



The Earth the Lord's, but we need *more* than one!

Rev Dr Jason John, ecominister, Scots Uniting Church, <http://ecofaith.org>
Based on early thoughts for a Bible study I wrote for TEAR's magazine, the August 2007 edition of *Target*, which is available from <http://www.tear.org.au/resources/target/index.shtml>

“The Earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.” (Ps 24:1)

This classic biblical text is quoted by almost every Christian trying to convince their peers that the love of God's creation is an intrinsic part of loving the Creator.

The verse is incredibly confronting for Christians like me, living in a capitalist countries. Under capitalism (or wealth-ism), each bit of Earth “belongs” not to God, but to those with enough wealth to buy it.

Increasingly, we are learning that even if we do believe and live as if the Earth is the Lord's, not rich humans, many humans are living as if there was not one, but many Earths from which we can draw resources, and into which we can dump our wastes.

I am an ecominister at [Scots Uniting Church](#) in Adelaide, Australia. It's small. People wise and building wise. Yet it takes about *15 city blocks* worth of land to maintain it!



Scots Church physically occupies the tiny white square, above, but its ecological footprint is equivalent to all these buildings (2.4km x 150m).

Even our associated [ecofaith community](#), which worships in the park every week and therefore has no building, is mostly attended by car drivers. So although we take up only about 10 square metres of park as we gather, our ecological footprint is about 100 square metres!

These are just two small examples of the stunning revelation that to maintain the lifestyle of the average Australian would take [four planets](#), if every human was to live like us.

So until the “average Aussie” is willing to consume 75% less, and produce 75% less waste (and all the Americans follow suit), Psalm 24 should really read:

“*One Earth is the LORD's, but the other three belong to Westerners.*”

If we accept that other creatures should have some room left aside for them, we might have to chant in worship:

“*One Earth is the poor's, three belong to Westerners, and another two or three for all the other animals.*”

Problem is, we only have one Earth!

So how do we live a “one Earth” lifestyle?

According to one online calculator, we could become a vegan with no car, eating only locally grown produce, living with six other people in an eco friendly 5x10m unit!

How close can we get to that sort of lifestyle? Many of us live within structures which make it impossible to reduce our footprint by 75%, *but if we convince just two others to join us in a 25% reduction, the effect is the same!*

If you visit <http://ecofaith.org/footprint> you will find a link to a great video which explains the “how many earths” concept, and to calculators which can help you estimate the “global footprint” of your house, business, school, event, or even worship service! Yes, now your faith community can measure how much your worship of the Creator is costing Creation, and make decisions as a community as to what to do about it. The worship footprint is a work in progress, which a few Uniting Church congregations are piloting thanks to some funding from [Uniting Foundation](#), but you can already take advantage of the resources we've produced so far through the above link.