins

My expertise is not in nuclear science, medicine, geology, or environmental science. My expertise is in theology – our understanding of God and God’s relationship to the world. As a Christian bishop, pastor and theologian, my understanding of God is informed by the Holy Bible. Through the Bible I understand these things about God in relation to the question of expanding the uranium industry in Saskatchewan:

1. Psalm 24 declares: “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the creatures and all that dwell therein”. We confess in faith that God created all things known to us: earth, space, the universe and beyond. In love God established the earth as a place where life might flourish, where clean water and air and fertile ground might sustain plants, animals and human life. Over the history of human habitation of this earth we learned to till the soil for growing crops. We domesticated animals for work, companionship and food. We harnessed power in water, wind, coal, natural gas and uranium to provide light, heat and energy. God gave us this earth in which to live and thrive. And we do so to God’s glory. But with the gift comes a great responsibility: to preserve and maintain the earth for God’s glory. We are to use God’s gifts of life, earth, water, air and all good things for the good of all creation. And when our use of God’s gift threatens any part of creation, we are compelled to use everything at our disposal – our collective intellect, science, ethics, social understanding, wisdom – to do the least harm and the most good.

In my opinion the report of the Uranium Development Partnership fails to take into account the full impact of expanding the uranium industry on many elements of life in our province, among them: the water supply, disposal of radioactive waste, environment costs of building a nuclear power plant, long-term financial obligations of the people of Saskatchewan, and other renewable options for energy production. I urge the Government of Saskatchewan to examine these impacts before committing us and our descendants, and the other living things around us, to expansion of the uranium industry.

2. In the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus says, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” In God’s calculation of who wins, it’s not the one who collects the most toys. With God, the least becomes the greatest; the last becomes first; and meekness takes the biggest prize. I know this thinking flies in the face of modern society. We are all taught to strive for power, control and wealth. For whatever reason – fear of want, desire for security – we want to accumulate money, power and possessions so that we can be assured our future will be safe, secure, and comfortable. But that’s a short-sighted view of the life that God offers us. In this beautiful creation each of us is inextricably intertwined with the rest of creation – human life with its six degrees of separation, but also the rest of life. Our consumption of goods affects the economies of people halfway around the world – for good or for ill. When we are expect

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strawberries in January and cheap bananas year-round, our demands mean that somewhere else, acres that could provide local food are being used for a cash crop instead. Because God made life interdependent on this planet, we are compelled to make decisions about all things – food, energy use, energy production, waste – from a position of humility and meekness so that our decisions do not harm the planet or other forms of life on this earth. In that way we ensure that future generations are able to inherit a good life on this earth.

In my opinion the assumptions behind the recommendations of the Uranium Development Partnership are based on amassing power and wealth, especially for the Bruce Power Corporation. The recommendations to proceed with expansion of the uranium industry fail to consider the delicate balance of nature when diversion of waterways and accumulation of nuclear waste is anticipated. I encourage the Government of Saskatchewan to invest in research into renewable forms of energy that have less negative impact on the environment and work in a more humble way with the creation as God made it.

3. In the Book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible, we read, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.” Admittedly, the visions in the Book of Revelation are not science and not easily understood. Every age of Christianity has its own take on the meaning of the bizarre images recorded in this apocalyptic writing. And yet, every generation of faithful Christians finds hope in the promise of a new heaven and a new earth. That is not to say that this earth is bad. Or should be a cause of shame. Or should be destroyed. It is to say that God has something better in mind than even this beautiful blue and green globe. One day we will come into the fullness of God’s intention for creation marked by peace, harmony, joy, no more tears, no more pain. As people created in the image of God you and I are enlisted into God’s plan for a more perfect world, and we can begin to imagine in the midst of this world what that might be like. More than that, we can work toward God’s more perfect world by the choices we make today.

For me the gift of uranium provided in God’s creation is one to be used with great care and caution. Its benefits are seriously tempered by the dangers it poses to life. Mining uranium makes jobs, but at what cost to the workers, the ground-water and the plant and animal life in the area? Producing uranium for energy creates the potential for nuclear arms proliferation. And building a nuclear power plant in Saskatchewan brings the dangers of uranium more fully into our midst. I encourage the Government of Saskatchewan to keep God’s image of a more perfect world in mind as decisions are made about energy production, energy use, mining and development.

These public consultations have given the citizens of our province the opportunity to hear the proposals and react to them. A responsible government will hear the concerns of the people and go back to the drawing board with these things in mind – the care of God’s creation, the importance of humility in planning for the future, and the hope for a more perfect world with humankind and the earth in a beautiful balance for now and for generations to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views on the report of the Uranium Development Partnership.

Sincerely,

+Cynthia G Halmarson

