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## *Earth Hour*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip**

I value every memento and photograph and plaque that rest in my Cathedral office. Photographs remind me of weddings; seashells and antlers remind me of the outdoors; small gifts remind me of various large projects.

But among those items is one certificate in particular. It proclaims that I am a "Life Member" of the "International Dark Sky Association." Not many people know what this organization is. Started out west, where the skies are still relatively clear, the organization tries to eliminate the unnecessary use of light during the night. I only play around at astronomy, but the serious astronomers have always known that artificial light at night blinds us.

Why do we focus lights upward on our buildings at night? Of course, we want to make a statement; we want people to notice our businesses and our presence. At some of our residences, why do we install lights inside our trees, shining upward? Well, we enjoy the ambience.

Unfortunately, most of us have now never known what lights the sky can give us, without our help. Unlike our ancestors, we have not sat outside at night, telling stories about the movement of moon, and planets, and constellations. For centuries, before the television brought us indoors, humanity has usually enjoyed one another by enjoying God's lights and God's stars.

The International Dark Sky Association is not against light. It is against light that shines upward. Essentially, we waste light and energy by shining it up into the sky. Do we think airplanes need to see where they are headed? Do we think God needs more light in the heavens?

Thus, I was thrilled at the effort of so many to turn off lights on Saturday, March 29. Boog and I were having dinner in a friend's condominium. Our host had taken care to finish all the preparations by 8:00, so he could turn off stove and lights. We ate by candlelight. No television. No music player. Just conversation and good food and candles. It was marvelous. Unfortunately, the night sky was still hazy with artificial light; but we captured something of true evening community on Saturday night.

I actually believe it is presumptuous to think that humanity can "save" the earth. But we can certainly care for earth. Our humble role in the earth is to make our presence equitable and proportional. I am not against the use of energy or the consumption of food. I am for using those resources responsibly and then returning them to effective use in the grand ecosystem of the earth. In the ecosystem of the earth, every item has a purpose—even mosquitos and weeds—and there is no such thing as waste. Every piece of "waste" can actually be returned to the process of earth sustainability.

Meanwhile, the wonderful Cathedral Market opens this Saturday! It is one small step from the Cathedral toward care and stewardship of the earth. We will host, in our large parking lot, the natural foods and artisanal goods of local farmers and craftspersons. We try to support local farmers and growers. We try to support local artisans. The Cathedral Market thus creates another source of community for our neighborhood. In the great tradition of ancient cathedrals, we create economic community for all citizens around us, whether they are members of the parish or not.

Did I say "economic community?" Yes, the word "economy" is a great word. At its best, it means "stewardship;" it means "earth care," putting to use God's resources in the most efficient way possible. We are a part of the earth and the heavens; we are a part of God's creation. It may be that we realize this for only one hour, on a Saturday night or a Saturday morning. But I pray that our earth hours become earth days and earth years.

Sam Candler signature



The Very Rev. Sam Candler