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January 2, 2013

Playing offense

It's time to divest from the oil industry

By Bill McKibben
The Christian Century

The pipeline blockaders in the piney woods of East Texas that Kyle Childress describes ("Protesters in the pews," *Christian Century*, January 9, 2013) are American exemplars—the latest incarnation of John Muir, Rachel Carson, John Lewis or Fannie Lou Hamer. They're playing defense with verve and creativity—blocking ugly and destructive projects that wreck landscapes and lives. And defense is crucial. As generations of sports coaches have delighted in pointing out, defense wins games.

But we're very far behind in the global warming game, so we need some offense too. And here's what offense looks like: going directly after the fossil fuel industry and holding it accountable for the rapid warming of the planet. It's the richest and most arrogant industry the world has ever seen. Call it Powersandprincipalities, Inc. And where once it served a real social need—energy—it now stands squarely in the way of getting that energy from safe, renewable sources. Its business plan—sell more coal, gas and oil—is at odds with what every climate scientist now says is needed for planetary survival.

If that sounds shocking, sorry: a lifetime of Exxon ads haven't prepared us for the reality that Exxon is a first-class villain, any more than a lifetime of looking at the Marlboro Man prepared us to understand lung cancer. In fact, our first task is to turn the fossil fuel industry into the equivalent of the tobacco industry, making people understand that it plays a destructive role in

society. Yes, we all use fossil fuel. But most of us would be just as happy using sun and wind power. It's only the fossil fuel industry that works every day to make sure that doesn't happen.

And our first tool to do that job: divest institutions (schools, churches and municipalities) of stock in those companies. Sell the stock. The fossil fuel companies care about money.

It won't be an easy fight. Still, here's the first sign that it's going to work: beginning the night after the presidential election, a crew from the 350.org movement spent 21 nights crisscrossing America on a biodiesel bus (with Johnny Cash's old driver) and holding nightly gatherings that sold out big theaters and enormous churches. We found people eager to dig into this issue. By the time we were done, students on 182 campuses had active divestment fights under way—our battle was the most e-mailed story in the *New York Times*, and *Time* magazine said: "University presidents who don't fall in line should get used to hearing protests outside their offices. Just like their forerunners in the apartheid battles of the 1980s, these climate activists won't stop until they win."

Better yet, the Massachusetts conference of the United Church of Christ, with veteran climate activist and conference minister Jim Antal in the lead, passed a resolution demanding that the denomination divest immediately. As they put it, "We can't continue to profit from wrecking God's creation—not through our pensions, not through our endowments, not by our personal investments. As Jesus said: 'Where your treasure is, there is your heart also.'"

Let's begin with the problem. It's the greatest problem human beings have ever faced. And if you had some sense that global warming was distant or abstract or safely in the future, 2012 should have convinced you otherwise.

The year began with that summer-in-March heat wave that meteorologists called the most statistically freakish weather event in our history. In lots of places across the Midwest the *low* temperature for the day beat the old all-time high. That was a foretaste of what would come: a summer of record heat (July was the hottest month in any month of any year in American history), marked by record wildfires and a drought so intense that barges ran aground on the Mississippi. And there was that Sandy thing: the lowest barometric pressure ever recorded north of Cape Hatteras as well as the largest storm ever measured, with tropical storm–force winds stretching 1,040 miles out from the center and the cold Atlantic pouring into New York subways. Exactly how many signs do we require?

If we thought that this was occurring only in the United States, consider that during this past summer the Arctic was melting so fast that it smashed every record in the books. By mid-September NASA's James Hansen was describing it as "a planetary emergency." Meanwhile, after a fall gathering devoted to a discussion of ocean acidification, leading researchers concluded that the seas would soon be "hot, breathless and sour." Then a study funded by the least developed countries and released this fall found that climate change was already killing 400,000 people a year, not to mention undercutting developing economies. The relentless drought was enough to raise world grain prices 40 percent in a matter of weeks—and if you're getting by on a few dollars a day, that was definitely the biggest thing to happen in your world this past year.

We've known for 25 years what's been going on. When human beings burn coal, oil and gas, they pour carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, and the molecular structure of that CO2 traps heat that would otherwise radiate back out to space. So far we've raised the planet's temperature one degree—enough, remember, to melt the Arctic. But the same scientists who told us that would happen now tell us with sober confidence that the one degree will become four or five degrees before the century is out unless we change our ways. That's not a world that will support our civilizations. Agronomists at Stanford warned last year that from now on each degree rise in global temperature will cut grain yields 10 percent. Imagine our planet yielding 40 percent fewer calories.

So why don't we change our ways? It's not impossible. Germany, the one large country to take this problem seriously, announced in November that it would soar past its targets of producing a third of its energy with renewable sources by 2025. In fact, the energy minister of the conservative Angela Merkel government declared that Germany will be above 50 percent and perhaps at two-thirds.

Is this because Germany has an unfair advantage in sunshine? Probably not, since Munich is north of Montreal. It's because the Germans have assembled the necessary political will. And it's not just Germany. China, while it has made serious energy mistakes in recent years—such as building too many coal-fired power plants—has installed more solar hot water arrays than any nation on Earth. At this point, 250 million Chinese—more than 25 percent of the country—get their hot water from the sun. In this country less than 1 percent heat water via the sun—and that's mostly to heat swimming pools.

We're stuck going nowhere because of politics. The oil industry alone spends $440,000 a day lobbying Congress, which explains why endless delegations of scientists are not heard when they explain the stark facts of our predicament. When anyone deviates even slightly—when President Obama delayed action on the Keystone Pipeline for a year, for instance—the reaction is swift and predictable. The American Petroleum Institute promised "significant" political consequences and helped fund an endless series of ads. Days after the election, 18 senators demanded that the pipeline project be restarted. Between them they'd taken $11 million in campaign contributions from the fossil fuel industry. And that's only one pipeline.

A few numbers clarify our situation:

• Two degrees—that's how much even the most conservative nations of the world think we should limit the rise in global warming. It's high—twice the Arctic-melting level of one degree—but it's where the world's countries—the G-8, the G-20, China, the U.S.—have drawn the line.

• 565 gigatons—that's how much more carbon dioxide the scientists say we can pour into the atmosphere between now and 2050 if we want to have any hope of staying below the two-degree limit. At current rates—we're burning more than 30 gigatons annually and increasing 3 percent a year—it will take us 14 years to seal our fate.

• 2,795 gigatons—that's how much carbon dioxide the fossil fuel industry has in its declared reserves, ready to burn. It's still below the ground physically, but economically it's already up on the surface. That's how Exxon sets its share price. Oil reserves provide the collateral when Peabody Coal wants to borrow money. And it's five times 565—five times what anyone thinks we can safely get away with burning.

But it will be burned unless we intervene. The numbers—first published a year ago by an obscure group of British financial analysts—mean there's no longer any doubt about how this story comes out. There's no room for wishful thinking. Exxon alone has 7 percent of the carbon necessary to take us past two degrees, followed closely by Chevron, BP, Shell and the rest. These companies aren't outlaws against the laws of the state. They mostly get to write those laws. But they are outlaws against the laws of physics. Unless we intervene, the end of the story is written.

So what do we do? One tactic, of course, is to use less of their product. Every time we get more efficient, every time we screw in a better lightbulb or ride a bike, we make these companies a little less powerful. Alas, the key word is *little*. Given 100 years, slow changes in behavior would do the job. But since much of the Arctic has already melted, we need to move much faster. We need the kind of structural changes (a serious carbon tax) and international agreements (helping the developing world leapfrog past coal to sun) that the fossil fuel industry has proved so expert at blocking.

That's where the offense comes in. As individuals, we can't help burning some fossil fuel ourselves (you want to take the train, but if there isn't one . . .), but we can help ourselves from profiting from it. We can make sure our institutions divest from fossil fuel, and in the course of doing so we will have the chance we need to turn Exxon into the equivalent of Philip Morris and weaken its power dramatically. As I said before, this is the new tobacco industry, except that instead of killing us off one by one it's taking down the whole planet. We need to divest from it.

We've done this once as a society in a big way, during the battle to end apartheid in South Africa. One hundred and fifty campuses sold their stock, as did many cities and lots of churches. When Nelson Mandela finally got out of prison, one of the first places he went was California, to say thanks to students who had pressured their schools' trustees into selling $3 billion in stock. Now Desmond Tutu has made a short video for our Do the Math tour calling for this kind of pressure again—and calling climate change the next great overriding moral issue on the planet's agenda.

Most of the time, we can pressure companies to change their bad practices other ways, through shareholder resolutions and the like. That's because most of the time those bad practices are a fairly minor part of the business plan. Author Naomi Klein points out that when we ask Apple to pay decent wages to its Chinese workers, we don't need the company to stop making iPhones. But the fossil fuel industry is different. At the moment, carbon and more carbon is its business plan. Exxon spends $100 million every day looking for more hydrocarbons, even though we already have far more than we can safely burn. Someday these companies can be part of the solution, turning themselves into energy companies and using their skills to build a planet full of solar panels. But that won't happen until they're beaten politically, until they can no longer use their power to ward off the future.

We need to go to work, and as we do, our practical survival instincts should kick in: No more Sandys. No more droughts. But this battle is so big and so tough that it will need to reach our moral core if we're going to work hard enough and fast enough to get the job done. Bob Massie, Episcopal priest and pioneer of the corporate responsibility movement, says: "If one is opposed to climate change, it is morally wrong to hold stock in—and thus to benefit from—corporations whose purpose is to make it worse. Many people have pointed out the painful hypocrisy of America's founders arguing for freedom at the same moment that many of them owned slaves. A similar form of hypocrisy—conveniently obscured, quietly justified—must now be exposed and challenged."

Virtually every college and every denomination I know is on record arguing that we must work hard to be good stewards. If we're called to green the campus and green the church, how can we not be called to green the portfolio?

It won't be easy. Fossil fuels often make up a big part of investment strategies. But we can't be like the young rich man who "went away sorrowful for he had great possessions." Already the trustees of Unity College in Maine have voted to sell every penny of their fossil fuel stocks. Already the student body of Harvard has voted—3 to 1—to tell their trustees to do the same. Already members of the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association have introduced resolutions instructing their denominations to do likewise.

Sometimes the fight seems hopelessly lopsided. When I told a TV reporter about plans to tame the Exxons of the world, he said: "This just seems impossible. It's a David and Goliath story." I was nodding my head and feeling glum, and then I thought: "Wait a minute. I know how that story comes out."

I can't promise that we'll triumph. But I do know that this is the greatest fight humans have ever had to engage in, that it's coming to a head and that the time to be counted is at hand.

http://www.christiancentury.org/article/2012-12/playing-offense

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January 4, 2013

An Ecological Paradise in Southern India? A Discussion About The Todas With Dr. Tarun Chhabra

By Michael Charles Tobias
Forbes

Environmentalism is, by definition, given to skepticism, dismay, political cynicism and the seemingly endless endeavors to guide human nature along a path more sustainable than that currently on display worldwide.

Yet, in India, the second most populated nation on earth, with her inordinate share of ecological turmoil and over 1.241 billion people, there exists an ancient, indigenous community of vegetarians, the Todas, whose lifestyle and footprint suggests a true window on what humanity – at its best – is capable of.

I'm referring to a community, in 2013, that is ethically vegetarian, non-violent; that may well be the most sustainably-committed community in human history. The Sistine Chapel of pure living; a "Maria Vespers" of the moral and geographical compass. A group of denizens who, if you are tracking ecological success stories, are front-page news.

Moreover, at the core of some of this community's habitat remains the last remaining "wilderness" in all of India; unexplored by most. This region – the inner Nilgiris – hosts the last best hope for India's wild tigers and one of three remaining wild populations of Asian elephants. Moreover, it is a botanical collective of astonishing dimensions in which – depending on the precise season, and day (or night) – are a vast number of endemic species known particularly well by one man – Dr. Tarun Chhabra.

Thanks to this remarkable ecologist, a practicing dentist by profession, and brilliant ethnobotanist, Dr. Tarun Chhabra, I have had the privilege over the course of many years, of spending time with this community: the Todas, on numerous occasions. In 1992, Dr. Chhabra and colleagues set about to preserve the Toda heritage, which was facing increasing pressure – demographic, toxicological, economic, genetic, cultural, legal – all those bedeviling challenges that can exponentially accumulate in the name of modernity and India's increasingly palpable habitat fragmentation. Indeed, the Toda heartland was the same Western Upper Nilgiris aggregate of ecosystems that were also being threatened. Urgent measures were needed to save what was left of this habitat that is unique in all of Asia. Dr. Chhabra and colleagues established a non-profit Trust "EBR" which stands for the Edhkwehlynawd Botanical Refuge to help rally support for the Toda who dwell within the core biological area of India's first recognized biodiversity hotspot and UNESCO biological World Heritage Site.

What endows this community with such a unique place in the bio-cultural context of southern India, and – for that matter- the whole world – is not merely the fact that they are one of the only vegetarian tribal groups left on Earth (while surrounded by meat-eating communities); or the computable realization that their ecological footprint, by even today's economically-much marginalized rural Indian standards, is statistically zero.

What is utterly amazing about the Todas is their true biological sustainability. They magnificently integrate their own culture and rich biodiversity; a markedly restrained humanity, shy ethos, distinctly pan-Asian reclusiveness, and poetic landscape revery inherent in the tools of personal and community existence. This defines ecosystem person-hood. In the case of the Todas, it would appear to derive, at least in part, from their explicitly animist cultural rituals, traditions, beliefs, and worldview. This Renaissance-ecological orientation is a powerful argument in favor of the possibilities of the human species, after all. For thousands of years the Todas have worshipped a rare species of (now endangered) Asian river buffalo and have practiced non-violence with rare, consistent vigilance. Even their so-called "noyim," a form of conflict-resolution, is so subtle that to be present at such a gathering (as I have been) you would

never know a problem was even being resolved. Toda crises are not fought out at the last second, like fiscal-cliffs in Washington, although the stakes – if you are a Toda – are no less critical.

It must be professed that the Todas argue for one of the most advanced lessons on Earth in reference to how human beings can harmoniously engage in what Voltaire summarized in his novel, **Candide** (1759) when he suggested, in the end, that we simply *cultivate our gardens*. Remarkably, the Todas are not even *that* inflictive upon nature. Trans-montane ritually nomadic pastoralists, they restrain from nearly all traditional agricultural exploitation (not unlike the majority of India's Jain communities – except that the Toda hamlets are to be found in rural, even wilderness areas, not in the urban environments, where most Jain communities are located.)

In 1873, a British ethnographer, W. E. Marshall, visited the Todas and wrote of them that they were, in essence, a total ethnographic anomaly, or anachronism; that they engaged in no hunting, no meat eating; no violent sports, no violence whatsoever. Marshall wondered, therefore, whether he had not come upon "the tracks of an aboriginal reign of conscience?" and asked, "Was man originally created virtuous as well as very simple?" His famed riposte to his own culturally-condemned conjectural inanity was that "in this absence of vigorous qualities; in the disregard of gain and thrift; as well as in their [the Todas'] ultra domesticity, we have the attributes of a primeval race."

That "primeval race" – that ultimate "reign of conscience" remains true to form in southern India; a bio-cultural Eden about which the human 21st century needs urgently to take notice.

I asked my friend, Dr. Chhabra – who lives just a few miles away from one of several Toda hamlets, about this wonderful and unique community of Todas today; their beliefs (herewith simplified, to be sure); and the threats to their livelihood. Toda environmentalism offers a rare window on human possibilities and optimism. Its anodynes and rudiments have tested the arc of time, whilst at least 22 other known human civilizations have risen, and fallen, as chronicled by such historians as the late Arnold Toynbee and Clarence Glacken.

Michael Tobias: Dr. Chhabra, what makes the Todas so globally unique, certainly from a ecological point of view?

Tarun Chhabra: I would attribute it to a combination of the following factors: The Todas live at the heart of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve – in the highlands where they have traditionally been strictly pastoral people, with no history of farming. Much of their entire worldview revolves around an endemic breed of buffalo. They rely on the buffalo for the mainstay of their economic livelihood, derived from dairy products – sacred milk and butter

Michael Tobias: Of course, then, they are not vegan, but, as I have witnessed, they treat those buffalo like dignitaries, royalty.

Tarun Chhabra: That, and the fact the Todas are generally vegetarian folk with apparently no history of hunting. Moreover, their traditional architecture has been celebrated. The Head of Architecture at MIT is bringing out a book on "First Societies and their Architecture" where he is including the Toda structures. Moreover, their language has been reported to have the most

complex phonetic system in India. Most importantly, the Todas have managed to adopt a manner of sustainable living and have kept their own population low over the centuries.

Michael Tobias: Zero population growth in India is certainly uncharacteristic, notwithstanding an inspired array of family planning luminaries and legislation throughout the nation. But India's Democracy, as you well know, has not managed, ultimately, to come to grips with a demographic speeding train, most saliently in those EAG (Empowered Action Group) states where the TFR, or Total Fertility Rates are still as high as 3.9, such as is the case within the States of Bihar, or Rajasthan. To come upon a community of replacement fertility trends, and one with sovereign, historic staying power, is miraculous.

Tarun Chhabra: Even today, the orthodox Toda community number just over 1400 persons.

Michael Tobias: And the Todas' spiritual and practical relationship to the botanical refuge in which they reside?

Tarun Chhabra: The Todas use specific plant species in their rites of passage, in the construction of their traditional dwellings and dairy-temples and even for denoting a person's age, wisdom and anxiety levels accurately. They have also used the flowering cycles of plants not only to denote the different annual seasons, but also the stage of each season.

Michael Tobias: I gather the Todas have a complex belief system in terms of the afterlife, or Heaven?

Tarun Chhabra: The Todas believe in an afterlife and their afterworld is located at the Southwest corner of the Upper Nilgiris.

Michael Tobias: For referencing paradise that's remarkably specific, a bit like that of famed John Bunyan's 1678 **Pilgrim's Progress**, with its maps; but, in this case, veritable GPS coordinates?

Tarun Chhabra: Well, the location of their ascribed paradise can certainly be ascertained. The eighteen mythical landmarks that a departing spirit is believed to cross en route, can all be seen as actual physical landmarks. For instance, at the place where the spirit is to ascend steps, we can see an actual, nature-created series of rocky stone steps.

Michael Tobias: It's on a huge cliff, I gather?

Tarun Chhabra: Yes. The assumption is that only those who have used all the mandatory plants in their rites of passage and other important ceremonies, are eligible to enter Amunawdr, the Toda afterworld. This belief in their afterworld is what has ensured that Toda cultural heritage has been maintained.

Michael Tobias: If the more than 50% of the human species now occupying major cities around the world were told that their "heaven" or paradise were dependent upon the preservation of specific plant species in their very neighborhoods, specific locations (à la Central Park, in

Manhattan) one might suppose the emergence of a true and universal ecological revolution. People would be utterly motivated (as in the case of Ecuador and her enshrined Yasuní National Park) to preserve all in situ native and endemic plant and animal species. To firmly swear that Paradise is here and now, right there, in one's own backyard.

And here, in the heartland of India, you have this community of 1400 venerable back-to-nature Gurus, in the name of the Todas, who are telling us just that. It's really bewitching, mystifying and magnificent. So where's the downside? What are the crucial threats facing the Todas' livelihood, and how do you view their current situation as emblematic of the problems across Asia, with respect to most indigenous peoples and their extremely complex ecological challenges?

Tarun Chhabra: One of the Toda's biggest hurdles concerns future stewardship of their traditional homeland in modern times. The Toda people have sustainably managed their surrounding ecosystem for millennia. Although they continue to observe indirect methods of management by conducting, for example, so called saltwater pouring rites for their buffaloes during different seasons of the year (this ceremony, which is still observed by all Toda clans at every major hamlet, is basically a plea for ecosystem health); or by their gathering on the Paw(r)sh hill to pray to the Pykara River deity for general wellbeing and on the deity hill, Kawnttaihh, to pray for a healthy environment in which they reside, most direct forms of ecosystem management have been undermined or proscribed outright by India's Government Forest Department, in recent decades.

Michael Tobias: Translate such legal ambiguities and outright debacles?

Tarun Chhabra: Well, during the onset of the winter season, the Toda priest of the highest-grade tea institutions performs a ritual where, using firesticks (Todas continue to use *Litsea wightiana* sticks to make fire in other rituals), they selectively set fire to the grassland and wetland. Although many officials now grudgingly acknowledge that a lack of firing is leading to ecological degradation in the Toda homeland, there is yet no move to rectify this.

Michael Tobias: To many, this might seem extraordinarily obscure. But it is not. In fact, it is this same conflict/discrepancy, in other guises, that invites serious debate amongst park managers across North America and Europe: the use, or lack thereof, of fire as a form of maintenance of forest tracts and parklands. It goes to the heart of forest management - whether in Yellowstone, Yosemite, or throughout Europe.

Tarun Chhabra: Here, in southern India, vast swathes of the Toda's sacred grasslands have been planted by the Forest Department with exotic non-native trees. These include Blue Gum and Black Wattle.

Michael Tobias: Fast growing timber. Bio-invasives, in other words, that out-compete indigenous tree and shrub species, thereby abetting the impoverishment of native seeds and fruits upon which native species, particularly invertebrates and avifauna, are dependent. And no more so than during the quadruple-cascade effects of cumulative bio-invasive shock, climate change,

poaching, and habitat fragmentation with profound impacts upon mammals and other vertebrates, in particular.

Tarun Chhabra: Yes. And, additionally, for a people who only drank dairy produce and had no native intoxicants, the onslaught of a cash economy that was imposed on them, has brought about all the usual problems, like alcoholism.

Michael Tobias: In searching for species like the endemic Tahr, Black Langur, and Laughing Thrush, I -like many -have seen firsthand the problem of habitat disruptions, whether in the form of tea plantations, or simply the spread of cities like Ooty (Ootacamund, in the State of Tamil Nadu) in all directions. Some of the rivers have long been polluted, and eco-tourism had resulted in economic boom-towns, with proliferating human surroundings.

Tarun Chhabra: Moreover, the fragmentation of habitat in the biosphere preserve that adjoins and encompasses much of Toda territory is obviously under increasing threat from encroachment, not to mention – as you indicated- of climate change, poaching and development.

Michael Tobias: In a region that is recognized for its biological World Heritage status by the United Nations; that prides itself on having the last free-ranging viable genetic populations of tiger and Asian elephant, what do you see as a crucial component of the Todas' assured protective measures by the Government of India?

Tarun Chhabra: Well, thanks to sustainable management of their homeland by the Todas over centuries, areas like the Mukurthi National Park now constitute the core of the first formally-consecrated biosphere reserve in all of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. But much of the Upper Nilgiri plateau has now been populated by hundreds of thousands of people; tea estates stretch over tens of thousands of hectares as do other highly destructive methods of agriculture. The grasslands and wetlands of the Todas have been planted with exotic trees solely for commercial purposes by the Government. Several hydroelectric dams and reservoirs now inundate the heart and soul of Toda country, with the rich biodiversity of the wetlands now under severe threat.

The grass species that the Todas know as *avful* in their ancient Ahl language (to Western science it is known as *Eriochrysis rangacharii*; the Todas use avful to thatch their sacred dairy temples) is, incidentally, endemic to some Nilgiri wetlands and found nowhere else on this planet, and it is now on the verge of extinction.

Michael Tobias: So, if the sacred species upon which their ecological heritage pivots are lost, what can we imagine, expect, envision for the Toda culture as a whole?

Tarun Chhabra: Michael, as you yourself have seen and researched firsthand, all the indigenous groups of the Nilgiris are now dwarfed culturally and demographically. People who reside in the vicinity of the Todas almost invariably do not even care to learn or understand anything about Toda culture at all.

Michael Tobias: So what do you predict, and what are you and your colleagues working to engender, in terms of Toda bio-cultural preservation?

Tarun Chhabra: I see that involving indigenous people like the Todas in joint management of their traditional homeland with the Government is a vital component for the long-term protection and rejuvenation of the climax shola-grassland ecosystem, as it is termed. We are taking initial steps to begin such an experiment with one Toda clan at present. The thousands of hectares of exotic tree plantation "forests" must revert back to grassland status.

Michael Tobias: These are universally trying issues that cascade in any ecologist's imagination; a plethora of problems facing every high biodiversity region on the planet. In this case, it is especially critical, and unnerving, because we are talking about not only some of the most critical habitat (e.g., montane wet temperate forest) in all of the Indian sub-continent, but, as previously noted, possibly the last vegetarian tribe on Earth.

The Toda comprise a veritable constellation of like-minded souls who are ecologists by first nature; environmental philosophers without skipping a beat; wilderness poets in their souls. With that in mind, what should the good people of India be especially mindful of when it comes to the Toda?

Tarun Chhabra: Well, on a very practical level, people should at least acknowledge the role of the Toda heartland in generating phenomenal quantities of freshwater and electricity for the multitudes in the plains who are dependent on this. This year in 2012, the Nilgiris suffered a failure of both monsoon seasons – with the result that crops in the plains down below (several thousand feet) are perishing and the people there are being subjected to power cuts that often stretch to ten hours every day!

Michael Tobias: Aside from the practical, I'd like to conclude with the ideal: What astonishes you most about the Todas?

Tarun Chhabra: The fact that they were one of the very, very few indigenous people who did not look up to their colonial masters during the British era. The fact that the Toda people considered their cultural heritage to be of a truly superb character; and this Toda state-of-mind, or nobility, utterly fascinated the British who, in fact, did their utmost to help these people, to continue to nurture the rare Toda ethos.

Michael Tobias: The Toda are largely vegetarian, but surrounded by numerous meat eating communities. To what do you attribute their vegetarian persuasion, their unflinching, unabashed love of nature, their worship of river buffalo, and their overall veneration of the habitat which clearly constitutes their sole survival?

Tarun Chhabra: Perhaps a combination of all three factors that you mention. Michael, I would recommend putting together a list of all the largely vegetarian indigenous groups and cultures from the world over and then look for the common characteristics.

Michael Tobias: I have endeavored to do just that, over the years. What is unique, I think, about the Todas is that there is evidence, as you know, that once they may have eaten meat, occasionally. And more recently, would sacrifice a buffalo once a year. Yet, something in their psyche changed; the whole culture switched to vegetarianism, by and large. I think it would be very important to discover what exactly triggered that dietary and ethical transformation, for it is a fundamental paradigm shift; one that encompasses a *new nature;* a new template of non-violence for future human survival, I suspect.

http://www.forbes.com/sites/michaeltobias/2013/01/04/an-ecological-paradise-in-southern-india-a-discussion-about-the-todas-with-dr-tarun-chhabra/

January 6, 2013

Canadian PM to meet First Nations leaders after protests

Idle No More movement began as campaign by four women against changes to Indian Act and environmental deregulation

By Isabeau Doucet
The Guardian

The Canadian prime minister, Stephen Harper, has agreed to a meeting with First Nations leaders following indigenous protests sparked by a hunger strike.

Since 10 December there have been road and rail blockades across Canada, flash mobs and solidarity events as far away as New Zealand, in the biggest grassroots social movement in North America since Occupy.

On Algonquin island in the Ottawa river, within view of parliament, Chief Theresa Spence of Attawapiskat, a poor aboriginal community, has been living in a teepee in sub-zero temperatures subsisting on liquids for 27 days. Two other Aboriginal elders were in week four of their fasts when Harper agreed to meet to discuss aboriginal rights and economic development.

Spence said she would continue her fast until the meeting had produced concrete action and a promise of consultations. "I'll still be here on my hunger strike until that meeting takes place," she said. "We'll see what the results are … because there are a lot of issues that we need to discuss."

Harper recently forced through parliament two budget bills, each more than 400 pages long. MPs had limited time to study the hundreds of legislative changes, let alone debate and amend them. The protest movement, under the slogan Idle No More, started as a campaign by four women who feared that the bill's changes to the Indian Act and environmental deregulation would disproportionately affect First Nations peoples, many of whom live like second-class citizens.

News of the meeting, scheduled for 11 January, has done little to slow the momentum of the movement, a self-professed leaderless and bottom-up mobilisation driven by Aboriginal women and media-savvy youth that has gained increasing sympathy from the broader public.

Further disruption of road and rail routes was planned this weekend. On Wednesday a court ordered an end to a nearly two-week blockade of CN Rail in Sarnia, Ontario, the city with the worst industrial pollution in Canada.

First Nations constitutionally protected land rights are often seen as red tape in the way of the government's economic plans. Clayton Thomas-Muller, a Manitoba Cree running the Indigenous Environmental Network's tar sands campaign, called for a "separation of oil and state".

"400 years ago we had Jesuit priests come into our First Nations in black robes promising a better way of life by changing the way we communicated with our creator," he said. "Today, CEOs come into our communities in black suits promising a better way of life if we change the way we relate to the sacredness of mother earth."

Nina Segalowitz, an Inuit throat singer attending a flash mob in a Montreal mall, said: "Hopefully people will understand it's not just an Aboriginal issue. Everyone needs to protect the legacy of the earth that we're going to leave for generations to come."

http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/06/canadian-pm-first-nations-protests

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January 10, 2013

Climate Change Divestment Campaign Spreads to America's Churches

Religious communities were crucial participants in many great American social movements. Is climate change next?

By Katherine Bagley
InsideClimate News

A fast-spreading movement to persuade universities to rid their endowments of fossil fuel assets is now taking root in America's churches.

"With the civil rights movement, the youth led and the churches followed," said Fred Small, minister of the Unitarian Universalist First Parish Church in Cambridge, Mass. The church is one of dozens of congregations across the country exploring how to divest their portfolios of coal, oil and gas companies.

"If young people see divestment as a key issue in the climate fight, then it is important for us to get involved," Small said.

The furthest along is the 1.2 million-member United Church of Christ, which will hold a national vote in June to adopt a fossil fuel divestment measure. Since November, divestment campaigns have spread to 210 universities in the United States and Canada, and to the city of Seattle, the first municipality seeking to divest its $1.9 billion pension fund.

The campaign is organized by 350.org, a grassroots climate organization founded by author turned activist Bill McKibben. It is part of a larger effort to boost the moral case for action by drawing attention to what McKibben calls global warming's "terrifying new math." Based on peer-reviewed science, the numbers say energy firms must keep 80 percent of their carbon reserves in the ground to limit the global temperature rise to the critical 2-degrees Celsius mark.

In an interview, McKibben said involvement of faith communities is crucial for climate action to become a great American movement.

"It's hard to think of a significant social advance in which churches didn't play a powerful role," he said. "And since the very first page of the good book asks us to exercise careful dominion over the earth, environmental stewardship is a key tenet of many synagogues, mosques, and churches."

Climate activism is nothing new for some American religious communities.

When legislation to tackle global warming was being seriously debated in Congress a few years ago, Roman Catholic, evangelical, Jewish, Muslim and interfaith leaders, among others, were part of campaigns to pressure Washington to set greenhouse gas limits on moral grounds. "Every religion teaches us to honor creation and care for the poor and vulnerable," who will bear the brunt of climate impacts, Small of First Parish said. "Clearly there is a religious imperative for us to get involved."

But the defeat of federal climate legislation, the failure of leadership at the United Nations Climate Conference in Copenhagen, the struggling economy and the rise of global warming skepticism in U.S. politics dampened prospects for climate policy. As a result, vocal church campaigns seemed to die out.

"I wouldn't confuse a lack of noise with a lack of action," according to Ben Lowe, director of young adult ministries at the Evangelical Environmental Network, one of the oldest religious groups focused on environmental issues in the United States.

Lowe said churches have been more focused on educating members about climate issues in the past few years, building up a base of support. He said that while evangelical churches typically don't have endowments, he has been watching the divestment campaign with interest and expects church leaders across the country to grow more vocal as global warming resurfaces in political debate.

Among evangelical Christians, the largest single religious group in the United States, there are still sharp divisions over the need for climate policy. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), the country's biggest evangelical organization, doesn't have an official stance on climate

action. Some evangelical-affiliated churches and political leaders maintain that Earth cannot be drastically affected by human activities.

The NAE told InsideClimate News it doesn't have a position on fossil fuel divestment.

First Vote in June

The United Church of Christ, a liberal Protestant denomination and the fifteenth-largest religious collective in the United States, has been at the forefront of faith-based climate efforts. In 2009, it passed a resolution asking its 5,600 churches to go carbon neutral by 2016. The church holds carbon fasts during Lent and often participates in climate protests, such as those against the proposed Keystone XL pipeline.

This year, the UCC will hold a vote at its annual national meeting in June on a resolution urging its churches to divest from the 200 largest fossil fuel companies. The resolution is being introduced by the Massachusetts branch of the UCC. The chapter is also looking into how its 386 statewide congregations can divest ahead of the national vote.

National resolutions aren't legally binding, but most churches end up complying, according to Jim Antal, minister and president of the Massachusetts branch who is leading the effort. The UCC has a national pension fund worth $2.9 billion. Each local church controls its own endowments.

The UCC Pension Boards did not respond to requests for information on how much of its pension is invested in fossil fuels. Antal said UCC churches across the country have reached out to him to pledge their support or learn more about divesting their endowment funds.

Julie Fanselow, a spokesperson for Interfaith Power and Light, a campaign aimed at helping churches address climate change, said she has heard rumblings that religious leaders of several faiths are looking into divestiture, including Episcopalians, Methodists and Presbyterians, among others.

Small at First Parish in Cambridge said his congregation will discuss divesting its roughly $5 million endowment at its investment meeting next month, and said he has talked with several other Unitarian Universalist churches interested in following suit. There are roughly 1,000 Unitarian Universalist churches across the country, which are non-denominational and socially liberal.

Advocates say divestment is largely symbolic in terms of its ability to affect the fossil fuel industry, but they believe participation of religious institutions could advance their larger cause. Forty percent of Americans—nearly 125 million people—attend religious services every week or almost every week, according to polls.

"Our political system has thus far shown itself incapable of facing this issue," Small said. "Hopefully millions of people taking a stance on this issue through their involvement with religious communities will resonate with politicians."

In his role as president of the Massachusetts Conference of the UCC, Antal said he spends each Sunday preaching at a different church in the state and tries to incorporate climate change into roughly every other sermon.

"The difference in the number of people that take offense or oppose my sermons [about climate change] from seven years ago to now is incredible," he said. "The question has shifted from, 'Is this happening?' to 'What can we do about it?'"

http://insideclimatenews.org/news/20130109/fossil-fuel-divestment-movement-climate-change-global-warming-bill-mckibben-american-churches-oil-coal-natural-gas

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January 10, 2013

Hindu American Seva Communities Promotes Eco-Dharma through Bhumi Seva

A public, private, education partnership

Hindu American Seva Communities Press Release

In an effort to practice what our dharmic texts have preached, HASC in collaboration with Oxford University's Bhumi Project and the University of North Texas, is working to advance greening of our temples and places of worship in the America. The Bhumi Seva initiative was launched in July 2011 at the White House.

HASC is pleased to announce a dedicated and highly talented volunteer team leading the initiative. Their brief bios are attached.

As part of the BhumiSeva initiative, , HASC has undertaken a pilot project with select temples to develop, track, and share the "green" progress together. We hope that more places of worship will take advantage of our humble offerings and together we can make our dharmic places truly a living testimony to dharmic teachings and traditions. The progress of the effort with temples in the pilot program is part of an international greening effort and will be highlighted globally.

HASC has compiled various guides and booklets to help make our Puja rituals and temples more eco-friendly. We will provide these to the select temples and help them assess their temples greening level so that they can increase energy efficiency.

HASC is inspired by the great Dharma teachings that are highlighted in this profound verse: *The Almighty is Omnipresent everywhere in the universe, including planet earth (in the oceans, rivers, forests, mountains, air, water, atmosphere, and space). Take only what you need from the bounties of planet earth; sacrifice greed so every one's needs are also met; do not plunder, do not hoard. Whose property is it after all? It all belongs to God. (Ishopanishad 1.1)*

For additional information on the project, please contact Pankaj Jain, Eco-Dharma and Bhumi-Seva Project Director (Pankaj.jain@unt.edu) and Arjun Bhargava, Associate Project Director (arjun@hinduamericanseva.org).

Eco-Dharma and Bhumi-Seva Team

Dr. Pankaj Jain is an Assistant Professor in the department of Anthropology and the department of Philosophy and Religion Studies at the University of North Texas. He is also the author of award-winning *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability.* Dr. Jain serves on HASC's Executive Advisory Council Board.

Arjun Bhargava is studying Environmental Policy in the Master of Environmental Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania. He is currently interning at the United Nations Environment Programme in New York. He serves on the Editorial Board of wH2O: The Journal of Gender and Water, an academic journal focused on women and water issues around the world. Previously, he volunteered with the Philadelphia Global Water Initiative and blogged as a Student Reporter from the World Water Forum held in France in March, 2012. He graduated from Drexel University with a B.S. in Biological Sciences.

Joseph Otterbine completed his undergraduate in Sociology/Anthropology at Winthrop University in South Carolina. He is currently studying Environmental Anthropology at the University of North Texas where he is researching development habits and environmental awareness in India.

Ashley Sauer is an aspiring anthropologist practitioner passionate about the energy/utilities industry and sustainability, pursuing her Master's degree in Applied Anthropology at the University of North Texas. Ashley is a project manager in marketing and outreach at Southern California Edison where she plans to apply her anthropological education and training to the marketing and development of smart grid enabled programs in residential settings.

Mariel Romero is a graduate student at the department of Anthropology at the University of North Texas; studying medical anthropology and public health. She is interested in studying health in India. During her undergraduate studies, she spent six months studying at the University of Hyderabad where she visited Hindu temples in Andhra Pradesh and other cities throughout the subcontinent. She is eager to learn more about spirituality, religions, and cultures as well as means of collaborating culture, health, and sustainability.

Dr. Susheer D. Gandotra is in the management committee at the Hindu Temple Society, Allentown, PA. He also teaches Hindi at the temple. He is a physician by profession and married with two children and likes to do gardening and working out.

Hemant Sharma has a degree in Engineering from Manipal Institute of Technology, India. He has a passion for music and has dedicated his talent in the service of the Lord. Hemant believes in having a positive influence in the community and the world and is looking to dedicate his experience, time, and effort in selfless service for the betterment of society.

Niki Shah received his B.A. in Journalism and Mass Media and Economics and M.S. in Global Affairs and minor in International Business from Rutgers University. He served as an AmeriCorps VISTA for HASC from 2010 - 2011 and worked with HASC to develop programs and training resources.

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http://www.hinduamericanseva.org/media/press-release-1

January 15, 2013

At a Climate Protest, Science and Religion

By Jada F. Smith
New York Times

Science and religion went hand-in-hand on Tuesday as leaders from both worlds gathered in front of the White House to protest what they cast as government inaction on climate change.

"This gathering today is to affirm that God has gifted us in many ways, one of which is a good mind to figure out how things are going," said Bob Coleman, the chief programming minister of the Riverside Church in New York City. "It's not so much an embrace of science, but an acknowledgement that science is a part of us, it's a part of our own living every day."

With record-breaking global temperatures in 2012, severe droughts and several storms and hurricanes on the East Coast, some members of the American clergy are saying that human decisions that contribute to the extreme weather associated with climate change can no longer be left in the hands of politicians.

Promoting an awareness of climate change and the role of humans as stewards of the earth has become a popular theme among progressive religious congregations. Even the climate skeptics in their ranks, some said, are starting to realize that something strange is going on.

A "pray-in" at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church and a subsequent march to the White House, which was blocked by bleachers as workers swarmed about setting up for the inaugural parade, was timed for the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. The civil rights leader's face was on banners, and his name was evoked repeatedly throughout the event.

Some participants described environmental activism as an extension of the work that King did to advance civil rights and economic justice, especially given the correlation between poverty and pollution.

“It is the poor of our world now who are suffering now from global warming — in Asia, Africa and South America, ” said Johari Abdul-Malik, the imam of a mosque in Falls Church, Va. “We have to go beyond personal recycling and reducing and reusing of plastic and paper — and the recycling of the same old politicians and policies.”

From the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans to a proposal to lay the proposed Keystone XL pipeline through some American Indian communities, some religious leaders have begun to see the issue of weather extremes, fossil fuel emissions and threats to habitats as a moral one.

After prayers and religious readings from Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh leaders and a few American Indian chants, the names and ages of the victims of Hurricane Sandy were read aloud, with the crowd responding “present” to acknowledge “the spiritual presence of the deceased.”

For the Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr., the president of the civil and human rights group Hip Hop Caucus — one of the organizations behind the popular 2004 “Vote or Die” campaign — the protest and pray-in were an opportunity to highlight the increasing involvement of minority institutions in the environmental movement.

“People say, well, it’s just a bunch of Birkenstock-wearing, environmentalist, tree-hugging rich white folk, but that’s really not the case,” Mr. Yearwood said. “A lot of times there are other things going on in the communities, such as gun violence in Chicago, which makes it hard to focus on this issue. But now we’re seeing church involvement – the black churches – and urban communities getting more engaged. There really is a transition going on in the communities and young people asking what we can do to change our environment.”

The next step, he says, is to bring even more groups into the fold.

“Dr. King, clearly he was about fighting against injustice, but he recognized that we cannot fight injustice as a segregated progressive movement,” Mr. Yearwood said. “We could not do this movement siloed.”

“In other words, this movement cannot be just all white, or the gun violence movement in the ‘hood just all black, or the immigration issue just all brown,” he said. King “would say that we need to come together because this is our planet, and if we lose this, then all the other issues won’t matter.”

http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/15/at-a-protest-science-and-religion-team-up/

January 17, 2013

World's Biggest Holy Gathering Aims Green

By Joanna Sugden
Wall Street Journal

The Kumbh Mela, perhaps the largest religious gathering on Earth, began Monday in Allahabad, a city in northern India's Uttar Pradesh state.

Between 80 and 100 million Hindus are expected to take part in the 55-day festival, bathing at the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna, sacred rivers believed to cleanse sin and enable devotees to escape the cycle of death and rebirth.

These waters are also some of the most polluted in the world, according to conservation groups. The Ganges alone receives 2.9 billion liters of sewage a day along its 1,557 mile length. That's enough sewage to fill 1,600 Olympic-size swimming pools every day.

Environmentalists and religious leaders, concerned about the impact of such vast numbers of pilgrims camping on 20 square miles of floodplain, are hoping to appeal to the religious consciences of the visitors and encourage them to become more eco-conscious.

For the first time at a Kumbh Mela, which takes place every three years, there is a "Green Camp" for pilgrims. The camp is backed by India's newly formed Green Pilgrimage Network, which aims to protect pilgrimage sites and make them more environmentally sustainable.

"We started with the concept that we should make this the green Kumbh Mela," said Chidanand Saraswati, a Hindu swami, or holy man, who is leading the eco-friendly camp — Global Sangam — on the banks of the Ganges.

"Hindus have always cared for the environment but people have started to forget because of population growth and lack of resources," said the swami, who is also leader of the Parmarth Niketan an ashram in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand.

"But when they see their leaders and their gurus going in the green direction, they will follow," he told The Wall Street Journal's India Real Time. The camp is using recyclable steel plates and utensils instead of plastic. It also has eco toilets, filtered drinking water instead of plastic bottles and will organize litter picking collections and tree planning along the banks of the sacred river.

The local government and the High Court in Allahabad have also banned the use of plastic bags at the festival for the first time.

Gopal Patel, who is documenting the environmental impact of the Mela as project manager for the U.K.-based Bhumi Project , said he was encouraged by the efforts of the authorities to make the pilgrimage more environmentally conscious. "It's all looking quite clean at the moment but there's a desperate need for more toilets," Mr. Patel said in a telephone interview from the Kumbh Mela site.

The Mela administration, led by the Commissioner of Allahabad, has installed 35,000 individual toilets at the site, up from just over 20,000 at Allahabad's last Kumbh Mela in 2001. The Kumbh Mela rotates between four cities – Allahabad, Haridwar, Nasik and Ujjain.

Government estimates suggest that 8.3 million more pilgrims will attend on the six main bathing days than in 2001, when a total of 80 million gathered at the Allahabad confluence, where Hindus believe a mythical river, Saraswati, intersects with the Ganges and Yamuna.

Kumbh, which means pot, is named after the pitcher carrying the nectar of immortality that Hindus say was spilled by the deities in a fight with the demons when they lived on earth. Hindus say the nectar dropped at four different spots on rivers across India: on the Ganges in Haridwar; the Shipra in Ujjain; the Godavari in Nasik; and at the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati in Allahabad.

During the festival when the moon, sun and Jupiter are in a specific alignment, it is believed that the spiritual properties of the water are one thousand times more potent. The most auspicious days for bathing attract the most pilgrims, who bathe before dawn believing that is when the greatest cleansing is available.

"Mobility has increased so much, people have so much disposable income to spend on travel and it's putting so much pressure on infrastructure and the sewage systems can't cope," said Mr. Patel, who is a founder member of the Green Pilgrimage Network, which was set up in October 2012 at the Convention on Biological Diversity in Hyderabad.

"Religious towns in the West are given so much protection but in India that's not the case. They are seen as places to make money," he said. "They are being lost to business and commerce."

A report by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India estimates that the Mela will generate $2.2billion of income for the city and create thousands of jobs.

But there hasn't been a report on its impact on the environment. Successive attempts to clean up the Ganges since 1985 when the first Ganga Action Plan was put in place have failed.

Less than half the funds — $462,000 out of $1.2million — allocated for the restoration of the river until March 2011 in the central government's national river conservation plan was spent. *P*oliticians on the parliamentary standing committee for environment and forests blamed this on poor coordination between agencies.

Rana Singh, a professor of cultural geography and heritage studies at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, and campaigner for a cleaner Ganges, said "bureaucratic and administrative delays" were preventing the funds from being allocated quickly.

Delays in procuring land from farmers for sewage treatment plants have also stalled the clean up process, according to reports in the Indian media.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Environment wasn't immediately available for comment.

Kusum Vyas, founder and president of a U.S.-based environmental group called Living Planet Foundation, is holding a conference at the Mela to raise awareness on the plight of the rivers at the Triveni Sangam (three river confluence.)

"The rising population, illegal sand mining and dams cause a lot of stress on the environment and the rivers are the biggest casualties," Ms. Vyas said. "It's a lack of awareness, there has never been a campaign from the bottom up to educate people."

Ms. Vyas is also the founder of the first Green Kumbh Yatra, which she describes as "the Olympic Torch for the Kumbh Mela." The yatra, or journey, involves a pot that has traveled since October from Hyderabad to Allahabad via Gujarat, carried by foot and train.

"It is being taken from village to village to educate people about why they should not throw garbage into the rivers," she said in a telephone interview from her office in the U.S.

Victoria Finlay director of communications for the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, which along with the United Nations Development Program is supporting the Green Pilgrimage Network, adds: "You can have lots of rules about separating waste and initiatives about recycling, but underlying it you need an ethos which says that in order to have a good pilgrimage you have to have a pilgrimage that is good for the Earth."

Joanna Sugden is freelance journalist living in Delhi. Before coming to India in 2011 she spent four-and-a-half years as a reporter at The Times of London, covering religion and education. You can follow her on Twitter @jhsugden.

http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2013/01/17/worlds-biggest-religious-gathering-aims-green/

January 22, 2013

Think.Eat.Save: UNEP, FAO and Partners launch global campaign to change culture of food waste

WRAP

Consumers, Food Industry and Government all have role to play in reducing 1.3billion tonnes of food wasted or lost each year

Geneva – Simple actions by consumers and food retailers can dramatically cut the 1.3 billion tonnes of food lost or wasted each year and help shape a sustainable future, according to a new global campaign to cut food waste launched today by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and partners.

The **Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint** campaign is in support of the SAVE FOOD Initiative to reduce food loss and waste along the entire chain of food production and

consumption – run by the FAO and trade fair organizer Messe Düsseldorf – and the UN Secretary General's Zero Hunger Initiatives. The new campaign specifically targets food wasted by consumers, retailers and the hospitality industry.

The campaign harnesses the expertise of organizations such as WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), Feeding the 5,000 and other partners, including national governments, who have considerable experience targeting and changing wasteful practices.

Think.Eat.Save. aims to accelerate action and provide a global vision and information-sharing portal (www.thinkeatsave.org) for the many and diverse initiatives currently underway around the world.

Worldwide, about one-third of all food produced, worth around US$1 trillion, gets lost or wasted in food production and consumption systems, according to data released by FAO. Food loss occurs mostly at the production stages – harvesting, processing and distribution – while food waste typically takes place at the retailer and consumer end of the food-supply chain.

"In a world of seven billion people, set to grow to nine billion by 2050, wasting food makes no sense – economically, environmentally and ethically," said **UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.**

"Aside from the cost implications, all the land, water, fertilizers and labour needed to grow that food is wasted – not to mention the generation of greenhouse gas emissions produced by food decomposing on landfill and the transport of food that is ultimately thrown away," he added. "To bring about the vision of a truly sustainable world, we need a transformation in the way we produce and consume our natural resources."

"Together, we can reverse this unacceptable trend and improve lives. In industrialized regions, almost half of the total food squandered, around 300 million tonnes annually, occurs because producers, retailers and consumers discard food that is still fit for consumption," said **José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General.** "This is more than the total net food production of Sub-Saharan Africa, and would be sufficient to feed the estimated 870 million people hungry in the world."

"If we can help food producers to reduce losses through better harvesting, processing, storage, transport and marketing methods, and combine this with profound and lasting changes in the way people consume food, then we can have a healthier and hunger-free world," Graziano da Silva added.

The global food system has profound implications for the environment, and producing more food than is consumed only exacerbates the pressures, some of which follow:

- More than 20 per cent of all cultivated land, 30 per cent of forests and 10 per cent of grasslands are undergoing degradation;
- Globally 9 per cent of the freshwater resources are withdrawn, 70 per cent of this by irrigated agriculture;

- Agriculture and land use changes like deforestation contribute to more than 30 per cent of total global greenhouse gas emissions;
- Globally, the agri-food system accounts for nearly 30 per cent of end-user available energy;
- Overfishing and poor management contribute to declining numbers of fish, some 30 per cent of marine fish stocks are now considered overexploited.

Part of the trigger for the campaign was the outcome of the Rio+20 Summit in June 2012, in which Heads of State and governments gave the go-ahead for a 10-Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Patterns. Developing an SCP programme for the food sector must be a vital element of this framework, given the need to sustain the world's food production base, reduce associated environmental impacts, and feed a growing human population.

"There can be no other area that is perhaps so emblematic of the opportunities for a far more resource-efficient and sustainable world – and there is no other issue that can unite North and South and consumers and producers everywhere in common cause," said Mr. Steiner.

According to FAO (http://www.fao.org/save-food/en/), roughly 95 per cent of food loss and waste in developing countries are unintentional losses at early stages of the food supply chain due to financial, managerial and technical limitations in harvesting techniques; storage and cooling facilities in difficult climatic conditions; infrastructure; packaging and marketing systems.

However, in the developed world the end of the chain is far more significant. At the food manufacturing and retail level in the developed world, large quantities of food are wasted due to inefficient practices, quality standards that over-emphasize appearance, confusion over date labels and consumers being quick to throw away edible food due to over-buying, inappropriate storage and preparing meals that are too large.

Per-capita waste by consumers is between 95 and 115 kg a year in Europe and North America/Oceania, while consumers in sub-Saharan Africa, south and south-eastern Asia each throw away only 6 to 11 kg a year.

According to WRAP, the average UK family could save £680 per year (US$1,090) and the UK hospitality sector could save £724 million (US$1.2 billion) per year by tackling food waste.

"In the UK we have shown how tackling food waste through engaging with consumers and establishing collective agreement with retailers and brands, reduces environmental pressures and aids economic growth," said **Dr. Liz Goodwin, CEO of WRAP**. "With a rising population, even more pressure is going to be put on resources, and we are excited to be a partner in UNEP and FAO's **Think. Eat. Save.** campaign, which is a great start to tackling food waste on a global scale."

In a similar vein to other parts of the world, the European Union is looking into the issue of food waste, and the European Commission has lent its weight to the new initiative.

“In the EU we have set ourselves a target to halve edible food waste by 2020 and to virtually eliminate landfilling by 2020; the Commission is planning to present ideas next year on the sustainability of the food system which will have a strong focus on food waste,” said **Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for the Environment.**

“Less food waste would lead to more-efficient land use, better water resource management, more sustainable use of phosphorus, and it would have positive repercussions on climate change. Our work fits perfectly with the launch of this initiative,” he added.

For the campaign to reach its huge potential, everyone has to be involved – families, supermarkets, hotel chains, schools, sports and social clubs, company CEOs, city Mayors, national and world leaders.

The campaign website, www.thinkeatsave.org, provides simple tips to consumers and retailers, will allow users to make food waste pledges, and provides a platform for those running campaigns to exchange ideas and create a truly global culture of sustainable consumption of food.

For example, the website provides the following advice, which will help consumers, retailers and the hospitality industry reduce waste – thus reducing their environmental impact and saving money.

Consumers

- *Shop Smart:* Plan meals, use shopping lists, avoid impulse buys and don’t succumb to marketing tricks that lead you to buy more food than you need.
- *Buy Funny Fruit:* Many fruits and vegetables are thrown out because their size, shape, or colour are deemed not “right”. Buying these perfectly good fruit, at the farmer’s market or elsewhere, utilizes food that might otherwise go to waste.
- *Understand Expiry Dates:* “Best-before” dates are generally manufacturer suggestions for peak quality. Most foods can be safely consumed well after these dates. The important date is “use by” – eat food by that date or check if you can freeze it.
- *Zero Down Your Fridge:* Websites such as WRAP’s www.lovefoodhatewaste.com can help consumers get creative with recipes to use up anything that might go bad soon.
- *Other actions include:* freezing food; following storage guidance to keep food at its best, requesting smaller portions at restaurants; eating leftovers – whether home-cooked, from restaurants or takeaway; composting food; and donating spare food to local food banks, soup kitchens, pantries, and shelters.

Retailers and the Hospitality Industry

- Retailers can carry out waste audits and product loss analysis for high-waste areas, work with their suppliers to reduce waste, offer discounts for near-expiration items, redesign product displays with less excess, standardize labelling and increase food donations, among other actions.

- Restaurants, pubs and hotels can limit menu choices and introduce flexible portioning, carry out waste audits and create staff engagement programmes, among many other measures.
- Supermarkets, hotels, restaurants, companies, cities and countries will be able to use the website to pledge to measure the food they waste and put in place targets to reduce it.

Food Loss refers to food that gets spilled, spoilt or otherwise lost, or incurs reduction of quality and value, before it reaches its final product stage. Food loss typically takes place at production, postharvest, processing and distribution stages in the food supply chain.

Food Waste refers to food that completes the food supply chain up to a final product, of good quality and fit for consumption, but still doesn't get consumed because it is discarded, whether or not after it is left to spoil. Food waste typically, but not exclusively, takes place at retail and consumption stages in the food supply chain.

Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint

Visit www.thinkeatsave.org for more information on the campaign.

SAVE FOOD Initiative

SAVE FOOD the Global Initiative on Food Losses and Food Waste Reduction is a partnership between companies and organizations worldwide to reduce the estimated 1.3 billion tonnes of food that is lost or wasted every year. For more information and facts and figures on food waste and food loss, visit: http://www.fao.org/save-food/en/

Photo Gallery 'One Third' by Klaus Pilcher:
One Third uses images to describes the connection between individual wastage of food and globalized food production:
http://www.kpic.at/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=45&Itemid=88

WRAP

WRAP is a non-profit organization funded by all four UK governments and the EU, and aims to help people recycle more and waste less. For more information, visit: http://www.wrap.org.uk/

Feeding the 5,000

Feeding the 5,000 organizes events where meals made from food that would otherwise have been thrown out are distributed free. For more information, visit: http://www.feeding5k.org/

Related Reports, Facts and Figures

UNEP discussion paper on the role of global food consumption patterns in sustainable food systems:
http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/news_events/upcoming/RioCSF/partner_deliverables/Role_of_Global_Food_Consumption_Patterns.pdf

The work of UNEP's Resource Efficiency Programme on Agri-Food:
http://www.unep.org/resourceefficiency/Home/Business/SectoralActivities/AgricultureFood/tabid/78943/Default.aspx

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WRAP (Waste & Resources Action programme)
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http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/thinkeatsave-unep-fao-and-partners-launch-global-campaign-change-culture-food-waste

January 23, 2013

Ecology, Spirituality, and Religion at CIIS

California Institute of Integral Studies

In fall 2013, California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) will launch a new graduate program in Ecology, Spirituality, and Religion. The program is housed in the Institute's Philosophy and Religion Department, and will offer both MA and PhD degrees.

CIIS is now accepting applications for the fall 2013 semester.

The ecological challenges of the 21st century represent a crisis of values and consciousness. The twin threats of climate change and biodiversity loss are among the greatest existential threats humanity has seen. Graduate study in Ecology, Spirituality, and Religion allows students to cultivate the knowledge and wisdom to respond to the ecological crisis from integral and transdisciplinary perspectives. Students gain skills and insight to transform practices, worldviews, and consciousness in the service of a more just and flourishing planetary future.

The program's uniquely integrated curriculum explores such questions as:

- What are the roles of religion, spirituality, and culture in the ecological crises of our time?
- What ecological insights do the world's religious heritages offer?
- How can exploring worldviews help us to understand and address ecological trauma?

Ecology, Spirituality, and Religion MA

The MA in Ecology, Spirituality, and Religion emphasizes an embodied, engaged approach, in which contemplative practice and career exploration complement rigorous study. Students are at the forefront of a rapidly emerging interdisciplinary field devoted to ecological healing and resilience. Graduates will be well prepared to engage environmental issues in multiple spheres, or to pursue doctoral-level study.

Ecology, Spirituality, and Religion PhD

PhD students investigate and analyze the role of worldviews, philosophies, and religions in generating and responding to global challenges. Doctoral students wishing to specialize in Ecology, Spirituality, and Religion should possess a master's degree in a discipline relevant to the program (e.g., religion, ecology, biology, environmental studies, environmental history, geography, anthropology, literature, or philosophy) from an accredited graduate institution.

Core faculty are at the forefront of the dialogue linking spiritual and cosmological with ecology and sustainability. Faculty include: Elizabeth Allison, Robert McDermott, Jacob Sherman, and Brian Swimme.

For more information, visit the program's website.

To speak with an admissions counselor or to apply, email dtownes@ciis.edu, or call 415.575.6164.

January 25, 2013

Hindus Welcome Scrapping Of Luxury Condo Near Malaysia's Batu Caves

Eurasia Review

Hindus have welcomed reported scrapping of the luxury 26-storey condominium building in Batu Caves area of Malaysia.

Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, in a statement in Nevada (USA) today, said that it was a "step in the right direction" as it would ensure safety and environmental preservation of nearby iconic Batu Caves temple complex, which was highly revered for Hindus.

Rajan Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, thanked the State of Selangor and Selayang Municipal Council for having a feel for the wishes of Hindus in reported revoking of the approval given to condominium developer. Development should not come at the cost of environment, safety, happiness and devotion of the community, Zed added.

Highly popular and impressive Hindu pilgrimage point Batu Caves, just north of Kuala Lumpur, is a limestone hill, which has a series of caves and cave temples, besides a 140 feet high statue of Lord Murugan, said to be tallest in the world. Thaipusam Festival, which has been reportedly held here since 1892 and falls on January 27 this year, is expected to draw about 1.5 million devotees and visitors.

http://www.eurasiareview.com/25012013-hindus-welcome-scrapping-of-luxury-condo-near-malaysias-batu-caves/

January 23, 2013

Chief Theresa Spence to end hunger strike today

Spence to wrap it up after NDPs, Liberals and chiefs sign her declaration

CBC News

Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence has decided to end her six-week-long hunger strike after members of the Assembly of First Nations and the Liberal and New Democrat caucuses agreed to back a list of commitments supporting aboriginal issues.

Representatives from the AFN, the NDP caucus and the Liberal caucus have all signed a declaration of specific commitments asked for by Spence. Interim Liberal Leader Bob Rae, who was in Sarnia Wednesday, will also be signing the 13-point declaration.

Michèle Audette, president of the Canadian Native Women's Association, said Spence will hold a press conference Thursday morning in Ottawa at 11 a.m. ET, along with Raymond Robinson, an elder from Cross Lake Nation in Manitoba.

Robinson, who joined Spence in her liquids-only diet, will also announce an end to his protest.

"I have never been in such an awe-inspiring movement … with all the nations of different races coming together to try to achieve a common goal, and I cannot thank them enough for all the generosity, all the support," Robinson told CBC News Wednesday.

There will also be an "honouring ceremony" for Spence and her fellow fasters Thursday afternoon hosted by Nishnawbe Aski Nation, which Rae and the other representatives are expected to attend.

AFN chief Shawn Atleo expressed his personal appreciation for Spence's contribution.

"Our shared goal is simple and clear: to guarantee that our children can achieve the brighter future that they deserve. This is what every chief across this country, every member of the Assembly of First Nations will continue to fight to achieve," Atleo said in a statement.

Spence, who had been subsisting on fish broth and medicinal tea since Dec. 11, had been examining ways to return to her home and nurse herself back to health.

She had been engaged in her protest for six weeks, camped on an island in the Ottawa River not far from Parliament Hill, in an effort to convince the country's top leaders to take First Nations concerns seriously.

A delegation that included Rae and Alvin Fiddler, northern Ontario deputy grand chief at Nishnawbe Aski Nation, had been working closely with Spence to hash out a dignified solution.

Rae brought with him a reputation as a firm but approachable and respectful mediator in tricky situations such as the Burnt Church aboriginal fishing dispute in 2000. Fiddler is from the same region as Spence and is known as a practical, sharp thinker.

As well, a delegation from Attawapiskat is heading to Ottawa, and had been intending to ask their chief to end her hunger strike. Attawapiskat's acting chief, Christine Okimaw-Kataquapit plans to meet with Spence in the morning.

Kataquapit told CBC Radio she will present a letter signed by all band councillors in Attawapiskat.

The letter states that community members feel she has made her point and it's time to come home. The letter also expresses concern for Spence's health.

Declaration calls for many actions

Spence and a couple of her closest confidantes crafted a declaration of the chief's concerns.

A copy of the declaration, obtained by CBC News, lists 13 commitments:

- An immediate meeting between the Crown, the federal and provincial governments, and all First Nations to discuss treaty and non-treaty-related relationships.
- Clear work plans and timelines, and a demand that the housing crisis within First Nations communities be considered as a short-term immediate action.
- Frameworks and mandates for implementation and enforcement of treaties on a nation-to-nation basis.
- Reforming and modifying a land-claims policy
- A commitment towards resource revenue sharing, requiring the participation of provinces and territories.
- A commitment towards sustained environmental oversight over First Nations lands
- A review of Bill C-38 and C-45 to ensure consistency with constitutional requirements about consultation with aboriginal peoples.
- Ensure that all federal legislation has the consent of First Nations where inherent and Treaty rights are affected
- The removal of funding caps and the indexing of payments made to First Nations.
- An inquiry into violence against indigenous women.
- Equity in capital construction of First Nation schools and additional funding support for First Nation languages.
- A dedicated cabinet committee and secretariat within the Privy Council Office responsible for the First Nation-Crown relationship.
- Full implementation of the United Nations declaration of the rights of indigenous peoples.

One important point is the requirement for consent for federal legislation that affects inherent or treaty rights. The constitutional requirement has been for the government to meaningfully

consult with aboriginals over legislation that affects them. The notion of consent seems to take the obligation much further.

Meeting with Harper, GG sought

Thursday is the day Spence and the Assembly of First Nations had asked Harper and Gov. Gen. David Johnston to hold a broad meeting with the country's chiefs, partly to commemorate the first anniversary of last year's Crown-First Nation gathering, which was supposed to have reset relations between the two sides.

Harper and Johnston have not agreed to that meeting, but several chiefs are expected to come to Ottawa that day anyway, Ontario Grand Chief Stan Beardy said earlier this week.

Speaking Wednesday from Cambridge, Ont., where he made an auto-industry announcement, Harper said that a date for a meeting has not been set. He stressed the need for aboriginal people to be able to participate in the economy.

"Those opportunities exist with resource development in remote areas with the shortage of labour the Canadian economy's going to be experiencing and I want to see aboriginal people, particularly young aboriginal people, take full advantage of those opportunities," Harper said.

Opposition Leader Thomas Mulcair, speaking from Baie-Saint-Paul, Quebec, said Wednesday that he plans to work with the AFN and Chief Shawn Atleo.

"We continue to hope that as discussions move on we can see rather rapidly an end to the hunger strikes because we're worried about people's health," he said.

Mulcair has not visited with Spence since she began her hunger strike, but he noted that about 20 NDP MPs had met personally with her.

Mulcair is not expected to attend Thursday's honouring ceremony, but MPs Romeo Saganash and Charlie Angus, whose riding includes Attawapiskat, will be there to represent the NDP.

There has been a growing list of politicians and First Nations leaders anxious to see Spence end her protest. They have been careful, however, to leave the final decision up to her.

Instead, they are telling Spence how they count her victories: greater national awareness of First Nations issues; a meeting between the AFN, Harper and several cabinet ministers; and a commitment to modernize treaties and aboriginal rights, with negotiations between chiefs and the top levels of government.

They also say Spence's resolve helped galvanize thousands of protesters across the country under the Idle No More banner.

Spotlight on band's finances

Spence's protest attracted unwanted attention, too: much publicity surrounded a government-ordered audit of her band's finances that showed a lack of proper documentation for about $100 million in funding.

Despite the negative publicity engendered by the audit, it is women chiefs who have been instrumental in keeping Spence's spirits up, say insiders.

Indeed, a group of Manitoba women chiefs just wrapped up a visit to Spence, and issued a call for female chiefs to come to Ottawa on Thursday to support the Cree leader.

"We share Chief Spence's deep concern for the future of our nations and echo Chief Spence's call for restoring our relationship with the Crown to reflect the original spirit and intent of the treaties," said a statement from Chief Betsy Kennedy of War Lake First Nation.

Atleo to return to duties

While Spence's protest may be forging a bond among First Nations women leaders, her refusal to budge over the past few weeks has divided the Assembly of First Nations and prompted questions about the leadership of Atleo.

He attended the meeting with Harper on Jan. 11 even though the Governor General was not included, as Spence had demanded. She boycotted the meeting, as did many chiefs from Manitoba, Ontario and other parts of the country.

Atleo has been on sick leave, but issued a statement on Monday saying he would be back at work with a united AFN later this week.

Late Wednesday, the AFN issued a press release saying that Atleo will address the media Thursday at an AFN Special Chiefs Assembly taking place at the Musqueam Community Recreation Centre in Vancouver.

http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2013/01/23/attawapiskat-spence-hunger-strike.html

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January 28, 2013

On Climate Change, Americans May Trust Politics Above Preachers

By Liz Halloran
NPR

When President Obama during his inauguration speech made a case for tackling human-driven climate change, it felt like deja vu for many in the environmental community — including members of religious groups who have long looked to him for action.

After all, Obama made a similar pledge during his first inauguration address in 2009, and left-leaning and progressive faith-based organizations were among activist groups that pushed for quick congressional action on major climate legislation.

But the effort was derailed first by the health care battle in Congress, and again when Democrats lost control of the House.

Since then, what Donald Brown has characterized as a "strange, two-year silence" on climate change settled over Washington, the White House and, for the most part, last year's presidential campaign.

The breaking of that silence "obviously made me happy," said Brown, a prominent voice on the ethics of environmental sustainability and international justice issues related to climate change.

It also has roused faith organizations like California-based Interfaith Power and Light, which has seized on the president's re-engagement to begin again a "major push for action," as the group's head, the Rev. Canon Sally G. Bingham, said recently.

The organization in February plans to use its annual "National Global Preach-In" event to mobilize its network of 14,000 congregations in 39 states around the issue of climate change.

Opportunity And Reality

But efforts by religious groups like Interfaith Power and Light to reanimate the climate change debate are complicated by more than the realities of congressional gridlock and conservative efforts to delegitimize the mainstream scientific consensus surrounding the human causes of climate change.

Surveys have consistently shown that while faith-based groups may draw attention to what they characterize as the biblical imperative to be good stewards of the Earth, their efforts don't move public opinion on what is now one of the most deeply divisive, politicized issues in America.

"In public opinion, this is a superpartisan issue among Americans," says Alan Cooperman of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. "And it is not because of their religion."

Additionally, argues Brown, a scholar in residence at Widener University's Environmental Law Center, religious groups advocating for environmental action, particularly on climate change, need to transform their more generalized biblical/moral environmental argument to one of justice and policy specificity.

"Not only say that this is the moral thing to do, but start talking about it in terms of specific climate change issues," says Brown, who during the Clinton administration coordinated environmental issues under consideration at the United Nations. "If you see this as a justice issue, it transforms the way you debate about 10 issues in the climate change negotiations."

The Environmental Divide

Cooperman, of Pew, says that when it comes to Americans' views on the environment, "religion is not salient."

"It doesn't mean that religion doesn't have a role," he said. "Religious groups can be highly involved, and potentially influential — individuals can say, and fully mean it, that their faith speaks to them on the issue."

But it is political party identification that defines positions on the environment, even among the nearly half of churchgoing Americans surveyed who say their clergy speaks out about the environment.

In a Pew survey in 2010, for example, 39 percent of white evangelicals — typically the most skeptical about climate change — said their clergy spoke out about the environment, but just 11 percent said that religion is the biggest influence on their environmental views.

A recent Pew survey found that 85 percent of Democrats say there is solid evidence the Earth is warming, compared with 65 percent of independents and 48 percent of Republicans.

The partisan divide was even more significant when respondents were asked whether solid evidence linked human activity to global warming. Just 16 percent of conservative Republicans said yes, compared with 91 percent of liberal Democrats.

The political pressures of the issue were perhaps most strikingly illustrated during former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman's brief run for the GOP presidential nomination in 2012. After announcing in a tweet that, "I believe in evolution and trust scientists on global warming. Call me crazy," Huntsman later backpedaled before a conservative audience, saying that the "scientific community owes us more" on the issue.

Then, the following day in a speech to the Republican Jewish Coalition, he reset again, saying: "I put my faith and trust in science. So you have 99 of 100 climate scientists who have come out and talked about climate change in certain terms, what is responsible for it. I tend to say this is a discussion that should not be in the political lane but should be in the scientific lane."

In a 2010 Pew survey, Americans were asked whether religion influenced their thinking on tougher laws and regulations to protect the environment. Just over 5 percent said yes.

The biggest influences? Education, the media and "personal experience," Pew found.

And while 78 percent of Protestants and 85 percent of Catholics surveyed said they favored tougher environmental laws and regulations, support plummeted when they were asked if those laws are worth it if they "cost too many jobs and hurt the economy."

"Support for environmental laws is very high, and very broad — but it's a mile wide and an inch deep," Cooperman says.

Access And Message

Brown argues, however, that religious leaders often enjoy better access than environmental activists to lawmakers and decision-makers, and it's in that realm they can leverage their influence.

"Almost all of the religious groups in the United States, even evangelical Protestants, along with mainstream Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists, and others, have been talking about the justice and ethical dimensions of this issue," he said. "Their voice is really important to encourage."

"They can lead the turn to the ethics and justice dimensions of this issue," he said. "We need them really engaged in the policy aspects in a way they haven't engaged before."

Brown argues that the debate over climate change in the U.S. has been almost solely defined by clashes over the legitimacy of global warming science, and the economic effect of tackling the issue.

He defines the justice problem like this: Rich people and countries contribute to changes in the Earth's climate, resulting in catastrophic events like droughts and superstorms whose victims are "the poorest and most vulnerable," largely in Africa and parts of Asia.

And it's not clear whether the justice argument may sway political leaders who argue that the U.S. can't be obligated to act on mitigating the effects of climate change by capping carbon emissions, for example, until other polluters like China and India do their part.

Climate change action on Capitol Hill remains uncertain, if not unlikely, even given Obama's re-up on the issue.

Activists are looking for the issue to play out at environmental agencies and in the court system. Jeffrey Holmstead, a former Bush administration environmental official and now a Washington lawyer, told the Yale Forum on Climate Change and the Media that the first big climate-related test of Obama's second term will be whether the administration issues a rule that would effectively ban new coal-fired power plants.

If it does, he said, "the real action" will be in court.

http://www.npr.org/blogs/itsallpolitics/2013/01/28/170484601/on-climate-change-americans-may-trust-politics-above-preachers

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January-February 2013

When will we wake?

By Angela Manno
Fifteenth Street Meeting, Manhattan, New York

BeFriending Creation (Volume 26, Number 1)
Bi-monthly newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness

Much has been written about the dangerous, destructive, and morally untenable practice of hydraulic fracturing for natural gas. Many Friends would agree it's time to stop such practices that are violating Earth and switch to sustainable sources of energy—wind, water, and solar. Yet after all we have learned about the ill effects of extreme extraction—from an outright assault on our democracy, freedom of speech, property rights, human and ecological health—plus all we know of the beauty and integrity of the natural world, Friends for the most part are still sitting on the sidelines.

What is the source of Friends' failure to take corporate action on behalf of the planet? Why are Friends still so reluctant to take a stand in the face of the literal evisceration and shattering of our larger body—Earth—through hydraulic fracturing?

The answer is not in a lack of knowledge. Friends are, I believe, quite cognizant of the problems—or they could be. The Quaker Earthcare Witness discussion listserv provides an endless stream of news on the growing concerns and coming ravages of climate change, overpopulation, genetic engineering, hydrofracking, tar sands strip mining, and more.

Albert Einstein said, *"Those who have the privilege to know have the duty to act."* Why, then, do so many Friends continue to shirk this grave responsibility?

To unblock the floodgates to action, we must first examine our unconscious fears and the errors in our thinking.

Causes for inaction

In my search for answers, I found that the most likely causes for inaction—both Quaker and non-Quaker—can be explained in the writings of Quaker activist George Lakey and eco-theologian Thomas Berry.

As I have investigated these two seminal thinkers, and as I have searched my own heart, I have come to believe that most Friends do not take action beyond our personal realms (what George Lakey calls "earning Quaker merit badges by personal lifestyle choices rather than asking how much difference one is making in the movement's struggle for macro-level change")[2] because of a fundamental confusion about our true identity as Homo sapiens (a cosmological question) and the unconscious limitations imposed by Friends' respective social class (the domain of social science).

The primary error in our thinking, it seems to me, lies in the misconception that we are somehow separate from or "above" Earth and all its life. As I wrote once to explain "why I care" to a group of Westchester Friends, "If you consider yourself separate from Earth, from Gaia, the being in whom we live and move and have our being, then confusion sets in when you see Earth in peril. But if you feel yourself to be part of the organism, of the larger being called Earth, it is a matter of self-care to want to preserve the beauty and well-being of the planet."

An excerpt from a Buddhist Ceremony for Ecological Regeneration illustrates this inseparability in a highly evocative manner:

With heart and mind open, I see that there is no separation between my body and the body of the Earth. Every mineral in this flesh and bone has been stone and soil and it will be again. Looking into one calcium molecule in my bone, I can see that it used to be part of the body of a green leaf. Before that, it was part of the living soil in a garden. Long before that, it was a shell in the sea. I see the continuation of this calcium molecule in so many forms and now in my bone. I can see that the earth element in me will return to the soil and manifest as other forms of life in the future.
. . . With tenderness and love I bring my awareness to the suffering that is present in this collective body. I see the mineral element that is stone becoming soil becoming vegetation becoming flesh and bone becoming soil again. I also see the suffering that is present in the mineral element. I see the toxins we have made creating sickness and cancer in living beings, and the pesticides and fertilizers poisoning the soil. I know that the suffering of the mineral element is my suffering. I embrace this suffering with tenderness and love. [Source: Ambrose. Desmond. "Touching the Earth for Ecological Regeneration." Used by permission.]

My query deepened: What is the source of this sense of separation that pervades our religious society and society at large, that keeps Friends mostly silent and immobile in the face of the poisoning of our planet? I noted that Friends were able to step up to the plate when the immorality of slavery finally became clear. What, then, makes the destruction of the Earth—the living host of all we know, the very source of the next breath we take—somehow less offensive in the eyes of Friends?

A major cause is species-centered narcissism, also known as anthropocentrism. In his Schumacher lecture "Every Being Has Rights," Thomas Berry proclaimed that our love had become too narrow. *"It has been narrowed to the human instead of including the whole of the universe, as it once was in the Christian teaching."*

We contend not only with our radical discontinuity with the rest of Creation. We are also unconsciously bound by our class distinctions. In his article for the January–February 2012 *Quaker Eco-Bulletin*, George Lakey writes that, *"middle class culture supports fitting in, being restrained. It was hard for nurses and teachers historically, to form unions, because they didn't want to appear 'unprofessional' in the eyes of the world, since 'professional' is performed by appearing smooth and not making waves. . . . Quakers who stay in their middle class bubble guarantee the ineffectiveness of which they complain."*

His words awakened something in me. I reached out to George to find out more. He explained that "no amount of consciousness-raising or discussion can ever take the place for Quakers of getting their bodies out of the chair and in motion, outside their comfort zone, taking a stand. One reason why a vigil is a waste of time for Quakers these days is that it is a ritual—the kind of ritual that early Friends scorned when they saw Anglicans doing it. Friends need to act, in situations of uncertainty, where they are slightly out of control, where nicely phrased locution is not the currency."[3]

In light of this new awareness, never having been a student of social science and belonging to the middle-to-owning class myself, it was interesting to consider my own resistance to nonviolent direct action. More burdensome, as a victim of child abuse I had no desire to ever again be a victim of "the Man" by getting myself arrested and perhaps being helpless and abused with no way out. Yet I understood how facing my worst fears might redeem a lifetime of conflict avoidance. The answer, George told me, is to keep remembering, "I am not alone. Others will help me," contradicting the message from my class background.

In contrast to the middle-class tendency to shy away from conflict, early Friends embraced and cultivated it. They used conflict to create a stir, to bring injustice into the light. Quaker history is full of examples of conflict cultivation, from women's suffrage, to civil rights, to the abolition of slavery.

This conflict aversion affects not only many Friends but middle class environmentalists as well, including the class of big name environmental organizations that veteran organizer Bill Moyer, the author of Doing Democracy (a handbook of essential reading that maps the structure of successful social movements), calls "Professional Opposition Organizations." George Lakey explains: *"Even with the cliff edge of climate change staring middle class environmentalists in the face, most are reluctant to return to the strategy used in their biggest U.S. victory, which they won against all odds, the 1970s nonviolent direct action campaign against nuclear power."*

In recent times we've learned that a number of established environmental advocacy groups have compromised what they stand for, quite possibly to avoid the conflict that inevitably will emerge if we act to safeguard Earth's living systems from the ravages of tar sands strip mining, nuclear energy, hydraulic fracturing, deep-water drilling, mountaintop removal, and genetic engineering. The most recent example to come to public awareness is Sierra Club's acceptance of $25 million from Chesapeake Energy, one of the largest gas drillers in the world. A further investigation of this capitulating trend can be found in the article published in The Nation in 2010, "The Wrong Kind of Green" (*http://www.thenation.com/article/wrong-kind-green#*).

Resources for Friends

We must each examine where we are unwilling to make waves, when our consciences dictate it's time to move our bodies "out of the chair and in motion, outside [our] comfort zone, taking a stand." However, George offers us not only his critique but also uplifting solutions: "Brought up owning class? Great—bring the gifts (vision, big picture, aesthetics) often cultivated in the owning class, and let go of the isolation and need to control. Brought up middle class? Great—bring the gifts (optimism about making an individual difference, process skills, articulateness) and let go of both the obsession to fit in and conflict aversion. Brought up working class? Great—bring the gifts (directness, passion and willingness to fight) and let go of the deference to 'superiors' and the old label of 'ignorant.'" He assures us there are guidebooks to help us learn to work together. He cites Betsy Leondar-Wright's book Class Matters as abundant with quotes and anecdotes. He also tells us that Linda Stout, who comes from many generations of Quakers, now leads the organization Spirit in Action and that her book Bridging the Class Divide is a great source of inspiration.

For more about the gifts and limitations of class conditioning, you can view George Lakey's 2011 William Penn Lecture, "Powerful Beyond Measure: Trusting the Call to Leadership", at *http://bit.ly/JzgPL9*.

There are many more resources for Friends. For more about the Quaker tradition of cultivating conflict, listen to George's FGC 2011 plenary address "Conflict as a Gift of the Spirit," where he discusses the specific power of conflict to transform and bring about positive change in our society. Another is "New Theory, Old Practice: Nonviolence and Quakers," George Lakey's Southeastern Yearly Meeting 2004 paper, which also discusses the most powerful (though slightly rusty) tool in the Quaker toolbox for social change. Then there's the organization Training for Change and the online blog/journal Waging Nonviolence. Finally, there's the amazing Global Nonviolent Database at Swarthmore College: *http://bit.ly/J3jeLx*.

In the struggle for ecological justice, which is integral to human justice, we have now seen the victims' faces. We see victims from 34 states across the US and around the world, animal stillbirths, destroyed land values, air pollution in Wyoming, the industrialization of the beloved landscape. Friends are needed in this struggle.

In closing, I leave you with the words and final query of Christopher Frye in his poem "A Sleep of Prisoners:"

T*he human heart can go the lengths of God.*
Cold and dark we may be, but this
Is no winter now. The frozen misery
Of centuries cracks, begins to move.
The thunder is the thunder of the floes,
The thaw, the flood, the upstart Spring.
Thank God our time is now, when wrong
Comes up to face us everywhere,
Never to leave us till we take
The longest stride of soul we humans ever took.
Affairs are now soul size,
The enterprise is exploration into God.
Where are you making for? It takes
So many thousand years to wake,
But will you wake for pity's sake!

—Christopher Frye, *A Sleep of Prisoners*

http://www.quakerearthcare.org/Publications/BeFriendingCreation/BFCCurrentIssue/BFCpage06.htm

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February 2013

February Newsletter of the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute

(SAFCEI)

To read the newsletter, visit:

http://fore.research.yale.edu/files/SAFCEI-Feb-2013.pdf

February 2013

Fresh water scarcity: An introduction to the problem

TED Ed

Fresh water is essential for life -- and there's not nearly enough of it for the world right now. Why is that, and what could we do? Christiana Z. Peppard lays out the big questions of our global water problem. And no, shorter showers are not the answer.

Created by:
Christiana Peppard, Educator
Jeremy Collins, Animator

Watch the video at:

http://ed.ted.com/lessons/fresh-water-scarcity-an-introduction-to-the-problem-christiana-z-peppard

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February 2013

Where we get our fresh water

TED Ed

Fresh water accounts for only 2.5% of Earth's water, yet it is vital for human civilization. What are our sources of fresh water? In the first of a two part series on fresh water, Christiana Z. Peppard breaks the numbers down and discusses who is using it and to what ends.

Created by:
Christiana Peppard, Educator
Jeremy Collins, Animator

Watch the video at:

http://ed.ted.com/lessons/where-we-get-our-fresh-water-christiana-z-peppard

February 1, 2013

Faith group calls for Government to change direction on energy policy

Operation Noah press release

On Ash Wednesday, Operation Noah will call on the Government to change the direction of its Energy Bill, currently going through parliament. On this day, when Christians traditionally repent of their sins, the group believes the Government should show true repentance – *metanoia* – involving a change of mind and purpose in its energy policy.

It is one year since Operation Noah published the Ash Wednesday Declaration – *Climate change and the purposes of God: a call to the Church*. One practical outworking of this declaration is the call for a decarbonised economy in the UK by 2030. In the last year, the Government has issued an Energy Bill that fails to set adequate targets for reduction in carbon emissions and gives a green light for the building of more gas-fired power stations, locking us in to fossil fuels several decades into the future. However, it is clear that urgent action is needed to completely turn the world's energy infrastructure around from fossil fuels to renewables. Reports from organisations such as PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC),[1] the World Bank[2] and the International Energy Agency[3] have issued urgent calls for action to reduce carbon emissions yet the UK Government is not heeding the warnings.

Isabel Carter, Chair of Operation Noah comments: 'The UK Government, like many others, assumes that short-term economic policy takes priority over the laws of nature and the laws of physics! Our fragile earth has alarm bells ringing all around. How much longer will we continue to ignore them?'

Operation Noah calls again for the Churches to make care for God's creation a primary factor in the Church's mission, and to join them in calling for the Government to take a lead in working for a sustainable world.

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[1] Low carbon economy index 2012: Too late for two degrees? www.pwc.co.uk/sustainability-climate-change/publications/low-carbon-economy-index.jhtml

[2] *Turn Down the Heat: Why a 4°C Warmer World Must be Avoided* (World Bank, 2012).

[3] The International Energy Agency's chief economist Fatih Birol (2012) on publication of the *World Energy Outlook* 2012: 'When I look at this data, the trend is perfectly in line with a temperature increase of 6 degrees Celsius which would have devastating consequences for the planet.'

Notes for editors

Operation Noah is an ecumenical Christian charity providing leadership, focus and inspiration in response to the growing threat of catastrophic climate change. www.operationnoah.org

The Ash Wednesday Declaration – *Climate change and the purposes of God: a call to the Church* can be found at www.operationnoah.org/ash-wednesday-declaration It was launched on

22nd February 2012 and challenges the church to realise that care for God's creation – and concern about climate change - is foundational to the Christian gospel and central to the church's mission. It was signed by many prominent church leaders.
The Methodist, Baptist, United Reformed Churches, Quakers and Church of England have issued a briefing about the Energy Bill asking for key amendments. See
www.operationnoah.org/take_action_energy_bill
For more information contact: Isabel Carter, Chair of Operation Noah, Isabel@amberlinks.org, (01694 722296/07800 536303) and Mark Letcher, Vice Chair of Operation Noah mark.letcher@climate-works.co.uk (0117 903 0361)

http://www.operationnoah.org/press/ashwedchallenge

February 1, 2013

Turning temples in North America green

By Arthur J. Pais
India Abroad

https://pacs.unt.edu/sites/default/files/indiaabroadTurningTemplesGreen_1Feb2013.pdf

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February 11, 2013

Links Between Health and Environment in Focus at Major UN Youth Conference

Launch of GEO-5 for Youth to Showcase Solutions by Young People to Key Environmental Challenges

United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi - Actions to cut food waste and to harness the power of social media to promote sustainable lifestyles are among the issues on the agenda at a major United Nations youth meeting on the environment which opens in Nairobi, Kenya, today.

The 2013 TUNZA International Youth Conference on the Environment will see some 250 youth delegates from over 100 countries will examine ways in which global youth can directly tackle today's most pressing environmental issues, and encourage their peers to take action.

The week-long event is organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Links between human health and environmental degradation are the main themes of the conference.

Today, around 60 per cent of ecosystem services are degraded, which negatively impacts on access to clean water, food, and sanitation that are essential for good health.

Exposure to unsafe chemicals and the inhalation of indoor smoke from inefficient cookstoves are among other key environmental factors linked to illness.

According to UN studies, such factors contribute to a larger proportion of illness in children and young people compared to the population as a whole.

At the TUNZA conference, UNEP experts will hold workshops, panel discussions and other events with young people to present the latest science on health impacts of environmental degradation. Other sessions will cover water, sustainable consumption, green entrepreneurship, and new international targets that are set to succeed the Millennium Development Goals from 2015.

Launch of GEO-5 for Youth

The opening ceremony of the conference also saw the launch of a new youth-edited publication, *Tunza Acting for a Better World: GEO-5 for Youth*, which showcases innovative sustainable development projects run by young people around the world.

From a 'green' community radio station in Cameroon, to a project in Nicaragua making durable building materials from waste, *GEO-5 for Youth* highlights simple, low-cost solutions which can be replicated in communities elsewhere.

The publication incorporates key findings from the UNEP *Global Environment Outlook (GEO-5)* - the UN's most comprehensive environmental assessment - in order to equip young readers with the latest science-based information on the current state of the global environment, including climate change, air quality, biodiversity, land use, and other areas.

"*GEO-5 for Youth* shows that young people are trailblazers when it comes to new, creative solutions to the world's most critical environmental challenges," Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, told youth delegates at the opening ceremony of the conference.

"In order to follow this example, and to ensure a fair share of the world's resources for all, governments, industry, and others must also commit to firm actions that can place the world on a more sustainable path. Through the TUNZA Conference, young people can deliver a clear message that, paradoxically, while time is running out, actions already underway across the globe hold the promise of delivering an inclusive Green Economy, green jobs and a sustainable century if accelerated and scaled-up," added Mr. Steiner.

GEO-5 for Youth was edited by a three-member team of young environmentalists, with case studies, photographs and other contributions being submitted by members of UNEP's TUNZA youth network across the globe.

"This book is not just about the environment or its problems - it is also about acting for change together," said the *GEO-5 for Youth* editorial team.

"Its aim is to show that there is hope and that successes are happening every day. We all have a responsibility to implement sustainable solutions that will protect our future and that of coming generations. We can no longer wait for someone else to fix things for us."

Initiatives featured in *GEO-5 for Youth* include a project by two young siblings from the USA, Adarsha Shivakumar and Apoorva Rangan. Concerned by the depletion of natural resources in their grandparents' home region of India, the brother and sister team founded 'Project Jatropha' to promote sustainable alternatives to tobacco cultivation, which was contributing to deforestation and carbon emissions through the burning of large amounts of leaves.

The project introduced the Jatropha plant as an eco-friendly bio fuel and cash crop to replace large-scale tobacco cultivation. The project purchased 13,000 Jatropha seedlings and distributed them to a few dozen local farmers. Once the plants had grown, oil from the fruit was extracted at a nearby plant, and sold to local customers.

The plant provides an income for subsistence farmers, but without the heavy ecological footprint associated with tobacco growing. Over 20,000 additional tree saplings were also planted by local schoolchildren as part of the project.

GEO-5 for Youth also explains the main decisions and commitments made by world leaders at last year's Rio+20 summit, and how young people can play their part in promoting sustainable development and tackling poverty.

In the 'Change Countdown' chapter, *GEO-5 for Youth* lays out a variety of actions, from '1 second' activities such as turning off unneeded lights, '1 week' actions like increasing personal transport use, through to '1 year' projects such as designing a low-carbon, resource-efficient lifestyle.

UNEP Governing Council

The TUNZA Conference takes place a week before environment ministers from across the world will gather for the UNEP Governing Council.

Following a resolution by the UN General Assembly in December 2012 to upgrade and strengthen UNEP, all UN member and observer states will participate at the 2013 UNEP Governing Council for the first time.

The General Assembly resolution also underlined the need for youth, women, indigenous peoples, and other interest groups to be integrated more closely in global environmental decision-making overall.

Representatives from the TUNZA Youth Advisory Council will attend the Governing Council to ensure that youth perspectives on the most pressing environmental challenges are conveyed to world governments.

Notes to Editors

The Full text of GEO for Youth is available at: www.unep.org/tunza

UNEP TUNZA Programme

In February 2003, the UNEP Governing Council adopted a long-term strategy for engaging young people in environmental activities and in the work of UNEP.

The TUNZA programme, which takes its name from a Kiswahili word meaning 'to treat with care or affection', develops activities for children and young people in the areas of capacity building, environmental awareness, and information exchange. It aims to foster a generation of environmentally conscious citizens, capable of positive action.

The TUNZA Youth Advisory Council (TYAC) comprises 14 Advisors, two per UNEP region and two indigenous youth representatives.

Members of the Advisory Council are elected at the TUNZA International Youth Conference to serve for a period of two years. The Council advises UNEP on better ways of engaging young people in its work and represents youth in international environmental negotiations.

For more information, please contact:

Bryan Coll, UNEP Newsdesk (Nairobi) on Tel. +254 20 762 3088 / +254 731 666 214 or E-mail: unepnewsdesk@unep.org

http://www.unep.org/NewsCentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2704&ArticleID=9390&l=en

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February 12, 2013

Pope Benedict XVI: the first green pontiff?

From having solar panels installed on the Vatican to addresses on St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology, the outgoing Pope deserves some credit for his green stance

By Ed King for RTCC
Guardian

It’s likely the departing Pope will be remembered for his deep conservatism, prayerfulness and inability or unwillingness to drag the Catholic Church into the 21st Century.

Others can deal with the church's child abuse scandals and the effect its dated views on contraception have had on the spread of AIDS. These are issues that still need to be addressed.

What is without doubt is that Benedict was progressive when it comes to the environment, taking a stand against climate change, promoting renewable energy and calling for a closer communion between Catholics and nature.

Addressing Italian students in 2011, he called on them to become 'guardians of nature' and follow in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology.

"Today more than ever, it has becomes clear that respect for the environment cannot forget the recognition of the value of the human person and its inviolability at every stage and in every condition of life," he said.

"Respect for the human being and respect for nature are one, but both can grow and find their right measure if we respect in the human being and in nature the Creator and his creation. On this, dear young people, I believe to find allies in you, true "guardians of life and creation."

Benedict was given an electric vehicle for his personal use by Renault last year.

Ahead of the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Conference, Benedict called on world leaders to "promote a joint development based on human dignity and for the common good".

After its well-documented failure he lamented the "self-centred and materialistic" attitudes prevalent in society, pointing to the global financial crisis as evidence humanity had lost its way.

During his tenure the Vatican revealed that by 2020, 20% of its electricity will be provided by renewable energy.

It installed photovoltaic cells in its main auditorium and joined a project to offset carbon dioxide emissions.

And last year the Pope was presented with a white Kangoo electric Maxi van by Renault, boasting a 44 kilowatt electric motor and lithium-ion battery and can travel 170km (105 miles) without recharging.

The carmaker also handed over a second car to the Vatican's police force.

For the Pope and the church, climate change is part of a wider and more complex range of problems affecting society, as Martin Palmer, Secretary General of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation(ARC) explained to RTCC last year.

"We have to put all this in context…for the mainstream churches climate change is not the major issue…it is a manifestation of the major issues, which are sin, greed, arrogance, sloth and evil," he said.

“What’s happening to the environment is part of a deeper problem.”

The Pope’s frail physical state and the size of the Vatican City belies huge influence around the world.

There are an estimated one billion Catholics on the planet, the majority living in the developing world, where climate change is likely to hit the hardest.

Francis Arinze, Nigerian Cardinal and Peter Turkson, the Ghanaian Cardinal, are both listed at best price odds of 4/1 and as short as 2/1 with some bookmakers.

But whether he is African, Latin American or another European – the environment is likely to figure highly in any new Pope’s inbox, and for that the departing Pontiff deserves some credit.

• This post was first published on RTCC

http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/blog/2013/feb/12/pope-benedict-xvi-first-green-pontiff/print

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February 13, 2013

Sister's Lenten resource brings the Earth and Jesus together

By Sharon Abercrombie
National Catholic Reporter

When a group of religious educators approached Sr. Terri MacKenzie to ask, "What is a good way to teach little children about God?", MacKenzie, a longtime classroom teacher, had a ready reply: "Don't look up at the sky while you are talking to them. They will think that God is only 'up there' and far, far away, instead of here on earth with us, in us and in everything that exists."

To mark the beginning of Lent, MacKenzie, a member of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, will bring her sky-to-earth grounding message to another venue with a group of adults at her parish, St. Gertrude Catholic Church in Chicago.

Through meditation, she will have them looking toward the sky, the source of the creation of the universe more than 13 billion years ago. But she will then turn them around toward their earthly home, to the everyday immediacy of dirt in their lives. Plain old dirt. Soil, the brown skin of the earth, which feeds every living critter and us our daily lunches. Soil, the brown womb that gives birth to redwoods, spring grass, tangerines, violets, dandelions, and birds of paradise blooms.

"Spirituality of Soil: A Lenten Journey from Cosmic Dust to Easter Garden [1]" is part of the 78-year-old sister's new online project with EcospiritualityResources.com. Launched in June, her free downloadable resource features both Lenten and Advent reflections and an informational

video on hydraulic fracking, "Time for an Energy Change," that she wrote. There are YouTube videos, books, and contemporary eco-music resources by Kathy Sherman and Jan Novotka. The rich assortment is there for Catholics and Christians to better understand the evolving worldview coming from the new science and new theology "so that they can better integrate their beliefs into that worldview," she explains on her website.

Each session connects the Sunday Lenten scripture readings with the wisdom of contemporary writers Mary Coelho, Judy Cannato, Mary Oliver, Thomas Berry, Fr. Al Fritsch and other environmental spirituality pioneers. Excerpts from the writings of crusty journalist Studs Terkel even make an appearance.

MacKenzie's sessions highlight the roles of earth and trees in the week's scripture readings and how they connect with what God asks of us. Each will include a closing activity and suggestions for Earth Care action. At the conclusion of the opening Ash Wednesday gathering, participants will anoint and bless one another with soil.

Does MacKenzie know of other Lenten groups who will be using her materials? So far, she has received no direct feedback from individuals. However, as of last week, there have been more than 5,500 hits to her website. "They've come from all over the world," she said, adding that she is amazed, overwhelmed and humbled.

Ecospirituality Resources is a refinement of materials MacKenzie created for her own religious community in 2003 after they invited her to develop a Lenten water reflection. This led to more Lenten materials and then, over the next nine years, expanded to include Advent materials. Her collection covers the entire three-year cycle of scripture readings. Each year will showcase that selection of readings and ecology-related reflections.

MacKenzie said her kinship with Earth was late in coming.

"I'm a poster child of someone who had no early experiences of caring for Earth or finding the divine there," she said. Even though she grew up in Chicago, close to Lake Michigan, "it was just background to me."

When MacKenzie entered the Society of the Holy Child Jesus 60 years ago, the implications of her community's charism " with all life, not just humans, being part of evolution, or a passion to care for every sacred part of Earth never translated for me." When she was tapped to develop workshops for her province around the 1971 World Synod of Bishops document *Justice in the World,* she began connecting many of the far-reaching dots justice encompasses.

But there was still one dot to go. A blue-green one, a water-filled planet pulsing with life within the Milky Way galaxy, located in an expanding universe. She found it in 1979 when she heard Sr. Miriam MacGillis, founder of Genesis Farm, talk about the consciousness of the universe.

"I was knocked off my horse," MacKenzie said. "I knew I had a lot of learn, and I felt called to learn it." Justice, she realized, included the earth as well.

During the '80s and '90s, she visited Universe Story writers and educators Thomas Berry and Mary Evelyn Tucker at Riverdale Center in New York. She studied at Notre Dame University summer school, where she met St. Joseph sister and artist Mary Southard, a fellow Chicagoan. It was a good connection. In the late 1990s, when Southard wanted to take a sabbatical from creating her yearly Ministry of the Arts earth calendar, MacKenzie stepped into her artistic shoes for two years.

MacKenzie is active in Sisters of Earth, a group of sisters and laywomen who are active in many types of earth ministries. She is one with them in their eco-related resolve: "I see (earth care) as a call within our call. And we are not going to burn out."

MacKenzie is also the organizer of a retreat on The Universe Story, which will be held June 14-17 near Philadelphia. Sponsored by the Sisters of the Holy Child EcoSpirituality group, it will feature Mary Evelyn Tucker, Jean Newbold, Terry Moral, Mary Ann Buckley and Lucy Slinger. Click here for more information [2].

Editor's postscript: As deadline approached, we discovered a kindred Lenten calendar from the Cincinnati archdiocese that partners well with Terri MacKenzie's website. The calendar, "Franciscan Energy Fast -- Because We Love God [3]," offers daily suggestions for cutting back and slowing down.

http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/sisters-lenten-resource-brings-earth-and-jesus-together

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February 14, 2013

God and climate change

By Robert H. Nelson
USA Today

Obama has brought religion back into the environmental conversation.

On Tuesday, President Obama once again brought up climate change in his State of the Union Address, just as he did in his inaugural address last month. This week, he spoke in the cold voice of science, but in that first address the president took a different approach, one in which the seeds of a broader environmental coalition can be found.

On his second inauguration, Obama said the U.S. must reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in order to "preserve our planet, commanded to our care by God. That's what will lend meaning to the creed our fathers once declared."

Climate activists have argued that science, not God, requires urgent greenhouse gas reductions. Now, as a *Slate* headline put it, "Obama Brings God Into the Climate Change Fight."

Some environmentalists speculated that Obama might be hoping to reach out to devout Christians — many of them Republicans — in the hope of building a wider consensus.

Role of Christianity

This is a long way from the 1967 declaration of American historian Lynn White, in *Science* magazine, that Christianity bears primary responsibility for raping the earth. Indeed, Obama's inaugural remarks appear to have been an allusion to the book of Genesis, which tells us that God gave the world to human beings for their sustenance and enjoyment, but requires us to be good stewards of his creation.

The president also might have been acknowledging the fact that among the political problems of our time, climate change could be the most "wicked" of all. Voters are being asked to bear large burdens now in order to create practical benefits that might not be realized until many of them are dead. If the case for climate change is not deeply moral, capable of invoking powerful altruistic motives, it will be politically hopeless.

Many of Obama's environmental supporters admittedly have in mind a different message of the Christian God. If human beings alter the climate radically, they will be "playing God," challenging God's authority over his own creation. In the Old Testament, we learn that those who challenge God's authority will surely be punished, typically with flood, famine, pestilence, drought, earthquake or other environmental calamity.

Today, new prophets tell us that our modern sins will lead to rising seas, stronger hurricanes and longer droughts. If we don't reform our sinful ways, global catastrophe on a biblical scale looms. Billy Graham could hardly have said it better.

Hearing God's call

In traditional Christian theology, there are two direct ways to access the thinking of God: the "Book of the Bible" and the "Book of Nature."

Until Charles Darwin, Christians believed that the earth was not much changed from its creation about 6,000 years ago, meaning the design of the natural world offered a glimpse into the mind of God. John Calvin would thus write that God "daily discloses himself in the whole workmanship of the universe." The plant and animal kingdoms are "burning lamps" that "shine for us ... the glory of its author." To eliminate a species or damage the earth is to limit our knowledge of God.

In some ways, environmentalism should be seen as a secularized version of Calvinism, minus God. Obama has brought God back into the environmental conversation, even if his theological knowledge is incomplete.

Robert H. Nelson is a professor of environmental policy at the University of Maryland, a research fellow at the Independent Institute and author of The New Holy Wars: Economic Religion versus Environmental Religion in Contemporary America.

http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2013/02/13/god-and-climate-change-column/1917975/

February 19, 2013

Jesuits Around the World Newsletter

Vol. XVII, No. 4

The last two years have seen the development within the Society of what we call the Global Ignatian Advocacy Networks (GIAN). The five existing networks are centred on Ecology, Right to Education, Management of Natural Resources and Minerals, Migration, and Peace and Human Rights. **Promotio Iustitiae no.110** is completely dedicated to the Global Ignatian Advocacy Networks. Along with other articles, it includes the position documents of these networks, a summary of what they are currently doing, and their plans for the future. Please find here the link to the publication: http://www.sjweb.info/documents/sjs/pjnew/PJ110ENG.pdf

USA: International Ecology Project

The *International Ecology Project* (IJEP) is a three-year collaborative project between *Loyola University Chicago* faculty and scholars from Jesuit institutions around the world to create an online *Living Textbook* that addresses select environmental science challenges from an integrated scientific, moral, and spiritual perspective. This *Living Textbook* will be a curricular resource in environmental science for teachers and students in Jesuit institutions of higher education and secondary schools worldwide. The IJEP emerged as a response of the Higher Education Secretariat to the challenge of Father General Adolfo Nicolás to the Society of Jesus to redouble its commitment to environmental stewardship in gratitude to God for the gift of the natural world, contained in his 16 September 2011 letter to Jesuits around the world and where he referred to the document *Healing a Broken World* (HBW). In light of today's serious environmental challenges, HBW's 'recommendation four' asked Jesuit institutions of higher education to "engage students in transformative education." The recommendation's third section specifically called for development of "curricula that address sustainability issues and impart a certain level of environmental literacy." For more information: www.luc.edu/ijep

USA: Saving the Earth as a New Frontier

Jesuit Father John Surette, of the New England Province, has a dream for the Society of Jesus. Responding to Father General Adolfo Nicolás's call for Jesuits to explore the "frontiers, those geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find difficult to reach," Fr. Surette looks to a frontier very close to home: planet Earth. "Forests are shrinking, water tables are falling, soils are eroding, fisheries are collapsing, rivers are running dry, glaciers and ice caps are melting, coral reefs are bleaching, the ocean is becoming more acidic, the atmosphere is

warming, plant and animal species are going into extinction at a greater rate and the children of all species are increasingly being born sick. In all of this and much more we are reaching the limits of what life on Earth can tolerate," Fr. Surette writes. A member of the Society of Jesus for 55 years, Fr. Surette has spent the last 22 years giving retreats and workshops on eco-spirituality. He sees the state of the Earth as one of the most important issues today: "What is happening to Earth belongs to an order of magnitude beyond any other into which we Jesuits have poured out our apostolic energies in the past. It is of greater magnitude than any of the present day social justice issues." Fr. Surette believes that Jesuits are called to make a religious response to Earth's fate. "This appears to be the most challenging role that we Jesuits have ever been asked to assume," he writes. "It will require that we move beyond any denial and paralysis and that we move into the future with hope, courage and intention" Surette concludes.

For full newsletter, visit:

http://www.sjweb.info/news/index.cfm?Tab=7&Language=1&PubNumID=182

February 19, 2013

Ministers Dine on Food Grown in Kenya But Rejected by UK Supermarkets for Cosmetic Reasons

Gourmet Meal at UN Environment Programme Headquarters Highlights Global Campaign to Cut Food Waste

Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint

Nairobi – Hundreds of ministers and high-level officials dined on perfectly good food grown by Kenyan farmers but rejected by UK supermarkets due to cosmetic imperfections at the headquarters of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi to highlight a major campaign to cut massive levels of global food loss and waste.

The zero-waste reception, taking place during a meeting of the first UNEP Governing Council under universal membership, was in support of **Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint** – an initiative launched in January by UNEP, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and partners such as Feeding the 5,000 and Messe Dusseldorf.

The campaign aims to promote actions by consumers and food retailers to dramatically cut the 1.3 billion tonnes of food lost or wasted each year – which aside from the cost implications and environmental impacts increases pressure on the already straining global food system – and help shape a sustainable future.

“No economic, environmental or ethical argument can be made to justify the extent of food

waste and loss currently happening in the world, and at UNEP we practice what we preach," said UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. "With this dinner we are demonstrating to retailers, consumers and policymakers who can push for change that the astonishing amount of food we throw away is not just edible and nutritious, but also delicious."

Tristram Stuart, food waste author and founder of Feeding the 5000, a key partner organization that has organized such dinners for years, visited producers across Kenya to source around 1,600 kilogrammes of unwanted fruit and vegetables for the meal and for donation to local charities.

The food had been grown for the export market only to be rejected – largely due to stringent standards over appearance or orders being changed after vegetables had been harvested. Some of this unwanted produce is sold on the local market or donated, but the quantities are so large that local markets cannot handle the volume and so much of it is either left to rot or fed to livestock – prompting resentment amongst Kenyan farmers who must bear the costs themselves.

"It's a scandal that so much food is wasted in a country with millions of hungry people; we found one grower supplying a UK supermarket who is forced to waste up to 40 tonnes of vegetables every week, which is 40 per cent of what he grows," said Mr. Stuart. "The waste of perfectly edible 'ugly' vegetables is endemic in our food production systems and symbolizes our negligence."

"But it is also a huge opportunity: by persuading supermarkets to change their standards, and by developing processing and other ways of marketing this produce, we can help to increase on-farm incomes and food availability where it is needed most," he added. "This dinner, and the many Feeding the 5000 events we have run, aims to change attitudes and highlight best practices, by showing that there is absolutely nothing wrong with this food we so casually discard."

While UK supermarkets are in the frame here in Kenya, experts believe that similar practises are happening in respect to supermarkets in many parts of the developed, and increasingly in parts of the developing, world.

Chef Ray Cournede, from Nairobi's prestigious Windsor Hotel, utilized the rescued food to cook a five-course meal that included such delights as Grilled Sweet Corn Tamales, Yellow Lentil Dal with Tamarind and Mangomisu – Tiramisu with a tropical twist. Mr. Cournede also prepared mango chutney and candied fruit peels, which show ways to preserve and use fruits when in season.

The dinner was a zero-waste event: guests were encouraged to doggy bag leftovers and many of the fruits and vegetables were donated to MCEDO, a community-based organization that runs a school with a feeding programme for 580 children in Nairobi's Mathare informal settlement.

Kenyan singing sensations Eric Wainaina and Suzanna Owiyo, who will support the food waste campaign when they are officially designated as National Goodwill Ambassadors later this week, performed at the event.

The Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint campaign is in support of the SAVE FOOD

Initiative to reduce food loss and waste along the entire chain of food production and consumption – run by the FAO and trade fair organizer Messe Düsseldorf – and the UN Secretary General's Zero Hunger Initiatives. The campaign specifically targets food wasted by consumers, retailers and the hospitality industry.

Worldwide, at least one-third of all food produced, worth around US$1 trillion, gets lost or wasted in food production and consumption systems, according to data released by FAO. Food loss occurs mostly at the production stages – harvesting, processing and distribution – while food waste typically takes place at the retailer and consumer end of the food-supply chain.

According to FAO roughly 95 per cent of food loss and waste in developing countries are unintentional losses at early stages of the food supply chain due to financial, managerial and technical limitations in harvesting techniques; storage and cooling facilities in difficult climatic conditions; infrastructure; packaging and marketing systems.

However, in the developed world the end of the chain is far more significant. At the food manufacturing and retail level in the developed world, large quantities of food are wasted due to inefficient practices, quality standards that over-emphasize appearance, confusion over date labels and consumers being quick to throw away edible food due to over-buying, inappropriate storage and preparing meals that are too large.

Per-capita waste by consumers is between 95 and 115 kg a year in Europe and North America/Oceania, while consumers in sub-Saharan Africa, south and south-eastern Asia each throw away only 6 to 11 kg a year.

"Together, we can reverse this unacceptable trend and improve lives. In industrialized regions, almost half of the total food squandered, around 300 million tonnes annually, occurs because producers, retailers and consumers discard food that is still fit for consumption," said José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General. "This is more than the total net food production of Sub-Saharan Africa, and would be sufficient to feed the estimated 870 million people hungry in the world."

NOTES TO EDITORS

Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint

The campaign harnesses the expertise of organizations such as WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), Feeding the 5,000 and other partners, including national governments, who have considerable experience targeting and changing wasteful practices. It aims to accelerate action and provide a global vision and information-sharing portal for the many and diverse initiatives currently underway around the world.

Visit www.thinkeatsave.org and www.unep.org/wed for more information on the campaign.

SAVE FOOD Initiative

SAVE FOOD the Global Initiative on Food Losses and Food Waste Reduction is a partnership between companies and organizations worldwide to reduce the estimated 1.3 billion tonnes of

food that is lost or wasted every year. For more information and facts and figures on food waste and food loss, visit: http://www.fao.org/save-food/en/

Feeding the 5,000
Feeding the 5,000 is a global food waste campaign whose flagship event provides 5000 free meals from food that would otherwise have been wasted. For more information, visit: http://www.feeding5k.org/

The state of the global food system
The global food system has profound implications for the environment, and producing more food than is consumed only exacerbates the pressures, some of which follow:

- More than 20 per cent of all cultivated land, 30 per cent of forests and 10 per cent of grasslands are undergoing degradation;
- Globally 9 per cent of the freshwater resources are withdrawn, 70 per cent of this by irrigated agriculture;
- Agriculture and land use changes like deforestation contribute to more than 30 per cent of total global greenhouse gas emissions;
- Globally, the agri-food system accounts for nearly 30 per cent of end-user available energy;
- Overfishing and poor management contribute to declining numbers of fish, some 30 per cent of marine fish stocks are now considered overexploited.

For outreach and to join the campaign, please contact:

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UNEP Newsdesk (Nairobi)
+254 20 762 5211
unepnewsdesk@unep.org

http://www.thinkeatsave.org/index.php/ministers-dine-on-food-grown-in-kenya-but-rejected-by-uk-supermarkets-for-cosmetic-reasons

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February 20, 2013

Operation Noah backs call for decarbonisation target in Energy Bill

Press Release

Today, many NGOs, faith groups and organisations have issued a joint statement calling on the Government to commit the UK to a near carbon free power sector by 2030.

The Energy Bill is currently going through parliament and an amendment, to include a decarbonisation target during the report stage in early March, was put forward by Tim Yeo MP and Barry Gardner MP last week. This amendment is backed by many MPs as well as businesses. A decarbonisation target would help to ensure longer-term investment in low-carbon electricity generation, create many more green jobs and help the UK to meet its commitments set out in the Climate Change Act to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

The groups behind this amendment to the Bill, say that they are "*united in the belief that a low-carbon power sector is essential to secure the future wellbeing of our economy"*, arguing that the Energy Bill *"represents a major opportunity to put the UK firmly on track to becoming a world leading low-carbon economy, boost employment and show genuine leadership in the fight against dangerous climate change."*

Operation Noah, a Christian charity working on climate change, has already written to the Government concerning the Energy Bill, and is now adding its name in support of this amendment. Dr Isabel Carter, Chair of Operation Noah, comments: "Just as the UK led the development of the industrial revolution, so we have a historical and ethical rationale to lead the way forward into a carbon free power sector by 2030."

We are calling on Christians to write to their MPs to support this amendment. Now is a crucial time to reform UK energy policy to ensure a low-carbon and sustainable future.

Ends
Notes for editors:
The full joint statement is

"The Energy Bill represents a major opportunity to put the UK firmly on track to becoming a world leading low-carbon economy, boost employment and show genuine leadership in the fight against dangerous climate change.

Our organisations jointly call on Members of Parliament to seize this unique opportunity to commit the UK in the Energy Bill to have a near carbon free power sector by 2030 in line with the recommendations of the Committee on Climate Change.

We represent different parts of society but are united in the belief that a low-carbon power sector is essential to secure the future wellbeing of our economy, our environment and future generations."

The following organisations have signed up to the statement: SSE, Mainstream Renewable Power, EdPR, Dong Energy, Repower, Repsol, Renewable Energy System (RES), Good Energy, Ecotricity, Seajacks UK Ltd, Seanergy Plc, Modus Seabed Intervention Ltd, Harland and Wolff Heavy Industries Ltd, UK Sustainable Investment and Finance Association, RSA, Cisco, Interface, PZ Cussons, Triodos Bank, The Co-operative Group, the TUC, Regen South West, Association for the Conservation of Energy (ACE), IPPR, Christian Aid, Oxfam, British Association for Sustainable Sport, Quakers in Britain, The Baptist Union of Great Britain, the United Reformed Church, Methodist Church in Britain, Operation Noah, Greenpeace, the RSPB, Friends of the Earth and WWF.

For more information on the Energy Bill see www.operationnoah.org/take_action_energy_bill

Operation Noah is an ecumenical Christian charity providing leadership, focus and inspiration in response to the growing threat of catastrophic climate change. www.operationnoah.org

For more information contact: Isabel Carter, Chair of Operation Noah,Isabel@amberlinks.org, (01694 722296/07800 536303) and Mark Letcher, Vice Chair of Operation Noah mark.letcher@climate-works.co.uk (0117 903 0361)

http://www.blackburn.anglican.org/news_more.asp?news_id=837

February 21, 2013

Forward on Climate Rally, Washington DC -- February 17, 2013

Genesis Farm Reflection

In these opening years of the twenty-first century, as the human community experiences a rather difficult situation in its relation with the natural world, we might reflect that a fourfold wisdom is available to guide us into the future: the wisdom of indigenous peoples, the wisdom of women, the wisdom of the classical traditions and the wisdom of science. We need to consider these wisdom traditions in terms of… their common support for the emerging age when humans will be a mutually enhancing presence on the Earth.

-- Thomas Berry

Last Sunday, a major event unfolded in our nation's capitol. The largest climate rally in US history took place in cold winter winds, in the shadow of the Washington Monument. An

estimated forty to fifty thousand people gathered together to speak out against the Keystone XL pipeline, against fracking, and against business-as-usual energy policies that heat up Earth's atmosphere and continue to threaten the long-term viability of the planet.

In addition to the strong opposition to further extraction and use of fossil fuels, there was a conspicuous feeling of unity. Represented at the rally were a diversity of peoples and perspectives. From the stage, we heard the voices of a remarkable assembly of First Nations and Native American leaders, women, people of faith, people of color, scientists and activists. All of them are confronting on a daily basis the direct effects of serious climate change and dirty energy in their communities.

Though the tone of urgency was palpable, so too was the sense of hope that this event was part of an awakening of a deep common wisdom. Thomas Berry wrote that humanity would need to call upon a "four-fold wisdom" to develop a mutually-enhancing relationship with Earth. This four-fold wisdom — the wisdom of the feminine, of indigenous people, of classical religions, and of modern science — were on display in full and glorious force at the rally.

At this point in human history, we face urgent choices and complex problems. And everywhere, ordinary people are responding. Something is stirring that is unprecedented, and we are gathering as never before. Idle No More's defense of First Nations rights in Canada, or 350.Org's movement to divest college monies from fossil fuel corporations, or the many people who are blocking the path of the Keystone XL Tar Sands pipeline are but three examples just on this continent.

This rising of an uncommon wisdom is everywhere across the planet. As we work to reverse the drift toward global warming, we will draw from our deepest reserves of inner wisdom to inform our actions. As Berry wrote, "We need all of the traditions. Each has its…own special contribution toward an integral wisdom tradition that seems to be taking shape in the emerging twenty-first century."

We might observe here that the Great Work of a people is the work of all the people. No one is exempt. Each of us has our individual life patterns and responsibilities. Yet beyond these concerns, each person in and through their personal work assists in the Great Work. The Great Work now… is to carry out the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner.

-- Thomas Berry

All quotes are taken from Berry's book The Great Work: Our Way into the Future

http://hosted.verticalresponse.com/857531/ab0092612c/1634009901/d32c77a1c6/

February 22, 2013

UNEP Strengthened and Upgraded to Implement The Future We Want

United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi - Starting from an office above a supermarket 40 years-ago, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) was today modernized into a strengthened and upgraded institution better able to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

The decision, by ministers of the environment meeting at the UNEP Governing Council, implements the call by Heads of States and governments in the Future We Want forged at the close of Rio+20 last June.

Governments this week also backed more predictable, stable and increased funding for UNEP from the UN Regular Budget by 2014 -underlining increasing confidence in UNEP's ability and role to deliver the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

Ministers meeting for the first time under universal membership of 193 member states- again as a result of the decisions taken and adopted last year at Rio+20 and the UN General Assembly later in the year- adopted a welter of other decisions relating to the way UNEP will operate and work as the global platform for environmental policy-making and action over the coming years and decades.

Governments called for the transformation of the existing Governing Council into a UN Environment Assembly of UNEP and to build stronger links between UNEP's science-based Global Environment Outlook process and its ministerial meetings - further implementing the call by member states at Rio + 20 to strengthen the science-policy interface.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said at the close: "The theme at this historic, universal membership Governing Council was *Rio+20: From Outcome to Implementation* - and that was precisely what happened over the past five days".

"Ministers responsible for the environment implemented the strengthening and upgrading of UNEP to an institution better equipped and resourced to serve the planet and its people to meet the ever growing challenges posed by ecosystem degradation to the growth of greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere while catalyzing transformational change to seize the equally fast growing opportunities for a sustainable development path change," he said.

"Meanwhile ministers responsible for the environment took also took forward the wider implementation of the Rio+20 outcome document - the Future We Want - across a broad sweep of issues and actions from support for 30 countries to make a green economy transition; building a stronger science-policy interface, and strengthening the exercise of environmental laws to fast tracking action on persistent and emerging issues, support for renewable energy under the UN climate convention and the decade long initiative on decoupling natural resource use from economy growth - in short the 10YFP," said Mr Steiner.

"Heads of State at Rio+20 grasped the sobering science, laid out in reports like UNEP's Global Environment Outlook-5, and put in the foundations for new pathways and new directions to achieve a sustainable century - here ministers and delegations from over 150 nations have been the architects and designers of an evolved UNEP with greater authority, impact and pathways to deliver the Future We Want," he added.

Among the wealth of other decisions taken at the first Universal Membership of the UNEP Governing Council were:-

- A UNEP-led consortium will host and coordinate the ***Climate Technology Centre and Network*** **(CTCN)** which will be the implementing arm of the Technology Mechanism of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The CTCN will work on leap-frogging the technical and financial hurdles to the even greater take-up of clean and renewable energies to low carbon tranportation and energy efficient buildings.

- Full operationalization of a decade-long initiative to decouple economic growth from unsustainable use of natural resources and pollution generation-the **10 Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP for SCP**)

The UNEP-hosted initiative will assist countries in areas from sustainable public procurement, lifestyles and education to sustainable buildings and construction and sustainable tourism, including ecotourism - again bringing from outcome to implementation other key aspects of the Rio+20 Future We Want.

- Governments also decided to convene in October this year an **intergovernmental diplomatic conference to formally adopt the Minamata Convention on Mercury** that was agreed in January in Geneva under a UNEP-facilitated negotiation-again a further implementation of the Rio+20 outcome document.

The mercury treaty, aimed at reducing releases and emissions of a notorious health-hazardous heavy metal from source such as artisanal small-scale mining, medical equipment and power stations, will open for signature at the conference in Japan en route to ratification and coming into force.

Inclusive Green Economy

The summary by the President of the Governing Council, **Hassan Abdel Hilal**, Minister of Environment, Forests and Physical Development, Sudan, noted that many ministers called for a driving forward of the Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Several suggested that efforts should initially focus on areas where fast action might happen soonest including in area such as energy, water and agriculture.

UNEP unveiled the Partnership for Action on a Green Economy (PAGE) in order to implement the outcomes of Rio+20 and meet the needs of countries keen to join such a transformation.

PAGE, which will initially support 30 countries on Green Economy work, is backed by UNEP, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

Sustainable Development Goals

The meeting also discussed the role of the environment in the post-2015 agenda and the discourse surrounding the development of a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which was informed by the presence of Amina J Mohamed, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning.

- In his summary, the President observed that many representatives observed that UNEP should play an important role in promoting environmental sustainability in the proposed goals and post-2015 agenda
- They also that achieving sustainable patterns of consumption and production should be one of the SDGs

Environmental Law

Governments also gave a big boost to environmental law, building on the UNEP-convened World Congress on Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability held during Rio+20 last June.

- Ministers and delegates today asked UNEP to lead the United Nations system and support national Governments in the development and implementation of environmental rule of law including boosting information disclosure, environmental auditing and independent dispute resolution.

Medium-Term Strategy and Budget

A medium-term strategy for UNEP's work up to 2017 was also adopted focusing on themes outlined in the Rio+20 outcome across seven priority areas while approving a more detailed work plan for the organization for 2014-15, which provides for strengthened responsiveness to country needs and more funds for direct activities including via a re-structuring of elements of UNEP's finances to be more stable and predictable via an increase to be approved from the UN Regular Budget.

From the Launch of Cutting Edge Reports to World-Class Meeting of Youth, Judges and Women Environment Ministers and Leaders

In advance and during the Governing Council UNEP launched a series of reports and hosted awareness-raising events and meetings of other stakeholders aimed at improving the science base

available to policy makers, prompting further transformative action, and highlighting key issues the organization will be working on in 2013 and beyond.

A UNEP-World Health Organization report on endocrine-disrupting chemicals unveiled new science on this subset of chemicals, which affect the hormone systems of humans and animals.

- Many such chemicals are untested for their effects, and *The State of the Science of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals* called for more research to understand fully the associations between these chemicals, found in many household and industrial products, and specific diseases and disorders.

UNEP and the Food and Agricultural Organization off the UN's *Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint* campaign on cutting food waste hosted a reception dinner for hundreds of policy makers. The campaign - whose web site is www.thinkeatsave.org- is in support of the UN Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge.

- The reception highlighted the scale of waste in Kenya and globally by preparing the meal from almost 2,000 kilogrammes fruit and vegetables that had been rejected by UK supermarkets for cosmetic reasons.

Young people representing over 100 countries at the UNEP Tunza International Youth Conference, which took place in Nairobi a week earlier, issued a statement to the Governing Council calling for governments, business, cities and civil society to support UNEP's campaign.

- The Tunza youth statement also called for reduced food waste and loss to be a post-2015 development target as a Sustainable Development Goal.

Also on the topic of the global food system, the UNEP-commissioned report *Our Nutrient World* laid out how humans - in pursuit of greater food production- have in many areas altered the natural flows of nitrogen, phosphorus and other nutrients, causing a web of water and air pollution.

The *UNEP Year Book 2013* highlighted the accelerated melting of sea ice in the Arctic, urging caution on moves to take advantage of the retreating ice to exploit resources and open up shipping routes.

- It also highlighted a spike in the illegal wildlife trade that has sent the numbers of elephants and rhinos poached soar - an issue that UNEP and its related conventions such as CITES are bringing to the attention of the global public.
- During the meeting for example UNEP signed an agreement with Shanghai, one of the world's most-populous cities, to promote awareness among the city's citizens of negative consequences of the illegal wildlife trade.

Women Environment Ministers

The day before the Governing Council got underway, the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment (NWMLE) and UNEP hosted the second High-Level Gender Forum.

The forum participants called upon ministers and environmental leaders to have dedicated officials for coordination of related gender and environment programmes and agreed to send a consolidated proposal on gender actions to be forwarded for consideration by UN Secretary General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

- The women ministers also requested nations to support the ratification of the Minamata convention on Mercury, which opens for signing in October.

Other highlights included:

- The launch of a collaboration with the Global Off-Grid Lighting Association to replace millions of kerosene lamps, candles and flashlights used worldwide with modern solar lighting and reduce the estimated 74 million tons of annual carbon emissions from fuel-based light sources commonly used in developing countries;
- Celebrations of the first anniversary of The Climate and Clean Air Coalition, a global initiative to significantly reduce emissions of black carbon, methane and other substances known as short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) that since its launch has been joined by 27 countries, bodies like the European Commission and the World Bank and 28 non-state organizations;
- The signing of an agreement with HRH Princess Lalla Hasna of Morocco, Chairwoman of the Mohammed VI Foundation for the Protection of the Environment, on youth engagement;
- Dozens of media roundtables and side events on issues such as the Green Economy, poverty and environment linkages, Sustainable Consumption and Production, renewable energy, climate change, REDD+, sustainable transport, and the post-Rio+20 environment and Sustainable Development Goals.

Notes to Editors

http://www.unep.org/gc/gc27/

Rio+20 The Future We Want
http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/727The%20Future%20We%20Want%2019%20June%201230pm.pdf

UNEP's Green Economy Initiative www.unep.org/greeneconomy

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http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=2704&ArticleID=9417&l=en

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February 27, 2013

EQAT's Campaign 2013: Fast, Demand, Shadow

By greenpnc
Earth Quaker Action Team (EQAT) Blog

EQAT's Bank Like Appalachia Matters campaign aims to end PNC Bank's financing of mountaintop removal coal mining. PNC's investment strategy not only destroys mountains, communities, and people's health and well-being - it is a fundamentally risky business investment, as the cost of global warming begins to skyrocket and calculating for that becomes part and parcel of corporate balance sheets.

Just this month, a shareholder resolution backed by Domini Social Investments, Walden Asset Management and Boston Common Asset Management is demanding that PNC "consider the risk" of greenhouse gas emissions. This is a clear blow to PNC's greenwashed veneer: LEED-certified buildings are not enough to cover the damage of fossil-fueled profits.

Even the SEC denied PNC's attempt to have the resolution blocked - a significant turnaround from a decade ago.

What does all this mean for Earth Quaker Action Team? It means that we -- and by that I mean **you** -- have the opportunity to sharpen our language, our intent, and our direct action. By what we say and do, we must convince PNC that mountaintop removal is a poor business risk. EQAT's strategy invites you to do just this.

The Goal: Escalate Until PNC Responds
SIGN UP HERE
On March 14, EQAT begins a **40-day fast** in which we are asking people to fast for a day or more during the fast period. The fast is flexible and we'll leave it up to you to decide how you fast. We only ask that you make your sacrifice public.

Dick Taylor, EQAT member and experienced faith-based activist reminded us that *"some demons can only be cast out by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21)*.

Mountaintop removal mining, and the financial investments that make it possible, is one of these demons. So we will fast. And we will let the PNC board know that we are fasting in the hope that they, too, will cast out the demon in their midst. We will invite board members to meet with us in an atmosphere of common struggle, to dialogue how PNC can go truly green.

What happens if PNC board members ignore us? What does a child do when a parent ignores her? Yell louder! Yes, EQAT is preparing to escalate so that PNC can no longer ignore our cries

for the mountains and peoples of Appalachia. On April 23rd, **EQAT will break the 40-day fast at the PNC shareholders meeting in Pittsburgh.** And you're invited!

Those with shares in PNC can join an action INSIDE the meeting. Those without can join the action OUTSIDE the meeting. We will be demanding a meeting with the board of PNC to negotiate a sector exclusion from mountaintop removal mining as a first milestone for PNC's true greening.

Preparing ourselves for the likelihood that PNC will refuse our demand, EQAT is preparing a further stage of escalation: to show up at PNC board member's public appearances and **Shine the Light on each board member's complicity** with the policy of mountaintop removal.

We call this SHADOWING.

We want to bring to light the reality that evil is not done by monolithic entities (like a Bank), but by the individual choices of the people who make up that institution. It is the PNC board who have the power to overturn bank policy, and so it is to the board members we turn!

SIGN UP HERE

Chris Baker Evens
Campaign Organizer
Earth Quaker Action Team

http://eqat.org/blog/eqats-campaign-2013-fast-demand-shadow

March 2013

Water Ethics Newsletter

http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/?u=31982f6e4937945bfaddf6712&id=020ffdf6ec&e=6dc5d2e0de

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March 2013

Rivers are People Too

By Daniel Stone
National Geographic

New Zealand's Whanganui River is about to be granted personhood. After the indigenous Maori people filed to protect the 180-mile meandering waterway, the country's government agreed to grant it legal rights.

For full article, visit:

http://fore.research.yale.edu/files/Rivers_Are_People_Too.pdf

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March 2013

Enlightening visit by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim

The Earth Charter Initiative

On March 11th, 2013 Yale University Professor's Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, co-founders and co-directors of the Forum on Religion and Ecology, visited Costa Rica to show their film, *Journey of the Universe*, and discuss the relationships between humanity, life on Earth and the Universe Story. The film has been greatly influenced by the Earth Charter and it reflects many of the Earth Charter's ethics on universal responsibility, ecological integrity, and respect, reverence, and care.

In the afternoon of the 11th, they presented the award-winning film at the Earth Charter Center for ESD on the UPEACE campus. Approximately 40 people participated in the presentation and the following discussion was lively. In the evening, they presented the film at La Salle University in San Jose to an audience of around 100 people. The following evening, March 12th, they also presentated the film at the National Technical University to an audience of approximately 150 people. At all the venues, the film and its presenters were well received and the ensuing discussions were fruitful and thought-provoking.

In several of the presentations, Mary Evelyn quoted a passage from the Earth Charter preamble, which she feels represents a fundamental aspect of her work with the Journey of the Universe film and the Story of the Universe educational initiative: "Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life." This concept lies at the heart of her work to provoke people to question their place in the universe and on planet Earth, and motivate them to take care of our home planet.

The presentations of the film in Costa Rica mark the Latin American premieres and the first time the film was shown with its Spanish subtitles. It was clear from the audience reception that the film and accompanying discussions are excellent learning opportunities and the film on its own offers a powerful message.

This was part of an effort of the Earth Charter UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development to promote knowledge-sharing between North America and Latin America.

You can find out more about the film at the official Web site.

http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/936/1/Enlightening-visit-by-Mary-Evelyn-Tucker-and-John-Grim/Page1.html

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March 2013

Practicing Ahimsa: Nonviolence toward Humans, Animals, and Earth

By Pankaj Jain, University of North Texas
Religious Studies News, AAR

Pankaj Jain is the author of Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability *(Ashgate Publishing, 2011), which won the 2012 DANAM Book Award and the 2011 Uberoi Book Award. He is an assistant professor in the department of anthropology and the department of philosophy and religious studies at the University of North Texas, where he teaches courses on the religions, cultures, ecologies, and films of India and South Asia. Jain has published articles in the journals* Religious Studies Review, Worldviews, Religion Compass, Journal of Vaishnava Studies, Union Seminary Quarterly Review, *and the* Journal of Visual Anthropology. *He has also contributed to the* Huffington Post, *the* Washington Post*'s forum On Faith, and* Patheos. *Jain received the Fulbright-Nehru Environmental Leadership Fellowship in 2012 to study the cultures and sustainability initiatives in the Himalayas. He is also the director of the Eco-Dharma and Bhumi-Seva Project and is working with the Hindu and Jain temples in North America on their "greening" efforts.*

An eminent scholar recently came to our university campus and spoke about the role of the diverse religious communities of the world and their attitudes toward the environment. He showed examples from several indigenous communities from North America, South America, Africa, and Asia. Yet when he referred to the traditions of India, he used these words: "India has the most bizarre culture in the world, where even a cobra is worshipped. This is a bit of an overshoot." It amazes me that even in this supposedly globalized world, India continues to mystify scholars.

The Principle of Ahimsa

While most Americans are familiar with yoga and Bollywood, Indian perspectives toward ecology seem to be largely unknown. Although yoga is widely known in the West as a practice centered around physical postures, many westerners do not realize that yoga is actually a system of eight "limbs" or components. The first step of the first limb of yoga is ahimsa, the practice of nonviolence. Unless one is firmly rooted in ahimsa in one's thoughts, speech, and actions, the

true practice of yoga cannot begin. Through this practice of yoga, practitioners develop harmony with and reverence for nature.

For more than 2,500 years, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain teachers have expressed the value of ahimsa as a core principle of philosophy, spirituality, and ethics. Mahavira, the last great teacher of Jainism, even proclaimed that ahimsa is the greatest dharma, a term whose meanings include religion, ethics, duty, virtue, and cosmic law. According to most of these texts, ahimsa improves one's karma. For observant Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists, hurting or harming another being damages one's karma and obstructs advancement toward moksha (liberation). To prevent the accrual of bad karma, practitioners avoid activities associated with violence, follow a vegetarian diet, and oppose the institutionalized breeding and killing of animals, birds, and fish for human consumption. Meat consumption in India has historically been much less compared to other regions of the world.

Gandhi as an Exemplar of Ahimsa

Despite our visiting scholar's concerns, the protection of the cobra and other animals has a long, celebrated history in Indian religion and is a shining example of Indian environmentalism. Cobras are worshipped by many Hindus, especially on a specific festival dedicated to them — just as there are specific festivals for mountains, rivers, cows, trees, and hundreds of other gods and goddesses throughout India. Mahatma Gandhi once had a brief encounter with a cobra at his ashram (retreat), and he, too, did not want it to be killed. Gandhi's principled practice of ahimsa aligns with the prevailing values of contemporary ecologists. As many scientific studies suggest, every being in nature is intrinsically valuable because all species are directly or indirectly dependent on each other's survival; this is one fundamental reason why scientists and environmentalists seek to protect the biodiversity of our planet. Therefore even a cobra has the right to survive. Moreover, other beings have an intrinsic duty to protect it as long as it is not a threat to them.

When I first mentioned this story in the classroom, one of my students asked an important question. If Indians in India are not following the principles of Gandhi, how can we expect others to do so? Like many emerging nations today, India is enthusiastically aping the West with its ever-expanding economy and ever-shrinking natural resources. Similarly, at a conference on "World Religions and Ecology," a participant asked what non-Western countries expect of the West. If the rest of the world is eager to make the same mistakes the West did, what route should the West take to ensure the planet's survival? One answer might be for the West to embrace Gandhi and learn from his ecological practices. If the West is to remain an intellectual leader of the world, it must reform and transform itself. As long as the West continues to crave more natural resources without changing its lifestyle, it will continue to lack the moral authority to preach to other cultures. The West has led the world with its modern scientific and technological innovations for the last several centuries. It will have to be the West that emerges as a new ecological leader, with Gandhi as the foundation of its lifestyle. Without a deep transformation, all voices to save the planet's ecology are hollow rhetoric.

In America today, we wage "war on terrorism," "war on climate change," "war on drugs," "war on corruption," and "war on obesity." From our physical, mental, and spiritual health to the well-

being of the environment, global security, international peace, and social justice — all these efforts will benefit if we first become nonviolent in our most basic activity of eating and surviving. “We are what we eat.” It is such a simple statement and yet it is widely ignored all over the world. This is the way Gandhi lived every day. His protest against imperial power was influential because it was based on his own great life.

Gandhi’s entire life can be seen as an ecological treatise. Every minute act, emotion, or thought functioned much like an ecosystem — his small meals of nuts and fruits, his morning ablutions, his everyday bodily practices, his periodic observances of silence, his morning walks, his cultivation of the small as much as of the big, his spinning wheel, and his abhorrence of waste. He rooted his life in the basic Hindu and Jain values of truth, nonviolence, celibacy, and fasting.

Gandhi’s Inspiration to Indian Environmental Activists

Gandhi’s example is still a powerful force in modern India. Moralists, nonviolent activists, feminists, journalists, social reformers, trade union leaders, peasants, prohibitionists, nature-cure lovers, renouncers, and environmentalists all take their inspirations from Gandhi’s life and other dharmic teachings. My book, *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability*, chronicles my research with three communities in India and the diaspora to showcase ecological practices inspired by the Indic traditions.

Contemporary environmental activists and dharmic leaders have modeled their lives on the dharmic teachings of India and continue to resist the pressure of global consumerism. Sunderlal Bahuguna, now in his eighties, is the leader of the famous Chipko Movement in North India, which used Gandhian-inspired nonviolence to protect trees from being cut down and to reclaim their traditional forest rights. Pandurang Hedge leads a Chipko-style movement in South India. Vandana Shiva is a fierce critic of Western-style globalism and capitalism, as is Ramachandra Guha, who has also criticized Western-style environmental approaches such as deep ecology. Medha Patkar is a strong voice against big dams in Central India. Anna Hazare, recently in the headlines for his major protest against political corruption, has engaged in extensive ecological experiments in his village in Central India. There are other leaders, along with hundreds of smaller voices spread all over India, that make it the nation experiencing the largest environmental movement on the planet (Christopher Chapple, *Hinduism and Ecology*, Harvard University Press, 2000).

Dozens of institutions in several Indian towns founded by Gandhi himself are still flourishing with their own small-scale production of textiles and agriculture. In addition, almost every Indian political party must at least use rhetoric based on Gandhi's values whenever there is a discussion on taking technology or any kind of aid from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, or other major Western power. Finally, several recent major Bollywood blockbusters with Gandhi-like figures are reminding vast audiences of the message of Gandhi — nonviolence coupled with civil disobedience.

Gandhi’s immortal soul and other dharmic traditions of India are still vibrant even in the twenty-first century globalized, consumerist society. Several decades ago, in his nonviolent movement for civil rights, Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Christ furnished the spirit and motivation, while

Gandhi furnished the method." It is again time to go back to these cherished values propounded by Christ, Gandhi, and King — nonviolence, not just toward other human beings, but also toward the entire earth.

http://www.rsnonline.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1463&Itemid=1621

March 2013

Together at the Table: YDS students, New Haven community celebrate food justice

By James Jenkins '15 M.Div.
Yale University Notes from the Quad

[Editor's Note: James Jenkins '15 M.Div. is Sustainability Coordinator at YDS. We have invited him to periodically share about the various projects YDS Sustainability coordinates.]

"When people learn that by taking control of your communities, by taking control of your lives, by collaboration—because when we work together, it's *ours*—you make a difference," Stacy Spell told the audience of divinity students, community leaders, and regional food advocates gathered in Marquand Chapel February 22-23 for a local conference on food justice.

As a gardener at the Little Red Hen Community Garden, president of the West River Neighborhood Service Corporation, board member at the New Haven Land Trust, retired homicide detective, and 2011 New Haven Man of the Year, Stacy Spell also preaches through his hands in the soil. He has seen crime drop by 80 percent in West River by creating neighborhood gardens and other projects that foster community ownership.

In this common spirit, Yale Divinity School was proud to host Nourish New Haven, a local food justice and sustainability conference connecting community leaders across Yale University and New Haven. Panel discussions, workshops, films, food, neighbors, and new visitors celebrated food justice and food literacy initiatives. Over 350 people registered as participants and presenters in the free conference with major funding from Yale Divinity School, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale. Leaders from the New Haven Food Policy Council, Common Ground High School, Yale Sustainable Food Project, the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale, The Bioregional Group, and Greenhorns contributed additional "inspiration and information" to the community feast.

Middlebury College professor emeritus and Yale University graduate John Elder opened the conference with a talk titled "Together at the Table." Sharing his personal Yale stories from the late 1960's of Passover Seder meals with fellow graduate students and hunger fasts with William Sloane Coffin, Elder reflected on the deep theological tradition of communion and its implications for addressing social and ecological challenges. As a leading environmentalist, Elder explained how "food has replaced wilderness as the beating heart of the environmental movement," emphasizing the "fundamental rights of every human being to have tasty and

nutritious food." He also quoted his minister father who defined religion as a "structure of beliefs and practices through which we can affirm the universe." Elder expressed his hope for the conference to provide a practical, equitable table for holding in common with others—not only to talk but also to eat and to be nourished.

Following Elder's remarks Friday evening, attendees had the opportunity to enjoy some delicious food and watch either *Soul Food Junkies* or *Fresh*—two recent documentaries about challenges and solutions in the American food system. After the films, everyone reconvened in Marquand Chapel for a local food system panel moderated by Melissa Spear, Executive Director of Common Ground, featuring Mark Bomford of the Yale Sustainable Food Project, Nicole Berube of CitySeed, Nadine Nelson of Global-Local Gourmet, Shannon Raider-Ginsburg of Common Ground, Steve Munno of Massaro Farm, Bun Lai of Miya's Sushi, Stacy Spell, and The Reverend Alex Dyer of St. Paul-St. James Episcopal Church, which sponsors the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry. The evening concluded in the Common Room with donated delights from Miya's Sushi, Claire's Corner Copia, Nica's Market, and Caseus Fromagerie Bistro.

During the food system panel, Melissa Spear explained that 24 percent of New Haven residents live below the poverty level with inadequate access to healthy food. The New Haven Food Action Plan reports 80 percent of New Haven Public School students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. Starting in June 2013, the New Haven Green will host a farmers' market for the first time in over 200 years thanks to CitySeed and the New Haven Food Policy Council.

The Reverend Alex Dyer described how the Loaves and Fishes partnership with CitySeed provides, on average, 250 people nutritious groceries every week.

Bun Lai explained how local New Haven restaurant Miya's Sushi draws inspiration from different cooking techniques to represent the "harmonization of human beings coming together." Started 31 years ago on Howe Street, Miya's consists of New Haven residents—many graduates of New Haven Public Schools—who work together to nourish the community. This February Bun and the Miya's team were nominated as Restaurant and Chef semifinalists for the James Beard Foundation Awards, the national food Oscars.

Saturday morning included a community fair, two workshop sessions, a New Haven Food Policy Council panel, and a celebratory lunch catered by Yale Dining. Nadine Nelson and Tagan Engel helped transform the YDS Common Room into a "Public Kitchen" and interactive exhibit of local food initiatives. The conference also included the *Lexicon of Sustainability* artwork, on loan from Boston's Museum of Science. A team of divinity students baked scones, muffins, and pastries to complement beverages from Koffee on Audubon. Divinity students and faculty joined local and national leaders to provide leadership in six of eleven workshops.

Director of Public Policy at the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale, Roberta Friedman moderated an interactive panel with Tagan Engel, Anika Thrower, Dawn Slade, Maria Tupper, and Frank Mitchell—all members of the New Haven Food Policy Council who helped create the New Haven Food Action Plan in 2012. Rafi Taherian, Ron DeSantis, David Kuzma, Pedro Tello, and Donna Hall at Yale Dining volunteered to prepare an exceptional culminating community lunch.

While Nourish New Haven aimed to connect divinity students and other attendees with current projects happening across New Haven—from the Divinity Farm to the New Haven Food Policy Council working groups—the weekend celebration also served as a greater call to action for ongoing partnerships to address food justice. 80 percent of survey respondents selected "very interested" or "ready to take a leadership role" in a future Nourish New Haven conference. As one survey respondent shared, "This was amazing! I only planned to go on Friday for the film, but everything was just so good I stayed till the end on Friday and came back Saturday! What a fantastic, inspiring, and wonderful event!"

Nourish New Haven originated from work happening through YDS Sustainability and a class taught by Willis Jenkins through the Divinity School and the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. The conference builds upon "Mobilizing Faith, Fighting Poverty," a larger initiative sponsored by Yale Divinity School to combat hunger and poverty, locally and globally. The spirit of Nourish New Haven responds to the passions and needs in this community for food justice and food literacy. Participants go forward nourished by the spirit of community gathered "together at the table."

Click here for more information about YDS Sustainability

http://notesfromthequad.yale.edu/together-table-yds-students-new-haven-community-celebrate-food-justice

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March 1, 2013

U.S. Ag-Gag Laws "Sinister" say Leading Academics

Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics
Press Release

Leading academics have branded United States "Ag-gag" laws, now in force in Iowa and Utah and awaiting consideration in other U.S. states, that make it a criminal offence to photograph or make a sound or video recording of an animal facility without the owner's permission, as "sinister".

The editors of the *Journal of Animal Ethics (JAE)* recently published by the University of Illinois Press Professors Andrew Linzey and Priscilla N. Cohn note that the objections to these laws seem to have been "insufficiently regarded in the preceding debates in these states, so perhaps they need to be spelled out". They list five reasons for concern:

In the first place, the overwhelming majority of Americans eat meat and animal products. That being so, they have an obvious interest in what (or whom) they are eating, in how the animals who result in that meat were bred, raised, fed, transported, handled, treated, and slaughtered.

Second, these animal facilities, though they may be privately owned, are subject to the laws of the land (however inadequate) that apply to the treatment of farmed animals. If they continue to be hidden from public gaze, it is difficult to see how we shall know what conditions prevail, who is responsible when things go wrong (e.g., when even the minimal standards are not adhered to), and what penalties are in force.

Third, although again they may be privately owned, these "animal facilities" are the recipients of public subsidies. Every taxpayer in the United States, vegetarian or otherwise, has a right to know what is being funded in his or her name. After all, it is *their* money.

Fourth, the ag-gag laws prevent consumers and taxpayers not only from knowing but also from seeing and judging for themselves. In the history of moral causes, the denial of transparency invariably betokens something to hide.

Last, there is an underlying ethical issue here of some importance. What we see, or are allowed to see, affects our moral judgment. That so much of industrialized farming is, as a matter of course, hidden from view hinders full moral evaluation.

The editors conclude "We can only hope that these laws will soon be judged unconstitutional. One of the redeeming features of U.S. law is the way in which state or even federal legislation can be referred back to fundamental principles. Some may judge that it can only be a matter of time. But in the meantime, the truth about animal farming in these states will be denied to those who have a right to know."

The *JAE* has been launched by a US and UK academic partnership with the goal of widening international debate about the moral status of animals, and is the result of years of collaboration between the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics and the University of Illinois Press. It is edited by the internationally known theologian the Reverend Professor Andrew Linzey, Director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, and Professor Priscilla Cohn, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Penn State University and Associate Director of the Centre.

Multidisciplinary in nature and international in scope, the *JAE* covers theoretical and applied aspects of animal ethics. To subscribe to the *Journal*, please visit the *Journal's* website here.

For more information, please contact Sam Calvert, Samantha Calvert Marketing & PR, sam@samcalvert.plus.com /+44 (0)1782 505430 / +44 (0)7967 042050.

http://www.oxfordanimalethics.com/2013/03/press-release-u-s-ag-gag-laws-sinister-say-leading-academics/

March 6, 2013

Solar Panels Rare Amid the Steeples

By Kate Galbraith
New York Times

AUSTIN, TEXAS — More than three decades ago, after an energy crisis that gripped the world, a Catholic priest in the Texas city of Lubbock took a stand for the environment. His congregation needed a new church. So the priest, the Rev. Joe James, anchored the building deep in the earth to optimize insulation. He also ordered five wind turbines for the church grounds. The largest was called Big Bird, because it stood 80 feet tall.

"I don't feel as though we are free to waste," Father James told a videographer at the time. Staring earnestly into the camera, he argued that saving money was not the only reason for energy conservation.

Father James, who still lives near Lubbock, was an outlier. In the intervening years, few churches have made energy saving a priority. Experts say that churches, like other houses of worship, face particular challenges in going green because of unusual architecture and an often slow decision-making culture. Even Father James's wind turbines got dismantled in the 1990s, after he had moved on.

Still, as the likely effects of climate change on people and nature become clearer, some religious leaders are increasing their engagement. Pope Benedict XVI, who stepped down last week, has been hailed as the "green pope." He put solar panels on the roof of a Vatican auditorium, though they are out of sight of the general public. Last year, he also acquired an electric car to get around the grounds of his summer residence. Environmentalists will be eager to see whether the next pope makes green issues a priority.

The Church of England has a goal of reducing its carbon footprint 42 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050.

Peter Pavlovic, who works on the environmental agenda for the Conference of European Churches, said concerns about climate change were prompting more church groups to engage communities and politicians on the issue.

"It's human-induced climate change," he said. "We are part of it. And we have to take responsibility for that."

Reducing the carbon footprint of the churches themselves may present a greater challenge than promoting environmentalism from the pulpit. Church buildings, which are often old and poorly insulated, offer plenty of scope for improvement. Bee Moorhead, executive director of Texas Impact, a multifaith advocacy group, said that the second largest expenditure for churches and other houses of worship was typically energy, after salaries for members of the clergy and staff. Church sanctuaries can be so large that the heat gets turned on two days before the Sunday

services, according to Jochen Geraedts, a Netherlands-based expert on the preservation of religious buildings. Sometimes more of the building gets heated than is actually used.

Cost savings tend to be a bigger real-world motivator for churches than reducing their carbon footprints, Mr. Geraedts said. But upfront costs can be daunting. Upgrades to heating and cooling systems can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, according to Ms. Moorhead, and historic features like stained-glass windows are often a lost cause in terms of energy efficiency.

Government incentives for green improvements have been cut back in parts of Europe and the United States. But even where government help is available, nonprofit organizations cannot always take advantage of the same tax incentives as for-profit institutions, Ms. Moorhead said.

Putting solar panels on the roof poses additional challenges in architecture and aesthetics. In theory, church roofs are an ideal place for solar panels. “There’s a lot of square meters of roof available for solar panels,” said Mr. Geraedts, noting that because most European churches were built east to west, they had south-facing roofs, which is optimal for generating energy in the Northern Hemisphere. But roofs must be sturdy enough, and historic buildings may run into preservation barriers.

Solar remains on the to-do list at St. David’s Episcopal Church in the center of Austin, Texas. It offers recycling for cellphones, batteries and other unusual items. It recently improved its heating and air-conditioning system and even conducts occasional services outside.

“On a beautiful spring morning when you’re doing a sermon on creation, what better place to have it?” said Rosera Tateosian, a parishioner who heads the church’s environmental guild.

But because the 19th-century church is a historic building, solar panels raise the question, “Is that what people want to see on the roof?” she said.

In 2011, Bradford Cathedral put 42 solar panels on its roof, becoming the first cathedral in Britain to take that step, officials of the Anglican cathedral said. The project cost about £50,000, or $75,000, according to Canon Andy Williams. The anticipated payback time is 14 to 15 years, he said.

One concern was damage to the original roof if the wind hit the solar equipment in a certain way, Canon Williams said. But specially designed clamps solved the problem.

One of the biggest barriers to going green may be the way churches are run.

With many volunteers involved, meetings can be sporadic and budgeting processes slow, according to Ms. Moorhead. “Churches aren’t running on the same kind of cash-flow model as a business,” she said.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/07/business/energy-environment/07iht-green07.html?emc=tnt&tntemail1=y&_r=0

March 7, 2013

Solastalgia and Creative Response

Living Hero

Solastalgia is homesickness when you haven't gone anywhere; it happens when your home environment or habitat changes drastically and you lose your beloved familiar place called home. All over the world human beings and other creatures are suffering from solastalgia. This show is about the nature of care and the care of nature, about how sensitivity, aesthetics, emotions, mental health, societal health and activism come together in the understandings of these aesthetic philosophers who have the big picture in mind while staying in touch with their own deep humanity and interconnectedness with all of life. Enjoy this holistic exploration!

Angela Manno is an internationally exhibited visionary artist who has been exploring the pattern that connects personal and planetary healing for over 30 years. Her award-winning art in a variety of ancient and contemporary media emphasizes the beauty and integrity of the human, natural and spiritual world. Her work is in private collections throughout Europe, the Americas and the Middle East and in the permanent fine art collections of NASA and the Smithsonian Institution. Angela's teaching, writing and activism aim at cultivating a benign human relationship with the planet. Her courses blend cosmology with instruction in applying the creative process to this critical work. Her articles on art, non-violent direct action and ecological consciousness have appeared in *The Ecozoic Reader*, *Befriending Creation* and *Friends Journal.* Visit her websites: School of Living Arts and her fine art site www.AngelaManno.com

Glenn Albrecht is a researcher, professor and director of the Institute of Sustainability and Technology Policy at Murdoch University in Western Australia. He is a transdisciplinary philosopher with both theoretical and applied interests in the relationship between ecosystem and human health. He has pioneered the research domain of 'psychoterratic' or earth related mental health conditions with the concept of 'solastalgia' or the lived experience of negative environmental change. He also has publications in the field of animal ethics including the ethics of relocating endangered species in the face of climate change pressures.

Suzi Gablik is an artist, writer, and teacher. She studied with Robert Motherwell, lived with the Magritte family, and hung out with Jasper Johns. In 1966, Suzi Gablik had a one-woman show of her collage paintings exhibited and catalogued in New York. She later brought a prodigious and caring voice to art criticism, as a respected reviewer of art in London for *Art in America*, and authored her engaging trilogy of scholarly writings on art and culture *Has Modernism Failed?*, *The Reenchantment of Art*, and *Progress in Art.* She also wrote *Magritte, Conversations Before the End of Time*, and her memoir *Living the Magical Life.* Currently, Suzi Gablik hosts a blog featuring her latest cultural and political essays at virgilspeaks.blogspot.com

To listen to this podcast, visit:

http://jari.podbean.com/2013/03/07/solastalgia-and-creative-response/

March 11, 2013

Yamuna Bachao Yatra to protest at Jantar Mantar to highlight plight of the river

India Today

After camping outside Delhi at Sarai Khawaja in Faridabad on Sunday, the Yamuna Bachao Yatra that started from Mathura will enter the capital on Monday. The yatra aims at creating awareness to save the "dying" Yamuna river.

The Yamuna Bachao Andolan, in which hundreds of spiritual leaders and activists are marching towards Delhi from Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh for the last one week, will see a protest outside parliament at Jantar Mantar to highlight the plight of the Yamuna river.

The marchers allege government apathy towards Yamuna river and failure to make the river pollution-free.

"Delhi Police wanted us to come into Delhi tomorrow (Monday), while Haryana Police wanted us to move today (Sunday) only. After deliberation, we decided to camp here overnight," Haresh Thenua, general secretary, Yamuna Rakshak Dal, said.

"They are coming as per their schedule and will stay at a ground in Sarita Vihar tomorrow (Monday)," Additional Commissioner of Delhi Police Ajay Chaudhary said, adding "Only a limited number of people would be allowed to move towards central Delhi's Jantar Mantar."

According to environmentalist Shravan Kumar Singh, "The politics of pollution must stop. It's no use blaming one agency or state. In the Taj city, despite the orders of the Supreme Court, dhobies (people who wash clothes in the river) have not been shifted. Dairies within the city and the crematorium at Taj Ganj or the hundreds of petha (sweet)-making units in the interiors have not yet been shifted."

The march by people is a reflection of deep anguish: Each day, hundreds of worshippers of Lord Krishna in Vrindavan, Mathura and Agra return disappointed and deeply frustrated from the Yamuna, as they cannot take a holy dip even on festivals because of the filth and effluents in the river. There are heaps of dirt, and dead bodies are dumped into the river.

The demands of the marchers include the release of a minimum quantity of water into the Yamuna round the year from the Hathini Kund barrage, some 100 km upstream of New Delhi, and effective checks on drains in the national capital that dump pollutants, effluents and sewer waste into the river - literally turning it into one huge drain.

Residents of Yamuna Kinara Road on the banks say that the river banks 500 years ago were so beautiful that the Mughals built some of their finest monuments like the Taj and Etmauddaula here. The glory days of the river, however, are lost and will never return, say residents.

The dozen-odd ghats along the riverfront, once the centre of thriving commercial activity, now appear a wasteland.

From the Kailash temple to the Dussehra Ghat adjacent to the Taj, there were more than a score of permanent ghats, some of them red sandstone ones, others made of marble. Behind the Red Fort, there were permanent ghats with highly decorative canopies for women from Mughal royal families.

While some ghats fell prey to long years of neglect, others were razed by overzealous bureaucrats at the behest of late Sanjay Gandhi during the Emergency, to make way for a picturesque river front like Mumbai's Chowpati. Before that dream could come true, his mother, prime minister Indira Gandhi was swept out of power in the 1977 elections.

The Yamuna has been the repository of arts, culture, architecture, history and Hinduism's Bhakti movement. Yamuna activists say millions of rupees have gone down the gutter in the two Yamuna Action Plans which have not made any discernible change to the river system that sustains life and agriculture affecting millions of people in the three states of Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

The Supreme Court has expressed its extreme displeasure that despite the creation of a Yamuna Development Authority and Rs.12,000 crore (over $2 billion) having been spent, the river has been reduced to a drain and its waters are unfit for drinking or even bathing.

http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/yamuna-bachao-yatra-to-protest-at-jantar-mantar/1/257364.html

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March 15, 2013

Veer Bhadra Mishra consigned to flames

By Binay Singh
Times of India

VARANASI: Pandit Veer Bhadra Mishra, eminent environmentalist, member of National Ganga River Basin Authority, and the founder-president of Sankat Mochan Foundation, was on Thursday cremated along the river that he fought all his life for to conserve and save from degradation. He was 74.

Mishra, one of the leading oracles of this ancient city on matters environmental, died of acute bronchial infection in BHU hospital on Wednesday. Honoured by the UN in its global 500 roll of honour and given the epithet "Hero of the Planet" by Time magazine, Mishra was an engineering graduate from Institute of Technology, BHU.

Popular as Mahantji, Mishra was devoted to the cause Ganga. In one of his articles in Current Science, he wrote, "The resurgence of India in modern times has become phenomenal, which the world is experiencing today. In this process, culture, science and technology (S&T), political process and the people must interact for balanced development of the country. We need to inculcate scientific outlook in the masses. S&T needs to appreciate the finer elements and fundamentals of our culture. Our universities and professional bodies have to take the lead, be it cleaning of rivers, environment or other spheres, affecting one billion people living in the country. A good beginning could be made by cleaning Ganga at Varanasi, using appropriate technology with minimum cost and by involving people. It will be inspiring and rewarding for the nation to clean the river."

In the citation given to him by BHU along with the 'Distinguished Alumnus Awards' in 2008, his name was described as synonymous with the Swachha Ganga Campaign, a unique effort to clean Ganga by creating an interface between science, technology, culture and faith, nationally and internationally.

The technical options developed by his Swachha Ganga Campaign use natural processes and gravity for cleaning the river and serve as a model for other rivers as well. Mishra was instrumental in reviving and protecting the rich and varied cultural traditions of the country through Sankat Mochan Sangeet Samaroh and Dhrupad Mela.

Born on January 10, 1939, Mishra inherited the position of Mahant at the Sankat Mochan temple at the age of 14. He did his BSc, MSc and PhD in civil engineering from BHU and later joined his alma mater as a faculty member. A professor of hydraulic engineering at BHU, Mishra was the founder president of the Sankat Mochan Foundation (SMF).

Rich tributes were paid to Mishra, with spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar paying homage. Leaders across political parties attended the funeral.

The SMF, working for the cause of Ganga, has been associated with other organisations like

Thames 21 (London), Friends of Ganges (US), Asia Foundation, Oz Green (Australia), and Swedish International Development Agency. Mishra received many national and international awards and recognitions.

Large number of people thronged the ghat to bid adieu to Varanasi's foremost son. "It's a huge loss to the nation as well as clean Ganga campaign," said BD Tripathi, another NRGBA members and environment scientist at BHU, who had a long association with Mishra since 1975. "We had gone to Delhi together to attend the last meeting of NGRBA chaired by the Prime Minister in April last year," he said.

http://m.timesofindia.com/city/varanasi/Veer-Bhadra-Mishra-consigned-to-flames/articleshow/18978469.cms

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March 15, 2013

Pollution and Purity

By Sarandha
Himal SouthAsian

As millions bathe in the sacred rivers they themselves have polluted during the Kumbh Mela, where does the schism between Hindu notions of nature and actual nature conservation lie?

The year 2013 began in India with the culmination of a 144 year wait at the confluence of Hinduism's holiest rivers, the Ganga and Yamuna, at the city of Allahabad, also known as Prayag. The *Maha Kumbh Mela* had millions of devotees, tourists and academics flocking to the holy confluence over a span of two months. By the end of this massive fair, Prayag had borne the footprints of about a hundred million people – a number five times the population of Mumbai, itself one of the world's most populous cities.

The Kumbh Mela, occurring every three years, has long been considered the largest congregation of humans on the planet. The Ardh Kumbh happens every six years, the Purna Kumbh every twelve, and the Maha Kumbh – the 'Great Kumbh' – occurs only once every 144 years, or every twelfth Purna Kumbh. There are references to this festival in the Vedas and Puranas, in epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana, and in various Tantric texts. Although not known as the Kumbh back then, under various other names the festival also finds its way into the historical accounts of Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to the Mauryan court in the 4th century BCE, and into the Chinese traveller Xuanzang's narratives on India in the 7th century CE.

Mythology and science may appear diametrically opposed to many, but at the Kumbh these two systems of knowledge intermesh seamlessly in the popular imagination. As Prayag becomes the most crowded place on earth, astrophysics and legend overlap to inspire this epic act of faith.

This piece originally appeared in Himal Southasian. To read the full article, visit:

http://www.himalmag.com/component/content/article/1-web-exclusive/5155-pollution-and-purity.html

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March 18, 2013

Idle No More, Defenders of the Land form alliance, call for "Sovereignty Summer"

By Jorge Barrera
APTN National News

Idle No More has joined forces with Defenders of the Land and the new alliance plans to launch "escalating action" during what is being called the "Sovereignty Summer," according to a draft joint declaration obtained by *APTN National News.*

The alliance has been endorsed by Jessica Gordon, Sylvia McAdam, Sheelah McLean and Nina Wilson, the four founders of Idle No More, along with the movement's lead organizers, provincial and territorial chapters.

As a result of the alliance, Idle No More has now agreed to support non-violent direct action, including blockades, in the cause of Indigenous rights.

The Defenders of the Land is an established network of Indigenous activists that was formally formed in 2008. The network has been involved in Indigenous land rights issues across the country, including in ongoing hotspots like Ontario's Grassy Narrows First Nation, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation and Barriere Lake in Quebec.

The joint declaration is calling for a "Sovereignty Summer" that would see "co-ordinated non-violent direct actions." The statement also calls on "non-Indigenous peoples" to join Indigenous communities in the actions.

"Alternatives will only come to life if we escalate our actions, taking bold non-violent direct action that challenges the illegitimate power of corporations who dictate government police," says the draft declaration.

The declaration also calls for a "Solidarity Spring" to precede the Sovereignty Summer with calls to action on March 21, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and April 22, Earth Day.

"The Harper government's agenda is clear: to weaken all collective rights and environmental protections, in order to turn Canada into an extraction state that gives corporations unchecked power to destroy our communities and environment for profit," says the statement. "Idle No More and Defenders of the Land….have joined together to issue this common call for escalating action."

The declaration makes several demands, including a repeal of sections of the now passed Bill C-45 that impact the environment along with Aboriginal and Treaty rights; changing the electoral system to proportional representation; ensuring consultation happens before any legislation is introduced that impacts collective rights and the environment; the full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; an end to the government's policies of "extinguishment;" full implementation of the treaties and a national inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous women.

"We know it will take a lot more to defeat (Prime Minister Stephen Harper) and the corporate agenda. But against the power of their money and weapons, we have the power of our bodies and spirits," says the declaration. "There is nothing that can match the power of peaceful, collective action in defense of the people and Mother Earth."

http://aptn.ca/pages/news/2013/03/18/idle-no-more-defenders-of-the-land-form-alliance-call-for-sovereignty-summer/

March 19, 2013

Pope Francis Installation Mass Homily Text

NBC Bay Area

Here is the draft text of Pope Francis' homily delivered at his installation Mass on March 19, 2013. A final, official text could be released later:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I thank the Lord that I can celebrate this Holy Mass for the inauguration of my Petrine ministry on the solemnity of Saint Joseph, the spouse of the Virgin Mary and the patron of the universal Church. It is a significant coincidence, and it is also the name-day of my venerable predecessor: we are close to him with our prayers, full of affection and gratitude.

I offer a warm greeting to my brother cardinals and bishops, the priests, deacons, men and women religious, and all the lay faithful. I thank the representatives of the other Churches and ecclesial Communities, as well as the representatives of the Jewish community and the other religious communities, for their presence. My cordial greetings go to the Heads of State and Government, the members of the official Delegations from many countries throughout the world, and the Diplomatic Corps.

In the Gospel we heard that "Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary as his wife" (Mt 1:24). These words already point to the mission which God entrusts to Joseph: he is to be the custos, the protector. The protector of whom? Of Mary and Jesus; but this protection is then extended to the Church, as Blessed John Paul II pointed out: "Just as Saint Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus Christ's upbringing, he

likewise watches over and protects Christ's Mystical Body, the Church, of which the Virgin Mary is the exemplar and model" (Redemptoris Custos, 1).

How does Joseph exercise his role as protector? Discreetly, humbly and silently, but with an unfailing presence and utter fidelity, even when he finds it hard to understand. From the time of his betrothal to Mary until the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem, he is there at every moment with loving care. As the spouse of Mary, he is at her side in good times and bad, on the journey to Bethlehem for the census and in the anxious and joyful hours when she gave birth; amid the drama of the flight into Egypt and during the frantic search for their child in the Temple; and later in the day-to-day life of the home of Nazareth, in the workshop where he taught his trade to Jesus.

How does Joseph respond to his calling to be the protector of Mary, Jesus and the Church? By being constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God's presence and receptive to God's plans, and not simply to his own. This is what God asked of David, as we heard in the first reading. God does not want a house built by men, but faithfulness to his word, to his plan. It is God himself who builds the house, but from living stones sealed by his Spirit. Joseph is a "protector" because he is able to hear God's voice and be guided by his will; and for this reason he is all the more sensitive to the persons entrusted to his safekeeping. He can look at things realistically, he is in touch with his surroundings, he can make truly wise decisions. In him, dear friends, we learn how to respond to God's call, readily and willingly, but we also see the core of the Christian vocation, which is Christ! Let us protect Christ in our lives, so that we can protect others, so that we can protect creation!

The vocation of being a "protector", however, is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. It means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world, as the Book of Genesis tells us and as Saint Francis of Assisi showed us. It means respecting each of God's creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about. It means caring for one another in our families: husbands and wives first protect one another, and then, as parents, they care for their children, and children themselves, in time, protect their parents. It means building sincere friendships in which we protect one another in trust, respect, and goodness. In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God's gifts!

Whenever human beings fail to live up to this responsibility, whenever we fail to care for creation and for our brothers and sisters, the way is opened to destruction and hearts are hardened. Tragically, in every period of history there are "Herods" who plot death, wreak havoc, and mar the countenance of men and women.

Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be "protectors" of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment. Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world! But to be "protectors", we also have to keep watch over ourselves! Let us not forget that hatred, envy and

pride defile our lives! Being protectors, then, also means keeping watch over our emotions, over our hearts, because they are the seat of good and evil intentions: intentions that build up and tear down! We must not be afraid of goodness or even tenderness!

Here I would add one more thing: caring, protecting, demands goodness, it calls for a certain tenderness. In the Gospels, Saint Joseph appears as a strong and courageous man, a working man, yet in his heart we see great tenderness, which is not the virtue of the weak but rather a sign of strength of spirit and a capacity for concern, for compassion, for genuine openness to others, for love. We must not be afraid of goodness, of tenderness!

Today, together with the feast of Saint Joseph, we are celebrating the beginning of the ministry of the new Bishop of Rome, the Successor of Peter, which also involves a certain power. Certainly, Jesus Christ conferred power upon Peter, but what sort of power was it? Jesus' three questions to Peter about love are followed by three commands: feed my lambs, feed my sheep. Let us never forget that authentic power is service, and that the Pope too, when exercising power, must enter ever more fully into that service which has its radiant culmination on the Cross. He must be inspired by the lowly, concrete and faithful service which marked Saint Joseph and, like him, he must open his arms to protect all of God's people and embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important, those whom Matthew lists in the final judgment on love: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-46). Only those who serve with love are able to protect!

In the second reading, Saint Paul speaks of Abraham, who, "hoping against hope, believed" (Rom 4:18). Hoping against hope! Today too, amid so much darkness, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others. To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope; it is to let a shaft of light break through the heavy clouds; it is to bring the warmth of hope! For believers, for us Christians, like Abraham, like Saint Joseph, the hope that we bring is set against the horizon of God, which has opened up before us in Christ. It is a hope built on the rock which is God.

To protect Jesus with Mary, to protect the whole of creation, to protect each person, especially the poorest, to protect ourselves: this is a service that the Bishop of Rome is called to carry out, yet one to which all of us are called, so that the star of hope will shine brightly. Let us protect with love all that God has given us!

I implore the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, Saints Peter and Paul, and Saint Francis, that the Holy Spirit may accompany my ministry, and I ask all of you to pray for me! Amen.

http://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/national-international/Pope-Francis-Homily-Prepared-Remarks-198929021.html

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March 19, 2013

Australian Pioneer Honoured for Philanthropic Work

Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics
Press Release

The Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics is delighted to announce Australian philanthropic pioneer Philip Wollen as its seventh Honorary Fellow. The award is given to individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the protection of animals.

Philip Wollen, 62, founder of the Winsome Constance Kindness Trust in Melbourne, suppports some 500 projects in more than forty countries in five key areas: children, animals, the sick, the environment and aspiring youth. The Kindness Trust's mission statement reads "to promote kindness toward all other living beings and enshrine it as a recognisable trait in the Australian character and culture". The initiative, named after Wollen's mother and grandmother, provides funding for schools, sanctuaries, shelters, orphanages, lion parks, vehicles, ambulances, biogas plants, disaster recovery, medical equipment, food and medicine.

In choosing the projects he supports, Wollen is assisted by an international network of cotnacts who conduct "due diligence" on his behalf. His preference is for small pro-vegan programmes that "punch above their weight".

Wollen describes himself as an "ahimsan" - derived from the Sanskrit word "ahimsa" - which means non-violence to any living being". He believes that ahimsa is "the most beautiful word ever written at any time, in any country, in human history." Wollen does not distinguish between the suffering of human and non-human animals. A philosophy that he summarises as "In their capactity to suffer, a dog is a pig is a bear ... is a boy." Philip Wollen received the "Order of Australia" in 2005, the "Austalian Humanitarian of the Year" in 2006 and in 2007, on Australia Day, he received the award "Australian of the Year Victoria".

Professor Andrew Linzey, Director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics says "It is a great pleasure to honour someone who has worked so sacrificially to improve the world for humans and animals."

Every year the Centre invites one or more outstanding individuals to become Honorary Fellows. Current Honorary Fellows are the Nobel Laureate Professor J. M. Coetzee, the distinguished international philanthropist Dr Irene W. Crowe, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wincheter Professor Joy Carter, Madame Jeanne Marchig founder of the Marchig Trust for Animal Welfare, Professor Justus George Lawler, theologian and scholar, and Multi Emmy award winning television personality, philanthropist and educational pioneer Bob Barker.

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For more press information please contact Sam Calvert at Samantha Calvert Marketing & PR on +44 (0) 1782 505430 / +44 (0)7967 042050 / sam@samcalvert.plus.com.

Note to editors

More information on the Kindness Trust at www.kindnesstrust.com.

About Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics

The Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, founded in 2006 by its director Professor Andrew Linzey, is an independent Centre with the aim of pioneering ethical perspectives on animals through academic research, teaching and publication. The Centre has more than 60 Fellows drawn from a vriety of academic disciplines from throughout the world. for more information about the Cente and its Fellow please see its website at www.oxfordanimalethics.com.

The Revd Professor Andrew Linzey is a Member of the Faculty of Theology, University of Oxford. He has written or edited 20 books, including *Animal Theology* (SCM Press/University of Illinois Press, 1994) and *Why Animals Suffering Matters* (Oxford University Press, 2009.

http://www.newsmaker.com.au/news/24681

March 20, 2013

First Nations say they will fight oilsands, pipeline

Minister of Natural Resources says pipeline projects are in First Nations' economic interest

The Canadian Press

An alliance of First Nations leaders is preparing to fight proposed new pipelines in the courts and through unspecified direct action.

Native leaders from Canada and the United States were on Parliament Hill on Wednesday to underline opposition to both the Northern Gateway and Keystone XL pipelines.

The first would tie the Alberta oil sands to the West Coast, while the second would send bitumen to refineries on the American Gulf Coast.

Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver said the federal government is consulting with First Nations, and is ready to hear their concerns.

"We're making every effort to respond to the concerns we have heard on the West Coast," he said after a caucus meeting.

"I've had quite a few conversations with aboriginal leaders and aboriginal people. And I've found those conversations very constructive. They want to do the best for their communities and we want to do the best for their communities as well. So I remain very hopeful."

Speaking to CBC News, Oliver said there was an "enormous economic benefit" at stake for First Nations.

"There is an opportunity to transform many aboriginal communities which have been suffering from high unemployment for far too long," he said. "There is an opportunity for jobs, for economic activity, for equity participation, and I would hope that when they see that there isn't an environmental risk that they would embrace these opportunities for their communities."

Oliver said the government supports peaceful protests as part of a democracy, but "we do expect people to live within the confines of the law."

Chiefs brush off federal appointment

Some of the chiefs brushed off the federal government's appointment this week of a special envoy to look at tensions between natives and the energy industry.

Vancouver-based lawyer Doug Eyford is to focus on energy infrastructure in Western Canada, but some native leaders say he has no credibility.

He is to examine First Nations concerns about the troubled Northern Gateway proposal, as well as the development of liquid natural gas plants, marine terminals and other energy infrastructure in British Columbia and Alberta.

He will discuss environmental protection, jobs and economic development, and First Nations rights to a share of the wealth from natural resources.

"He's going to be reaching out to find out more about their interests and their concerns and to look for ways that resource development can help improve the lives of aboriginals, create more employment, create more opportunities for communities," Oliver said.

Some native chiefs, however, said Eyford has already failed. Although he is also the federal government's chief negotiator on comprehensive land claims, they said he hasn't accomplished much on that file.

Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation said natives are determined to block the pipelines.

"It's going to be a long, hot summer," he said at a news conference.

"We have a lot of issues at stake."

'We're going to stop these pipelines.'

Phil Lane Jr. of the American Yankton Sioux, said native groups south of the border will stand with their Canadian cousins.

"We're going to stop these pipelines on way or another," he said.

Chief Martin Louie of the Nadleh Whut'en First Nation in northern B.C., said the pipeline opponents will never back down.

"If we have to keep going to court, we'll keep doing that," he said.

He said the stakes are high and go beyond native issues.

"We're the ones that's going to save whatever we have left of this Earth," he said.

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt said he hopes no one resorts to violent confrontation.

"The rule of law applies," he said. "We are free to express our opinions. That's the genius of Canada but we do it within the respect of the rule of law. I think they will do that. I hope so."

Chief Reuben George of the Tsleil-Waututh First Nation on Vancouver Island said it's time to act against the federal government's resource development agenda.

"We, as a nation, have to wake up," he said. "We have to wake up to the crazy decisions that this government's making to change the world in a negative way."

Valcourt said it's not an either-or argument: "This is about responsible development. I think we have the genius in Canada to be able to develop our natural resources while protecting our environment."

http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2013/03/20/ottawa-live-conference-first-nations-pipelines.html

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March 22, 2013

Pope Francis Raises Hopes for an Ecological Church

By Marcela Valente
Inter Press Service

BUENOS AIRES - The new pope's choice of the name Francis, to honour the Catholic Church's patron saint of animals and the environment, has awakened the hopes of ecologists and others who are concerned about rampant consumerism and the deterioration of the planet.

In 1979, then Pope John Paul II proclaimed St. Francis of Assisi (1181/1182-1226) the patron saint of ecologists. In his first mass as pope, on Mar. 19, Jorge Bergoglio said: "Let us be

protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment."

"It's excellent that a world leader is taking up this issue as a priority," Diego Moreno, director of the Fundación Vida Silvestre, Argentina's main wildlife advocacy organisation, told IPS. "With the Church's ability to reach people, the fact that the environment is part of the pope's discourse is very important, because it will get more people involved."

In Latin America and Africa, "environmental problems are closely linked to poverty, with the poor living in areas that are the most vulnerable to climate change and the degradation of the soil," he said.

But there are also other areas in which the pope "could turn out to be an ally," Moreno added. For example, excessive consumption – "verging on squander" – has a huge impact on natural resources, he said.

Both environmentalists and bishops in Latin America criticise consumerism and urge people to follow a simpler lifestyle.

The pope's homily was in line with the recommendations set forth in the final document of the 5th General Conference of the Council of Latin American Bishops in Aparecida, Brazil, in 2007.

Bergoglio, who was an Argentine cardinal before he was elected pope on Mar. 13, presided over the committee that drew up the final conclusions.

The document criticises the extractive industries and agribusiness for failing to respect the economic, social and environmental rights of local communities, and questions the introduction of genetically modified organisms because they do not contribute to the fight against hunger or to sustainable rural development.

The final document also stressed the region's rich flora and faun and social diversity, defended traditional indigenous know-how that has been "illicitly appropriated" by the pharmaceutical industry, and called for the preservation of the Amazon rainforest as part of "the inheritance we received, for free, to protect."

The call for the preservation of the environment "is a little-known aspect" of the Aparecida final document, Pablo Canziani, a doctor in physical sciences who is in charge of the environmental area of the department of laypersons in the Argentine bishops' conference, told IPS.

Environmental issues were not traditionally a concern of the Catholic Church, until they took on importance because of their links with human development, said Canziani, a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

"It is the poor who suffer the most from climate change, desertification, or the waste of food," said the scientist, who has served as an adviser to several Vatican delegations to United Nations conferences on poverty, the environment and food.

In Aparecida, the bishops stressed that in Latin America and the Caribbean, nature "is fragile and defenceless in the face of the economic and technological powers." And they said "the interests of economic groups that irrationally destroy the sources of life" should not be predominant over natural resources.

The final document also called for educating people to live a simple, austere lifestyle based on solidarity, for expanding the pastoral presence in communities threatened by activities that destroy the environment, and for seeking "an alternative development model, based on an ethics that includes ecology."

John Paul II (1978-2005) was the first to put these issues on the Church agenda, said Luis Scozzina, a priest who is the director of the Franciscan Centre of Studies and Regional Development.

The Centre was created in Argentina's Catholic University "to contribute to information and research on questions related to the environment," its web site says.

"Protecting creation" is one of the central focuses of Franciscans, Scozzina told IPS. And he said Bergoglio is "the most Franciscan Jesuit we have ever known," because besides his intellectual leanings, characteristic of the Jesuits, he leads an austere lifestyle with close ties to the poor, as Franciscans do.

"Francis will put the ecological crisis high up on the agenda. He already indicated that in his mass, when he spoke of protecting three dimensions: ourselves, one another, and creation. By 'one another' he meant the poor, who are hurt the most by the consequences of environmental deterioration."

Father Scozzina added that "even the most optimistic warn that we are moving towards steady destruction, and in response to that, we in the Church are calling for an ethics of austerity, a change in lifestyle that leaves behind this frenzied consumption."

In Aparecida, he noted, the bishops signalled the need for a change in the production model. "In Latin America, this merits reflection. Are we going to continue with the model of extraction of our natural resources" he said.

http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/03/pope-francis-raises-hopes-for-an-ecological-church/

March 22, 2013

Water as vital to national security as defence - UN

Reuters

* Shared rivers, aquifers face strains from more demand

* 145 countries share river basins with neighbours

* U.N. issues first definition of water security

By Environment Correspondent Alister Doyle

OSLO, March 22 (Reuters) - Stresses on water supplies aggravated by climate change are likely to cause more conflicts and water should be considered as vital to national security as defence, a United Nations report said on Friday.

About 145 nations share river basins with their neighbours and need to promote cooperation over a resource likely to be disrupted by more frequent floods and heatwaves, it said.

"In the past few decades, definitions of security have moved beyond a limited focus on military risks and conflicts," Michel Jarraud, chair of U.N. work on water and head of the World Meteorological Organization, said in the report.

About 185,000 Somalis fled to neighbouring nations in 2011, driven largely by water and food shortages linked to drought, while in South Sudan, entire communities were forced to leave due to water scarcity brought on by conflict in 2012.

"Few issues ... have the potential to create friction more than the management of water shared across international borders," said former Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, who chairs a group of 37 former heads of government campaigning to make water a security issue.

Water supplies are under increasing stress from a population of more than 7 billion people likely to reach 9 billion by 2050.

The damaging impacts of climate change are most often seen in water, the study said. Floods in Pakistan in 2010 killed almost 2,000 people and droughts in the United States and Russia in recent years have driven up global food prices.

Water-related diseases, from diarrhoea to malaria, kill about 3.5 million people every year, mostly in developing nations. Climate change could worsen the toll in some areas.

The report said that watersheds - lines that separate neighbouring drainage basins - cross the territories of 145 nations, and there are over 300 trans-boundary aquifers from which groundwater can be extracted.

"Trans-boundary waters pose enormous challenges for achieving water security," the report said.

Among encouraging signs, it said Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina had signed a deal in 2010 to cooperate and prevent conflicts over the Guarani Aquifer, which extends over more than 1 million square kilometres (386,000 sq miles).

The United Nations issued a first working definition of water security on Friday - sustainable supplies to ensure human wellbeing, avert water-related disasters, conserve ecosystems and aid economic and social development.

"This definition is a starting point," said Zafar Adeel, co-chair of the U.N. water task force on water security.

The World Health Organization estimates that each person needs between 50 and 100 litres (13-26 U.S. gallons) of water a day to meet basic needs. (Reporting By Alister Doyle; Editing by Tom Pfeiffer)

http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/water-as-vital-to-national-security-as-defence-un-says/

March 22, 2013

Bruno Latour thinks about the Anthropocene

By Garry Peterson
Resilience Science

Bruno Latour's Gifford Lectures **Facing Gaia: A new enquiry into Natural Religion,** which were given at University of Edinburgh over the last few months are now on the web.

- Lecture 1: 'Once Out of Nature' – natural religion as a pleonasm
- Lecture 2: A shift in agency – with apologies to David Hume
- Lecture 3: The puzzling face of a secular Gaia
- Lecture 4: Playing on the stage of the New Globe Theatre
- Lecture 5: War of the Worlds: Humans against Earthbound
- Lecture 6: Inside the 'planetary boundaries': Gaia's Estate

Bruno Latour's website has the text (pdf) of the lectures and describes them as:

Those six lectures in 'natural religion' explore what it could mean to live at the epoch of the Anthropocene when what was until now a mere décor for human history is becoming the principal actor. They confront head on the controversial figure of Gaia, that is, the Earth understood not as system but as what has a history, what mobilizes everything in the same geostory. Gaia is not Nature, nor is it a deity. In order to face a secular Gaia, we need to extract ourselves from the amalgam of Religion and Nature. It is a new form of political power that has to be explored through a renewed attempt at political theology composed of those three concepts: demos, theos and nomos. It is only once the multiplicity of people in conflicts for the new geopolitics of the Anthropocene is recognized, that the 'planetary boundaries' might be recognized as political delineations and the question of peace addressed. Neither Nature nor Gods bring unity and peace. 'The people of Gaia', the Earthbound might be the 'artisans of peace'.

The lectures are organized by groups of two, the two first ones deal with the question of Natural Religion per se and show that the notion is confusing because on the one hand 'nature' and 'religion' share too many attributes and, on the other, the two notions fail to register the originality of scientific practice and the specificity of the religious regime of enunciation.

Once the pleonasm of Natural Religion is pushed aside, it becomes possible to take up, in the next two lectures, the question first of Gaia as it has been conceived by James Lovelock and of the Anthropocene as it has been explored by geologists and climate scientists. It is thus possible to differentiate the figure of the Earth and of the agencies that populate it from the notion of nature and of the globe thus bringing to the fore the geostory to which they all belong.

In the last two lectures, after the notion of Natural Religion has been put aside, and after the complete originality of Gaia and geostory have been foregrounded, it becomes possible to reopen the political question at the heart of what will be life at the Anthropocene. Once the key question of war has been introduced, the search for a peace along the delineations allowed by politically relevant 'planetary boundaries' to which Earthbound (the new word for Humans) accept to be bound become again possible.

As mentioned on Resilience Science previously, Canada's CBC radio has a great accessible series – How to think about science – on science studies and philosophy of science, which includes an introduction to Latour and his work.

http://rs.resalliance.org/2013/03/22/bruno-latour-thinks-about-the-anthropocene/

March 24, 2013

Dozens Arrested as Keystone XL Protests Erupt Across the U.S.

Nation of Change

One month after the **largest climate rally** in U.S. history urging President Obama to deny the permit for the **Keystone XL** pipeline's northern segment, protesters in dozens of cities throughout the U.S. are confronting Keystone XL's corporate backers directly.

Thirty-seven have been arrested over the last 10 days for disrupting business as usual at TransCanada and their investors' offices, with more actions planned over the next couple of days.
The March 16-23 **Week of Action** to Stop Tar Sands Profiteers, in solidarity with Great Plains Tar Sands Resistance's Direct Action Camp in Ponca City, Oklahoma, is endorsed by more than 50 grassroots environmental organizations around the country. Organizers seek to expose green-washed corporations like TD Bank, a top shareholder in TransCanada, and force them to divest from the controversial Keystone XL tar sands pipeline.

"Its encouraging to see people around the country taking action to stop tar sands profiteers," said Ron Seifert, spokesperson for **Tar Sands Blockade**. "No longer will we allow them to build

Keystone XL and invest in toxic projects that endanger the health of low-income and communities of color. We will not allow 'business as usual' to continue."

Here are a few highlights from this week:

- 100 people occupied a TransCanada's office in Westborough, MA, holding a "Funeral for Our Future" and disrupting work for several hours. Twenty-five were arrested for locking themselves inside the office: **http://www.tarsandsblockade.org/funeralforourfuture/**
- TD Bank branches have seen protests at multiple locations including three people who were arrested for locking themselves inside a branch office in Washington, DC. **http://www.tarsandsblockade.org/weekofaction-day4/**
- Twelve people arrested for blockading a fracking pipeline in upstate New York: **http://ourfutureisunfractured.wordpress.com/**
- Portland, Oregon held a bike tour of the city's worst polluters including a rally at a TransCanada office: **http://www.tarsandsblockade.org/weekofaction-day3/**
- Dozens of activists in grim-reaper garb surround Michels Corporate office in Kirkland, WA, demanding that Michels stop building KXL: **http://www.tarsandsblockade.org/weekofaction-day3/**

Religiously and spiritually rooted Americans of all traditions gathered yesterday at the White House to make clear to President Obama that addressing climate change is a moral imperative and that delivering on his inspired State of the Union pledge will require bold actions, including rejecting the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline. Further, **Interfaith Moral Action on Climate Change** urges President Obama to lead Americans away from reliance on the dirty fossils fuels that drive climate change and transition us to a **renewable energy** economy. The risk of inaction is so great that some Interfaith Moral Action on Climate Change members felt morally compelled to engage in peaceful civil disobedience, leading to their arrest.

Check **www.tarsandsblockade.org** for live updates from actions across the country.

http://www.nationofchange.org/dozens-arrested-keystone-xl-protests-erupt-across-us-1364133644

March 25, 2013

Anti-extraction movement in the US gains momentum

By Eric Moll
The Ecologist

Protests against fracked-gas pipelines in Pennsylvania and New Jersey are part of a growing movement of direct-action resistance to extraction. Insider Eric Moll reports from the Frontline of the resistance

The directions take us just outside the New York City sprawl-zone: up through the hills and bare forests of late winter, the houses and yards getting bigger until they disappear altogether and suddenly we're nearing the highest point in New Jersey and one of the more strenuous parts of the Appalachian trail.

We're here to check on the last stand of trees to be cleared for loop 323 of the proposed Tennessee Pipeline, which would run through the heart of the Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania, opening new areas to fracking and fueling the proposed 1,120MW Newark Generating Station.

My friend and I have been working with a group called Tar Sands Blockade to oppose the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline in Texas. We came here to offer our support to locals in New Jersey and Pennsylvania who have been climbing into trees, blockading access roads, and locking themselves to trees in order to stop the Tennessee Pipeline since mid-February.

We arrive too late– the day's standoff with workers and police ended just before we arrived. Matt Smith and Jerome Wagner had locked themselves to trees along the pipeline's right-of-way, stopping work. Eventually the police came with tools to cut the locking device apart. An observer from the Ramapough Luunape nation helped negotiate with police so that the two protesters could unlock, leave without being arrested, and keep the device intact.

Long before dirty energy companies began to frack Pennsylvania, the Ramapough Lunape were suffering from buried poison leaching into their groundwater. In the 1960's and 1970's, the Ford Motor Company dumped waste into abandoned mineshafts on their land. The Ringwood Mines landfill site is now a Superfund site. Seven hundred of the thirty-five hundred people in the tribe have documented health impacts; one fourth of homes has at least one person with cancer.

The Ramapough Luunape do not want the pipeline on their land. The observer was there to document violations by the construction crew and ensure that culturally and archaeologically important sites weren't being destroyed.

At the same time the anti-fracking activists were stopping work at the construction site, over forty angry citizens were refusing to comply with the designated "public comment period" at the Delaware River Basin Commission's (DRBC) public meeting and calling out the representatives of the commissioners, president Obama and governors Jack Markell of Delaware, Chris Christy of New Jersey, Tom Corbett of Pennsylvania, and Mario Cuomo of New York, for refusing to exercise any of their regulatory powers over the Tennessee Pipeline or any of the other fracked gas pipelines which would cross the Delaware River.

They are there because the fracking infrastructure – from the drilling pads to the pipelines to the power plants – is tearing up the land they've hiked, hunted and fished in for years, seizing peoples' property through eminent domain (we met one man who will soon have to deal with Kinder Morgan digging a trench through his septic line), and making their water dangerous to drink.

The people here have long memories of being told to suffer for someone else's gold rush, to lose their health or land to development projects ostensibly for the "public good". The pipeline will

cut across George and Marsha FIgnes' property. George Feigner, 86 years old, had to fight to keep his home years ago, beginning in the late 1950's when the proposed Tocks Island Dam would have put his entire community at the bottom of a forty-mile lake. The Delaware River Gap National Recreation Area exists today because the community won that struggle. There were riots, and the police tear-gassed people out of their homes, but the dam was never built.

After introducing us to the Jersey residents who had spent the morning locked to trees (their first direct action), Alex Lotorto of Stop Tennessee Pipeline is showing us where the pipeline will cross the Appalachian trail. Alex and his father, who made his voice heard at that morning's DRBC meeting, have fought the fracking industry since 2008 when it first threatened the hills and streams they have hunted and fished in for decades. Alex has walked onto construction sites, locked himself to access gates, and climbed trees in the path of the Tennessee Pipeline.

As we hike in, Alex explains that we are checking on the last stand of trees left in the path of the pipeline. He hopes that the oaks will still be standing. Alex or someone else could climb one of those trees and stall construction, hopefully delaying the project enough to raise awareness and make Kinder Morgan and their investors nervous.

The trees are dead. They lie in piles alongside the pipeline easement. The clearing crews move fast. We've seen just how fast in Texas, where the same contractors, Northern Tree Clearing and Michel's, are clear-cutting for Keystone XL.

We stand on the ridge, a short walk from the top of New Jersey, and look at the wide scar that runs as far as we can see, marked by a long line of surveyor ribbons flying like the pennants of an invading army. The view would be impeccable otherwise: rolling hills of pristine, snow-fringed hardwood forest.

It's a rare, desolate moment. For the three of us, bundled against the dry, cold winds sweeping through the newly exposed slopes, a sense of loss pervades the skeletal March landscape. We know that Stop the Tennessee Pipeline's struggle will continue – somewhat changed now that fewer opportunities for tree-sits exist – but we were too late for these trees.

The increasingly desperate dirty energy barons are plumbing poisons across the continent, tearing up whoever or whatever gets in the way. Communities are being poisoned by mines, by fracking wells, by catastrophic pipeline failures, and by the carcinogenic refineries and power plants at the end of the line. All for a buck. For all the distractions and addictions money can buy.

I have felt the same ennui when I come across a newly ravaged KXL easement in Texas. I am often struck by the intersectionality of different anti-extraction struggles; not just against pipelines like the Tennessee and Keystone XL but against oil-driven deforestation of indigenous land in the rainforests of Central and South America, against the demolition of whole Appalachian mountains for the sake of expanding a coal-fired generating grid that already kills 25,000 people every year in the United States.

The same few people are responsible: the investors who don't care where their money comes from, the dirty energy execs, every politician whose regime is maintained by oil-lobby contributions, and the corporate media hacks who blithely focus every report around the issue of "job creation" as we face the greatest ecological disaster in history.

Contrary to popular portrayals of the anti-extraction movement as some kind of youth fad, I see resistance seething among people of all ages wherever I go. Scars run deep, and people like Chief Vincent Mann of the Ramapough Luunape remember a lifetime of exploitation by toxic industry. His people's past-and-present struggles against Ford and Kinder Morgan echo dozens of similar histories of abuse from the last century.

In Texas, I have heard many of these stories - stories of greed and corruption and rank old crimes, half buried beneath the red trampled earth. In Winona, Texas, anti-Keystone XL Tar Sands Blockaders who halted construction by climbing inside the pipeline itself took photos of visible holes in the welding of the pipeline, which will carry tar sands: one of the dirtiest, hardest to clean, most carcinogenic and teratogenic of the poisons which constitute the lifeblood of the fossil fuel industry.

The pipe segment with those holes was laid in the ground – uninspected and unrepaired – dozens of feet from homes in a predominantly African-American community in Winona, Texas. In a mostly white county, it's no coincidence that Keystone XL was routed through this community. The petrochemical industry has a long history of building its dangerous, toxic infrastructure through low income communities and communities of color because these communities have less political access and a limited ability to pay for legal opposition.

Despite the obstacles, Winona received national attention in the mid 90's when a group called MOSES (Mothers Organizing to Stop Environmental Sins) successful shut down the Texas wing of the American Ecology Corporation, which had been secretly dumping toxic waste in their neighborhood.

People have had enough. This movement will not stop with petitions and orderly rallies outside government buildings. "They're the third largest energy company in the country, but they're still not allowed to kill a human being," says Alex. Alex and others like him who put their bodies in the path of the machines are proving that the anti-extraction fight is about much more than asking a few privileged leaders to do the right thing.

The anti-extraction movement is about traditionally marginalized people standing up to build a better future: people like the Appalachia Resist! activists who shut down a fracking waste facility in Ohio on February 18th, like the members of the Red Lake tribe currently blocking an Enbridge tar sands pipeline through their land in northern Minnesota, like Debra White Plume and others from the Oglala nation who started blockading Keystone XL machinery in early 2012 and inspired an ongoing campaign of direct actions against the project.

At its heart, this struggle is about community resistance and resilience. It's about stopping these insane projects and doing it together in a way that works toward a more just, liberated world for all people, that strengthens our communities and prepares us for the coming storms and struggles

of the twenty-first century. There will be many more setbacks like the loss of those old Hemlocks along the Appalachian trail, but the movement will carry on. Alex, for one, isn't going anywhere. This is his home. He's as determined as ever to save what's left of it.

Eric Moll is a freelance journalist and activist, specialising in environmental reporting

http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/1861133/antiextraction_movement_in_the_us_gains_momentum.html?utm_source=GraphicMail&utm_medium=email&utm_term=NewsletterLink&utm_campaign=Ecologist+Newsletter+April+2013&utm_content=

March 26, 2013

Pope Francis Opens Ministry: "Let Us Be Protectors"

Pope Francis says during installation Mass that "authentic power is service" and urges protection for the environment and the poor.

By Nicole Winfield
NBC Bay Area

Pope Francis urged princes, presidents, sheiks and thousands of ordinary people gathered for his installation Mass on Tuesday to protect the environment, the weakest and the poorest, mapping out a clear focus of his priorities as leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics.

"Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be 'protectors' of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment," Francis said in a homily.

For full coverage of Pope Francis' installation, visit NBCNews.com

The Argentina native is the first pope from Latin American and the first named for the 13th-century friar St. Francis of Assisi, whose life's work was to care for nature, the poor and most disadvantaged. In a fitting note, he promised that a little bit of tenderness can "open up a horizon of hope." Tenderness is not a virtue of the weak, but a sign of strength, he added.

The Vatican said between 150,000 and 200,000 people attended the Mass, held under bright blue skies after days of chilly rain and featuring flag-waving fans from around the world. In Buenos Aires, thousands of people packed the central Plaza di Mayo square to watch the celebration on giant TV screens and erupted in joy when Francis called them from Rome, his words broadcast to the crowd over loudspeakers.

"I want to ask a favor," Francis told them. "I want to ask you to walk together, and take care of one another. ... And don't forget that this bishop who is far away loves you very much. Pray for me."

Back in Rome, Francis was interrupted by applause several times during his homily, including when he spoke of the need to protect the environment, serve one another with love and not allow "omens of destruction," hatred, envy and pride to "defile our lives."

Read: Pope Francis Installation Mass Homily Prepared Draft

Francis said the role of the pope is to open his arms and protect all of humanity, but "especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important, those whom Matthew lists in the final judgment on love: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison."

He said that "let us never forget that authentic power is service."

Francis, 76, thrilled the crowd at the start of the Mass by taking a long round-about through the sun-drenched piazza and getting out of his jeep to bless a disabled man. It was a gesture from a man whose short papacy so far is becoming defined by such spontaneous forays into the crowd and concern for the disadvantaged.

The blue and white flags from Argentina fluttered above the crowd, which Italian media initially estimated could reach 1 million. Civil protection crews closed the main streets leading to the square to traffic and set up barricades for nearly a mile along the route to try to control the masses and allow official delegations through.

Before the Mass began, Francis received the fisherman's ring symbolizing the papacy and a woolen stole symbolizing his role as shepherd of his flock. He also received vows of obedience from a half-dozen cardinals — a potent symbol given his predecessor Benedict XVI is still alive and was reportedly watching the proceedings on TV from the papal retreat in Castel Gandolfo.

A cardinal intoned the rite of inauguration, saying: "The Good Shepherd charged Peter to feed his lambs and his sheep; today you succeed him as the bishop of this church."

Some 132 official delegations attended, including more than a half-dozen heads of state from Latin America, a sign of the significance of the election for the region. Francis has made clear he wants his pontificate to be focused on the poor, a message that has resonance in a poverty-stricken region that counts 40 percent of the world's Catholics.

In the VIP section was German Chancellor Angela Merkel, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, the Argentine President Cristina Fernandez, Taiwanese President Ying-Jeou Ma, Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, Prince Albert of Monaco and Bahrain Prince Sheik Abdullah bin Haman bin Isa Alkhalifa, among others.

Among the religious VIPs attending was the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, Bartholomew I, who became the first patriarch from the Istanbul-based church to attend a papal

investiture since the two branches of Christianity split nearly 1,000 years ago. Also attending for the first time was the chief rabbi of Rome. Their presence underscores the broad hopes for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue in this new papacy given Francis' own work for improved relations and St. Francis of Assisi.

In a gesture to Christians in the East, the pope prayed with Eastern rite Catholic patriarchs and archbishops before the tomb of St. Peter at the start of the Mass and the Gospel was chanted in Greek rather than the traditional Latin.

But it is Francis' history of living with the poor and working for them while archbishop of Buenos Aires that seems to have resonated with ordinary Catholics who say they are hopeful that Francis can inspire a new generation of faithful who have fallen away from the church.

"I think he'll revive the sentiments of Catholics who received the sacraments but don't go to Mass anymore, and awaken the sentiments of people who don't believe anymore in the church, for good reason," said Judith Teloni, an Argentine tourist guide who lives in Rome and attended the Mass with a friend.

"As an Argentine, he was our cardinal. It's a great joy for us," said Edoardo Fernandez Mendia, from the Argentine Pampas who was in the crowd. "I would have never imagined that it was going to be him."

Recalling another great moment in Argentine history, when soccer great Diego Maradona scored an improbable goal in the 1986 World Cup, he said: "And for the second time, the Hand of God came to Argentina."

Francis has made headlines with his simple style since the moment he appeared to the world on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, eschewing the ermine-lined red velvet cape his predecessor wore in favor of the simple papal white cassock, then paying his own bill at the hotel where he stayed prior to the conclave that elected him pope.

He has also surprised — and perhaps frustrated — his security detail by his impromptu forays into the crowds.

For nearly a half-hour before the Mass began, Francis toured the square in an open-air jeep, waving, shouting "Ciao!" to well-wishers and occasionally kissing babies handed up to him as if he had been doing this for years. At one point, as he neared a group of people in wheelchairs, he signaled for the jeep to stop, hopped off, and went to bless a man held up to the barricade by an aide.

"I like him because he loves the poor," said 7-year-old Pietro Loretti, who attended the Mass from Barletta in southern Italy. Another child in the crowd, 9-year-old Benedetta Vergetti from Cervetri near Rome, also skipped school to attend.

"I like him because he's sweet like my Dad."

In an indication of his devotion to the Virgin Mary, which is common among Latin American Catholics, Francis prayed by a statue of the Madonna at the end of the service.

After the Mass, Francis stood in a receiving line to greet each of the government delegations in St. Peter's Basilica, chatting warmly with each one, kissing the few youngsters who came along with their parents and occasionally blessing a rosary given to him. Unlike his predecessors, he did so in just his white cassock, not the red cape.

On Wednesday, he holds an audience with the visiting Christian delegations. He has a break from activity on Thursday; a gracious nod perhaps to the fact that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, is being installed that day in London.

As a result, Welby wasn't representing the Anglican Communion, sending instead a lower-level delegation.

http://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/national-international/NATL-Pope-Francis-Installation-Mass-Inauguration-Fernandez-Kirchner-198876051.html

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March 29, 2013

Cost of Environmental Damage in China Growing Rapidly Amid Industrialization

By Edward Wong

The New York Times

BEIJING — The cost of environmental degradation in China was about $230 billion in 2010, or 3.5 percent of the nation's gross domestic product — three times that in 2004, in local currency terms, an official Chinese news report said this week.

The statistic came from a study by the Chinese Academy of Environmental Planning, which is part of the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

The figure of $230 billion, or 1.54 trillion renminbi, is based on costs arising from pollution and damage to the ecosystem, the price that China is paying for its rapid industrialization.

"This cuts to the heart of China's economic challenge: how to transform from the explosive growth of the past 30 years to the sustainable growth of the next 30 years," said Alistair Thornton, a China economist at the research firm IHS Global Insight. "Digging a hole and filling it back in again gives you G.D.P. growth. It doesn't give you economic value. A lot of the activity in China over the last few years has been digging holes to fill them back in again — anything from bailing out failing solar companies to ignoring the 'externalities' of economic growth."

And the costs could be even higher than the ministry's estimate, he said. The $230 billion figure is incomplete because the researchers did not have a full set of data. Making such calculations is "notoriously difficult," Mr. Thornton said.

The 2010 figure was reported on Monday by a newspaper associated with the ministry, and so far only partial results of the study are available. In 2006, the ministry began releasing an estimate of the cost of environmental degradation. The ministry has issued statistics only intermittently, though its original goal was to do the calculation — what it called "green G.D.P." — annually.

The rapidly eroding environment across the country has become an issue of paramount concern to many Chinese. In January, outrage boiled over as air pollution in north China reached record levels, well beyond what Western environmental agencies consider hazardous. The public fury forced propaganda officials to allow official Chinese news organizations to report more candidly on the pollution.

Chinese state-owned enterprises in the oil and power industries have consistently blocked efforts by pro-environment government officials to impose policies that would alleviate the pollution.

There have also been constant concerns over water and soil pollution. The discovery of at least 16,000 dead pigs in rivers that supply drinking water to Shanghai has ignited alarm there. This week, China Central Television reported that farmers in a village in Henan Province were using wastewater from a paper mill to grow wheat. But one farmer said they would not dare to eat the wheat themselves. It is sold outside the village, perhaps ending up in cities, while the farmers grow their own wheat with well water.

The Beijing government on Thursday released details of a three-year plan that is aimed at curbing various forms of pollution, according to a report on Friday in China Daily, an official English-language newspaper. The report quoted Wang Anshun, Beijing's mayor, as saying that sewage treatment, garbage incineration and forestry development would cost at least $16 billion.

In 2006, the environmental ministry said the cost of environmental degradation in 2004 was more than $62 billion, or 3.05 percent of G.D.P. In 2010, it released partial results for 2008 that totaled about $185 billion, or 3.9 percent of G.D.P. Several foreign scholars have criticized the methods by which Chinese researchers have reached those numbers, saying some crucial measures of environmental degradation are not included in the calculations.

There is consensus now that China's decades of double-digit economic growth exacted an enormous environmental cost. But growth remains the priority; the Communist Party's legitimacy is based largely on rapidly expanding the economy, and China officially estimates that its G.D.P., which was $8.3 trillion in 2012, will grow at a rate of 7.5 percent this year and at an average of 7 percent in the five-year plan that runs to 2015. A Deutsche Bank report released last month said the current growth policies would lead to a continuing steep decline of the environment for the next decade, especially given the expected coal consumption and boom in automobile sales.

Patrick Zuo contributed research.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: April 3, 2013

A picture caption on Saturday with an article about the rapidly growing environmental degradation in China that can be traced to its proliferating industrialization misidentified the substance shown spewing from a power plant in east Beijing. It is steam, not smoke.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/30/world/asia/cost-of-environmental-degradation-in-china-is-growing.html?ref=asia

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Spring 2013

Hope is the thing with feathers

Loyola *Magazine*

The American Goldfinch is one of 69 bird species documented at Loyola's Retreat and Ecology Campus.

Despite several degrees and years of experience that indicate otherwise, Stephen Mitten, S.J., doesn't think of himself strictly as a scientist. "I see myself more as a naturalist," he says. "I'm an ambassador for the environment."

As spiritual director and resident ecology faculty at Loyola's Retreat and Ecology Campus, Fr. Mitten teaches several biology and conservation courses. But his real love is avian ecology. Last summer, he and student Edgar Perez took a census of the birds and their breeding grounds on the rural campus in Woodstock, Illinois. Perez was an intern at the campus last summer, and will be again this summer, but he and Fr. Mitten have known each other since Fr. Mitten's previous tenure at St. John's Junior College in Belize, where Perez was a student. Now both are here, and both are highly invested in the research and restoration taking place at the Retreat and Ecology Campus.

Although the plant life at the campus had been surveyed and documented, the fauna had been much less so. The parts of an ecosystem are all connected, however, and birds can serve as good indicators of the health of the biological community. The data collected by Perez and Fr. Mitten will provide a baseline for the ongoing restoration of the campus's woodlands and wetlands.

"When we do restoration you may lose some species and may gain others," says Fr. Mitten. "How do we maintain biodiversity while meeting the goals we have for restoration?"

According to the final report, 69 bird species were documented, 40 species were found breeding or holding territories on the campus, and an additional 29 species were detected as flyovers or

occasional visitors. The most common species were Red-winged Blackbirds, Gray Catbirds, American Robins, Northern Cardinals, Black capped Chickadees, American Goldfinches, and Brown-headed Cowbirds.

Both Fr. Mitten and Perez have been interested in ornithology and ecology since childhood.

"When I was a kid, I used to ask my dad a lot of questions—what is this, what is that," says Perez. "If he didn't know, I went to find out. I was always curious about the environment. I purchased a bird book myself. I started to look over it and read it and learn the different parts that make a species." Perez eventually became involved with the Audobon Society, and participated in bird counts on the society's behalf in Belize. At St. John's, he was further encouraged by Fr. Mitten's own interest in birds.

Fr. Mitten is a local—he's from Zion, Illinois, and earned his undergraduate degree in biology from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. "I wanted to major in biology ever since I stole my Dad's Kodak instamatic camera in fourth grade and set out to take pictures of all the birds in the back yard," he says. "They were all just black specks, because I couldn't really get close enough to get a good photo."

The restoration process at the Retreat and Ecology Campus will take a long time. "The watershed basin has been really altered by past anthropomorphic ditch-digging," Fr. Mitten says. The area was originally drained to create land for cattle grazing. Long-term goals are to remove invasive species like buckthorn and honeysuckle, restore the oak-hickory woodland, and reestablish the fen, a kind of wetland created by the retreat of glaciers.

Fr. Mitten will continue to work toward the restoration and contribute to the new Institute of Environmental Sustainability. He is developing a course in avian ecology, and he teaches a study abroad course in Belize in January. He hopes to instill in his students the idea that local actions can have global consequences. "What I do in Chicago has an impact on whether these tropical ecosystems will be around in the future," Fr. Mitten says. And although he misses the biodiversity of the tropics, he values the particular ecosystems here as well. "Northern Illinois has things the tropics don't. If we don't have a glacier fen, we're deprived," he says. And, like St. Francis (which is Fr. Mitten's middle name), he sees the divine in even the Gray Catbird. "They're all God's creatures—I can't say one is better than the other," he says. "They all reveal the imagination of our Creator."

Perez will spend another year at Loyola, and then he plans to return to Belize and St. John's to develop the environmental science program there. He is also particularly interested in the effects of toxic chemicals, such as pesticides, on biological systems. "Belize doesn't have any ecotoxicologists," he says. "I hope to become the first one." He believes his scientific knowledge carries with it a responsibility to act. "Now that I have the knowledge I was after as a child, I realize there's more to it than that," he says. "I see environmental degradation, pollution, global warming. Hopefully I can do something with this knowledge that will help."

http://www.luc.edu/retreatcampus/homenews/hopeisthethingwithfeathers.shtml

April 2013

Sacred Sites Research Newsletter (SSIREN)

http://fore.research.yale.edu/files/SSIREN_April_2013.pdf

April 2013

Water Ethics Newsletter

http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/?u=31982f6e4937945bfaddf6712&id=c797e2090b&e=495d1f20da

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April 1, 2013

Air Pollution Linked to 1.2 Million Premature Deaths in China

By Edward Wong

The New York Times

BEIJING — Outdoor air pollution contributed to 1.2 million premature deaths in China in 2010, nearly 40 percent of the global total, according to a new summary of data from a scientific study on leading causes of death worldwide.

Figured another way, the researchers said, China's toll from pollution was the loss of 25 million healthy years of life from the population.

The data on which the analysis is based was first presented in the ambitious 2010 Global Burden of Disease Study, which was published in December in The Lancet, a British medical journal. The authors decided to break out numbers for specific countries and present the findings at international conferences. The China statistics were offered at a forum in Beijing on Sunday.

"We have been rolling out the India- and China-specific numbers, as they speak more directly to national leaders than regional numbers," said Robert O'Keefe, the vice president of the Health Effects Institute, a research organization that is helping to present the study. The organization is partly financed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the global motor vehicle industry.

What the researchers called "ambient particulate matter pollution" was the fourth-leading risk factor for deaths in China in 2010, behind dietary risks, high blood pressure and smoking. Air pollution ranked seventh on the worldwide list of risk factors, contributing to 3.2 million deaths in 2010.

By comparison with China, India, which also has densely populated cities grappling with similar levels of pollution, had 620,000 premature deaths in 2010 because of outdoor air pollution, the study found. That was deemed to be the sixth most common killer in South Asia.

The study was led by an institute at the University of Washington and several partner universities and institutions, including the World Health Organization.

Calculations of premature deaths because of outdoor air pollution are politically threatening in the eyes of some Chinese officials. According to news reports, Chinese officials cut out sections of a 2007 report called "Cost of Pollution in China" that discussed premature deaths. The report's authors had concluded that 350,000 to 400,000 people die prematurely in China each year because of outdoor air pollution. The study was done by the World Bank in cooperation with the Chinese State Environmental Protection Administration, the precursor to the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

There have been other estimates of premature deaths because of air pollution. In 2011, the World Health Organization estimated that there were 1.3 million premature deaths in cities worldwide because of outdoor air pollution.

Last month, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, based in Paris, warned that "urban air pollution is set to become the top environmental cause of mortality worldwide by 2050, ahead of dirty water and lack of sanitation." It estimated that up to 3.6 million people could end up dying prematurely from air pollution each year, mostly in China and India.

There has been growing outrage in Chinese cities over what many say are untenable levels of air pollution. Cities across the north hit record levels in January, and official Chinese newspapers ran front-page articles on the surge — what some foreigners call the "airpocalypse" — despite earlier limits on such discussion by propaganda officials.

In February, the State Council, China's cabinet, announced a timeline for introducing new fuel standards, but state-owned oil and power companies are known to block or ignore environmental policies to save on costs.

A study released on Thursday said the growth rate of disclosure of pollution information in 113 Chinese cities had slowed. The groups doing the study, the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, based in Beijing, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, based in Washington, said that "faced with the current situation of severe air, water and soil pollution, we must make changes to pollution source information disclosure so that information is no longer patchy, out of date and difficult to obtain."

Chinese officials have made some progress in disclosing crucial air pollution statistics. Official news reports have said 74 cities are now required to release data on levels of particulate matter 2.5 micrometers in diameter or smaller, which penetrate the body's tissues most deeply. For years, Chinese officials had been collecting the data but refusing to release it, until they came

under pressure from Chinese who saw that the United States Embassy in Beijing was measuring the levels hourly and posting the data in a Twitter feed, @BeijingAir.

Last week, an official Chinese news report said the cost of environmental degradation in China was about $230 billion in 2010, or 3.5 percent of the gross domestic product. The estimate, said to be partial, came from a research institute under the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and was three times the amount in 2004, in local currency terms. It was unclear to what extent those numbers took into account the costs of health care and premature deaths because of pollution.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/02/world/asia/air-pollution-linked-to-1-2-million-deaths-in-china.html?_r=0

April 3, 2013

UN Calls for Accelerated Action with 1,000 Days to Go on Millennium Development Goals

United Nations

New York - The United Nations and its partners around the world will observe the 1,000 days to the end of 2015 – the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – during the next week to inspire further action.

"The MDGs are the most successful global anti-poverty push in history," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said. "The Goals have helped set global and national priorities, mobilize action, and achieve remarkable results."

The eight time-bound MDGs address poverty and hunger, education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, combatting AIDS, malaria and other diseases, environmental sustainability and a global partnership for development.

Starting 5 April, the actual milestone date, and running through 12 April, the UN will work with governments, civil society and international partners to mark "MDG Momentum: 1,000 Days of Action" in a variety of ways.

In Madrid, Spain, the Secretary-General and young people from the Spanish and European Youth Councils are observing the moment at a special event on 4 April, joined by a number of heads of UN agencies, funds and programmes who are visiting for a senior-level UN meeting.

Since the MDGs were adopted by all UN Member States in 2000, governments, international organizations and civil society groups around the world have helped make tremendous progress to improve people's lives. The world's extreme poverty rate has been cut in half since 1990. A record number of children are in primary school -- with an equal number of girls and boys for the

first time. Maternal and child mortality have dropped. The world continues to fight killer diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS. Since 1990, two billion more people have gained access to safe drinking water.

To build on this success and accelerate action, the Secretary-General called on the international community to: increase targeted investments in health, education, energy and sanitation; empower women and girls; focus on the most vulnerable people; keep up aid commitments; and re-energize efforts from governments to grassroots groups to make a difference.

"The MDGs have proven that focused global development objectives can make a profound difference," Mr. Ban said. "Success in the next 1,000 days will not only improve the lives of millions, it will add momentum as we plan for beyond 2015 and the challenges of sustainable development."

#MDGmomentum

Social media will play a major role in observing the milestone. A global social media surge on Friday, 5 April – involving 1,000 consecutive minutes of digital engagement – will promote #MDGmomentum and the need to rally the world to step up efforts to achieve the eight Goals as 2015 approaches.

People around the world are invited to take part in the social media surge between Friday, 5 April, 8:00 am EDT and Saturday, 6 April, 1:00 am EDT.

The UN's MDG gateway will have a dedicated page promoting the various social media materials and initiatives being organized by a number of UN agencies and partners. The website is: www.un.org/millenniumgoals.

Media contacts:

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212-963-6870 – UN Department of Public Information

http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/sport/home/newsandevents/news/template/news_item.jsp?cid=39239

April 3, 2013

2 Major Air Pollutants Increase in Beijing

By Edward Wong

The New York Times

BEIJING — In the first three months of this year, levels of two major air pollutants increased by almost 30 percent here in the Chinese capital, over the same period in 2012, according to a report on Wednesday by a Chinese news organization.

The pollutants — nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter that is between 2.5 and 10 micrometers in diameter, called PM 10 — appeared to have surged sharply in January, showing levels 47 percent higher than the same month last year, according to the report by Beijing News that was translated into English by The Economic Observer. The report cited as its source Chen Tian, the head of the Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau.

A third pollutant, sulfur dioxide, decreased slightly over the same three-month period.

Mr. Chen said the main reason for the increase in two pollutants was high levels of emissions. Citing Mr. Chen, the report said "the emissions created by those living and producing in the city far exceed what the environment can take."

The report said the environmental bureau had concluded that the increases in the two pollutants had been also partly due to topography and weather conditions. Beijing recently had its highest levels of relative humidity in a decade, and surface wind speeds were the lowest in 10 years, which together resulted in a lower-temperature inversion layer that trapped pollutants, the report said.

Cities in northern China have been grappling this winter with record levels of air pollution, which have stirred fear and anger among many Chinese. In January, the Beijing municipal government recorded jaw-dropping concentrations of particulate matter measuring 2.5 micrometers in diameter or smaller, called PM 2.5. The highest concentrations were recorded at nearly 1,000 micrograms per cubic meter, which was on par with some severely polluted days in industrial London during the mid-20th century.

Beijing resembled an airport smokers' lounge in mid-January, and some foreigners called the persistent and omnipresent smog an "airpocalypse."

The Beijing News and Economic Observer quoted Mr. Chen as saying that 60 percent of the increased levels of PM 2.5 were due to the burning of coal and fuel. PM 2.5 is considered more damaging than PM 10, because the smaller particles can penetrate the lungs and embed deeply in tissue.

To prevent cost increases, large state-owned enterprises in the oil and power industries have consistently blocked proposed policies that would cut down the levels of pollutants.

Last Sunday, researchers released data that showed that outdoor air pollution had contributed to 1.2 million premature deaths in China in 2010, which was nearly 40 percent of the global total. The data were based on international research done on leading causes of death for the 2010 Global Burden of Disease Study, which was published in a paper last December in The Lancet, a British medical journal. In China, outdoor air pollution was the fourth-leading risk factor for death, the researchers said.

An official Chinese news report said last week that the cost of environmental degradation in China in 2010 was 1.54 trillion renminbi, about $230 billion, or 3.5 percent of the nation's gross domestic product. The amount was three times that of 2004.

A Deutsche Bank report from February said that current growth policies would mean a continuing surge in air pollution over the next decade.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: April 6, 2013

An article on Thursday about a new report showing that in the first three months of this year the levels of two major air pollutants increased by 30 percent in Beijing over the same period in 2012 misstated part of the name of one of the pollutants. It is nitrogen dioxide, not nitrous dioxide.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/04/world/asia/two-major-air-pollutants-increase-in-china.html?src=recg

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April 4, 2013

Desmond Tutu wins $1.7 million Templeton Prize

By Maria Golovnina
Reuters

(Reuters) - South African anti-apartheid campaigner Desmond Tutu has won the 2013 Templeton Prize worth $1.7 million for helping inspire people around the world by promoting forgiveness and justice, organizers said on Thursday.

A leading human rights activist of the late 20th century, the former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town played a pivotal role in the downfall of apartheid and subsequently worked to heal wounds in South Africa's traumatized society.

Tutu, 81, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for standing up against white-minority rule. He remains a prominent campaigner for peace and human rights.

The Templeton award was announced as his friend and fellow Nobel laureate Nelson Mandela was fighting pneumonia in a third health scare in four months for South Africa's first black president.

Established in 1972 by the late American-born investor and philanthropist John Templeton, the annual prize - worth more, in monetary terms, than the Nobel - honors a living person "who has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life's spiritual dimension".

"When you are in a crowd and you stand out from the crowd it's usually because you are being carried on the shoulders of others," Tutu was quoted as saying in a statement released by the U.S.-based foundation.

"I want to acknowledge all the wonderful people who accepted me as their leader at home and so to accept this prize in a representative capacity."

Last year's Templeton Prize went to the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader. Other recent winners include British astrophysicist Martin Rees and Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor.

The foundation, whose first award went to Mother Teresa in 1973, praised Tutu as a moral voice for people around the world".

"Desmond Tutu calls upon all of us to recognize that each and every human being is unique in all of history and, in doing so, to embrace our own vast potential to be agents for spiritual progress and positive change," it said.

"Not only does he teach this idea, he lives it."

Born in Klerksdorp, Transvaal in 1931, Tutu was ordained in 1960 just as the government began resettling black Africans and Asians from areas designated as "whites only".

His position in the church gave him a prominent platform from which to criticize the system. Angry with his activism, the government revoked his passport, prompting a global outcry.

With pressure on South Africa growing, talks between politicians and the African National Congress led to the release in 1990 of Nelson Mandela and the dismantling of apartheid laws.

After elections, President Mandela appointed Tutu as chairman of a commission examining the human rights abuses of the apartheid years. After his retirement Tutu continued to work as a global campaigner for democracy and human rights.

(Writing by Maria Golovnina; Editing by Tom Heneghan and Robin Pomeroy)

http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/04/us-religion-tutu-prize-idUSBRE93305F20130404

April 8, 2013

Stegner Symposium Focuses on Religion, Faith and Environment

Multidisciplinary Event to Include Religious and Secular Leaders and Scholars from Law, Policy, Science, Economics and the Humanities

University of Utah News Center

Much has changed in the nearly half century since UCLA historian Lynn White named the Judeo-Christian tradition one of the "root" causes of "our ecological crisis." Across the world today, people of faith are stepping forward to explain why our spiritual connections to the Earth demand environmental protection. At the same time, religion remains intertwined with some of the most vexing environmental problems.

The 18th Annual Stegner Symposium, to be held April 12 and 13 at the University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law, will examine and help untangle many of these fascinating issues.

"The relationship between religious belief and an environmental conscience raises important questions, perhaps nowhere more so than in Utah where so much attention attaches to both religion and environmentalism," says Robert Keiter, professor of law and director of the Wallace Stegner Center. "The symposium aims to help us better understand the connections between the two and how this is shaping our personal beliefs, public dialogue and political debates."

To kick-off the Stegner Symposium on April 11 at 12:15 p.m., Mary Evelyn Tucker, senior lecturer and senior research scholar at Yale University, will deliver the Wallace Stegner Lecture, "The Emerging Alliance of Religion and Ecology." The talk, to be held in the College of Law's Sutherland Moot Courtroom, is free and open to the public. No registration required and lunch will be served to attendees. One hour of continuing legal education (CLE) is available.

The 18th Annual Stegner Symposium runs from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Friday, April 12 and from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 13 in the Sutherland Moot Courtroom at the University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law. Pre-registration and payment are required. For more information, visit www.law.utah.edu/stegner or call 801-585-3440. Ten hours of CLE are available.

Conference organizer Lincoln Davies, professor at the College of Law, believes that the conference's multidisciplinary approach this year will help to highlight the varying perspectives of different faith traditions on the environment, land use and related topics.

"Across the world, people of faith are stepping forward to speak out on environmental protection," says Davies. "This year's symposium brings some of the leading voices on this topic to the University of Utah—Sally Bingham, who founded Interfaith Power and Light; Mary Evelyn Tucker of Yale; and a stellar host of other phenomenal speakers, including John Nagle of

Notre Dame; Jamie Korngold, the Adventure Rabbi; and Elder Marcus Nash of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

http://unews.utah.edu/news_releases/stegner-symposium-focuses-on-religion-faith-and-environment/

April 11, 2013

A village that plants 111 trees for every girl born in Rajasthan

By Mahim Pratap Singh
The Hindu

In an atmosphere where every morning, our newspapers greet us with stories of girls being tormented, raped, killed or treated like a doormat in one way or another, trust India's "village republics" to bring in some good news from time to time.

One such village in southern Rajasthan's Rajsamand district is quietly practicing its own, homegrown brand of Eco-feminism and achieving spectacular results.

For the last several years, Piplantri village panchayat has been saving girl children and increasing the green cover in and around it at the same time.

Here, villagers plant 111 trees every time a girl is born and the community ensures these trees survive, attaining fruition as the girls grow up.

Over the last six years, people here have managed to plant over a quarter million trees on the village's grazing commons- inlcuding neem, sheesham, mango, Amla among others.

On an average 60 girls are born here every year, according to the village's former sarpanch Shyam Sundar Paliwal, who was instrumental in starting this initiative in the memory of his daughter Kiran, who died a few years ago.

In about half these cases, parents are reluctant to accept the girl children, he says.

Such families are identified by a village committee comprising the village school principal along with panchayat and Anganwadi members.

Rs. 21,000 is collected from the village residents and Rs.10,000 from the girl's father and this sum of Rs. 31,000 is made into a fixed deposit for the girl, with a maturity period of 20 years.

But here's the best part.

“We make these parents sign an affidavit promising that they would not marry her off before the legal age, send her to school regularly and take care of the trees planted in her name,” says Mr. Paliwal.

People also plant 11 trees whenever a family member dies.

But this village of 8,000 did not just stop at planting trees and greening their commons. To prevent these trees from being infested with termite, the residents planted over two and a half million Aloevera plants around them. Now these trees, especially the Aloevera, are a source of livelihood for several residents.

“Gradually, we realized that aloevera could be processed and marketed in a variety of ways. So we invited some experts and asked them to train our women. Now residents make and market aloevera products like juice, gel, pickle etc,” he says.

The village panchayat, which has a studio-recorded anthem and a website of its own, has completely banned alcohol, open grazing of animals and cutting of trees. Villagers claim there has not been any police case here for the last 7-8 years.

Mr. Paliwal recalls the visit of social activist Anna Hazare, who was very happy with the progress made by the village, he says.

“But Rajasthan is quite backward in terms of village development compared to panchayats in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra etc. So we need to work hard towards creating more and more empowered villages,” says the former sarpanch, hoping the government listens to him.

http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/a-village-that-plants-111-trees-for-every-girl-born-in-rajasthan/article4606735.ece

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April 11, 2013

Conference Explores Environmental Humanities in a Changing World

By Holly Welles
Princeton Environmental Institute

Rarely do photographers, artistic directors, musicians, novelists, poets, scientists, engineers, and scholars in religion, philosophy, and literature come together for two full-days to explore an emerging field of mutual interest. Such a unique gathering took place during Princeton University’s conference “Environmental Humanities in a Changing World.”

Organized by the Princeton Environmental Institute (PEI) and co-sponsored by ten other entities across Princeton University, the goal of the March 8th and 9th conference was to provide succinct

overviews of scholarship in the respective disciplines and to consider how these various approaches can work together for the future of the planet.

During his opening remarks Stephen Pacala, the Frederick D. Petrie Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and director of PEI, stated, “This conference is a culmination of a dream of mine from 20 years ago when I first came to Princeton. PEI had just formed and we were a union primarily of scientists, engineers, and social scientists and we were looking for dance partners in the humanities. Somehow it never came together until now with this conference.

"What is needed in order for society to tackle the enormous environmental challenges that confront us,” said Pacala, “is for humanity to somehow find the nobility and the virtue and maturity to do what’s right and that is the domain of the environmental humanities.”

“This conference is really the result of the vision and tremendous energy of Ken Hiltner who is a visiting professor of English and the PEI and Currie C. and Thomas A. Barron ‘72 Visiting Professor in the Environment and Humanities. He has been a fantastic visitor and we’ve been fortunate to have him on loan from the English Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara,” said Pacala.

In planning the conference, Hiltner said he wanted to provide an overview of the environmental humanities for scholars, students, and the general public.

“A lot of people don’t know what environmental humanities are and hopefully we will answer this and also help answer questions I get frequently from students about what they can do, particularly the kinds of careers they can embark upon. The environmental sciences have been active for so many years, the career path is more known. The path is less clear if one is interested in the humanities, in art, poetry, or theater. How can you help? What are your options? This conference offers different answers to these questions.”

During his presentation, internationally renowned Canadian photographer and artist, Edward Burtynsky, described how he came into this field through art and his appreciation and awe of the natural environment.

Early in his career, he started taking photographs of the natural landscape. But, he said, after a couple years, "To be true to our times, I began taking photographs of the things we do to the landscape…. Rather than a celebration of land, of the wonder of nature, it became a critique of human enterprise and how it’s expanding upon the landscape and how it is usurping the natural world to the human world.”

To convey this point, Burtynsky showed slides of his visually powerful images of various industrial landscapes from gigantic tire piles, large oil spills, dying seas, to deep and vast coal mines.

His prints are often four feet by five feet. “I don’t believe I am communicating with you until you are in my image,” he said. “When you are in my image, I have succeeded. I can get you looking and talking about images and talking about what’s behind them without anyone being

threatened…it doesn't matter from what perspective you are coming from – religious or non-religious, left or right, rich or poor, it doesn't matter…what we are talking about here is beyond geopolitics, beyond religion, beyond anything. This is our habitat. If you pollute your water and drink it you are all going to get equally sick. The environment trumps all the geopolitics and it gets down to humans and our relationship to our habitat."

Audience member Evan Cole '15, a politics major, was particularly taken with the presentation by former Barron Fellows and cofounders of The Civilians, Steve Cosson and Michael Friedman, and their discussion of *The Great Immensity*, a play they wrote and co-produced about climate change during their year at Princeton.

"Specifically, it was the variety of the content they included that impressed me so much," said Cole. During their development of the play, Mike and Steve talked to dozens of people from a variety of disciplines. The way they integrated all of those diverse concerns into a theatrical work struck me as a very effective way to communicate the vast scope of the problems with our environment today.

"To me, it's [*The Great Immensity*] symbolic of the multifaceted nature of certain types of social issues, and that nature will necessitate an equally multifaceted set of solutions to those issues. It's a unique type of professional challenge, and the conference helped me see that a little bit better."

Dale Jamieson, Director of Environmental Studies at New York University and professor of environmental studies and philosophy, addressed the question of environmental ethics. He emphasized that an environmental problem like climate change requires revisions in our morality.

"Today we face the possibility that the global environment may be destroyed, yet no one will be responsible. This is a new problem," he said, "that will require revisions in our morality, especially around concepts of responsibility."

Yale University religion and ecology scholars and former Barron fellows, Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, stated that they agree with another of Jamieson's key points that, unfortunately, there currently is no magic bullet, no one thing that will change the conversation from the moral, ethical, spiritual perspective. "But we are," said Tucker, "trying to point to other ways to value nature beyond the economic. Ecosystem services is a fabulous cost benefit analysis as far as it goes. It is necessary, but not sufficient…. There is something beyond the economic valuing."

Tucker emphasized, "The environmental humanities need to enter into this discussion. Our collective challenge, from literature, and history, and ethics, and the arts, is to find a language that articulates what that is."

During a video address, Princeton professor of ecology and evolutionary biology, Lars Hedin, stated, "Many of the issues that now face us are not just the scientific issues, equally important are the interactions between these issues around what it means to be part of a system, a system of nature and a system of human society and the interaction between nature and human society.

He raised several questions such as what are our ethical and philosophical responsibilities in a rapidly changing society? How do we place a value, a monetary, a conceptual value on climate, our ecosystems, or even on our way of life? These dimensions are expanding what it means to be part of a system.

Hedin, who is also the director of the Program in Environmental Studies left a final challenge for the group.

"The real question," he said is, "How do we engage this generation of students, this generation of new minds, this generation of future leaders? How do we help them create a world that no longer separates the environment from the idea of being human, from the idea of how we reflect on our common future? How do we allow them to think about the history of art, music, religion, philosophy as it relates to the environment?How can we help lead the way forward? How can we create the next model for educating the next generation of leaders in this area? This is a terrific and important discussion to have."

Robert Socolow, professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering and PEI posited another challenge, particularly targeted toward those working in the field of the environmental humanities.

"Spend time not only amongst yourselves, but also with us, the scientists…. We need to work together."

The conference concluded with a roundtable discussion among 5 former Barron fellows, moderated by Hiltner, the current Barron Fellow.

The Barron Visitors Program, established in 2003, has enabled PEI to forge closer ties between environmental studies and the humanities and social sciences at Princeton. It was made possible through the generosity of Princeton alumni, Thomas A. Barron '72, and his wife, Currie, both long-time supporters of PEI. They are also credited for inspiring this conference.

During his conference remarks, Barron said, "We are, at our core, emotional beings. Our extraordinary capacities for rational thought and inquiry can be empowered—or derailed—by our emotional selves. Just as we rely on stories to understand our lives and our world, we yearn for knowledge to understand the greater story of which we are a part."

He asked, "Do we hope to change human behavior? To affect economic markets, technologies, and public policies? More than that, do we hope to survive as a species?"

If so, he said, "We will need all the comprehension we gain from the sciences and all the context we gain from the humanities. We cannot prevail, alas, with only the facts. We need to inspire loving as well as learning. And to do that, we must rely on the humanities: our stories, music, art, religion, myths, psychology, history, and cultures. The voices of all peoples, from all times."

Videos of all the conference presentations are available on the PEI website.

http://www.princeton.edu/pei/news/archive/?id=10095

April 15, 2013

InsideClimate News Team Wins Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting

ICN is the third web-based news organization to win national reporting honors, and the smallest among a trio that includes ProPublica and Huffington Post.

By InsideClimate News Staff

InsideClimate News reporters Elizabeth McGowan, Lisa Song and David Hasemyer are the winners of this year's Pulitzer Prize for national reporting.

The trio took top honors in the category for their work on "The Dilbit Disaster: Inside the Biggest Oil Spill You've Never Heard Of [2]," a project that began with a seven-month investigation into the million-gallon spill of Canadian tar sands oil into the Kalamazoo River in 2010. It broadened into an examination of national pipeline safety issue [3]s, and how unprepared the nation is for the impending flood of imports of a more corrosive and more dangerous form of oil.

The Pulitzer committee commended the reporters [4] for their "rigorous reports on flawed regulation of the nation's oil pipelines, focusing on potential ecological dangers posed by diluted bitumen (or "dilbit"), a controversial form of oil."

The recent ExxonMobil pipeline spill in Arkansas [5], which also involved heavy Canadian crude oil, underscores the continuing relevance of this ongoing body of work, as the White House struggles with reaching a decision on the controversial Keystone XL pipeline.

"It is enormously gratifying to have our work recognized with such a high honor, and I'm very proud of our entire team," said David Sassoon, founder and publisher of InsideClimate News. "It's a watershed moment for our non-profit news organization, a good day for environmental journalism, and a hopeful signal for the future of our profession."

InsideClimate News' executive editor Susan White, who conceived and edited the project, said it succeeded because of the combined talents of the three reporters.

"Elizabeth, Lisa and Dave believed deeply in these stories and were determined to do everything they could to make them clear and accessible to our readers," White said. "Elizabeth's ability to persuade people to talk, Lisa's science background and Dave's doggedness made it all work."

"The need to tell this story trumped all else," said Stacy Feldman, co-founder and managing editor. "So we figured out how to successfully balance the daily demands of an online news organization with a deep dive and commitment of resources to this long-term project."

The Pulitzer-winning entry included a three-part narrative by McGowan and Song [6], who described the unfolding of the Michigan oil spill from the point of view of those directly involved—residents; state, local and EPA officials at the scene; scientists; and spokesmen with Enbridge Inc., the company responsible for the spill. As the three-year anniversary of the spill approaches, oil is still being removed from the Kalamazoo River.

Song followed up with articles that revealed critical gaps in federal pipeline safety regulations [7], while Hasemyer focused on how Enbridge's rebuilding of the ruptured pipeline is affecting the lives of people along the route [8].

InsideClimate News is five-year-old non-profit, non-partisan news organization that covers clean energy, carbon energy, nuclear energy and environmental science. Its mission is to produce objective stories that give the public and decision-makers the information they need to navigate the heat and emotion of the climate and energy debates. It has grown from a founding staff of two to a mature virtual newsroom of seven full-time professional journalists and a growing network of contributors. It is raising funds to come to full scale in the next two to three years.

The core funders of InsideClimate News are the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Marisla Foundation and the Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment.

http://insideclimatenews.org/news/20130415/insideclimate-news-team-wins-pulitzer-prize-national-reporting

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April 19, 2013

Earth Day 2013 Message from Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director

UNEP is calling on people across the world to share their traditional knowledge and ideas of food preservation whether it be biltong in South Africa, pickling or jam making, sauerkraut in Germany, or the way shark meat is ripened and preserved in ice in Iceland.

United Nations Environment Programme

Earth Day 2013 marks a special day in itself for millions of people around the globe who care about the environment, and in many ways, for UNEP a countdown to World Environment Day on 5 June which offers another opportunity to mobilize in support of a sustainable century.

Earth Day this year is focusing on *Faces of Climate Change* - an important public awareness raising exercise given that by 2015 nations have pledged to agree on a new and inclusive UN treaty to deal with the seemingly inexorable build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and all the rising risks for countries and communities across the globe.

World Environment Day 2013, whose global host will be the government and people of Mongolia, is focused on the new UNEP and UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)

campaign *Think-Eat-Save: Reduce Your Foodprint* which is aimed at cutting the at least one third of all food produced that never makes it from the farm to the fork.

Different issues, but both connected: Every loss and waste of food represents a loss of the energy involved in growing the food in the first place, and the fuel spent needlessly on transporting produce from farms to shops and homes, often across the globe. Meanwhile small but significant amounts of methane – a powerful greenhouse gas - are linked to food thrown away into the globe's landfills set aside emissions linked with livestock and forests cleared for food that is never eaten.

Mongolia is one of the fastest growing countries in the world and one that is aiming for a transition to a green economy and a green civilization - it is not a big waster or loser of food but the traditional and nomadic life of many of its people does have some ancient answers to the modern-day challenge of food waste.

The Mongol general Chinggis Khan and his troops utilized a traditional food called borts to gallop across Asia without depending on elaborate supply chains- borts is basically concentrated beef equal to the protein of an entire cow but condensed and ground down to the size of a human fist. This remarkable method of food preservation, without refrigeration, meant a meal equivalent to several steaks when the protein was shaved into hot water to make soup.

And the Mongolians have other secrets to share that may contribute to preserving and thus not wasting food - aaruul, a form of dried curds that can last asa perfectly healthy dish or snack for years, again without refrigeration. UNEP is calling on people across the world to share their traditional knowledge and ideas of food preservation whether it be biltong in South Africa, pickling or jam making, sauerkraut in Germany, or the way shark meat is ripened and preserved in ice in Iceland. Please send your suggestions, ideas and ancient tips to worldenvironmentday@unep.org so we can document them on the WED website.

Earth Day and WED 2013 are linked as are the challenges and the opportunities for delivering economic growth and generating decent green jobs without pushing humanity's footing past planetary boundaries. Reducing food waste and food loss is an economic, ethical and environmental challenge as is climate change. Both need addressing urgently and in seeing the links we can deliver multiple benefits in line with the transition to a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Further Resources

- World Environment Day (WED) 2013
- Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint
- Earth Day Message from UNHCR

http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2712&ArticleID=9477&l=en

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April 20, 2013

In Love With My Planet

Interview by Dominique Browning
New York Times

Dominique Browning spoke with Sebastião Salgado, the documentary photographer and author, about the inspiration for his forthcoming book “Genesis.”

These beautiful photographs are so different from your previous work. Tell me about that.

They are different, but in the end, they come around to the same place. They have the same message. We are living in a very special moment, when the effect of everything we are doing to our world is accelerating. If we do not pay attention now, we will be facing catastrophe. A big red light should be blinking in all our brains.

What was your state of mind when you began this project?

I worked on my last book, “Migrations,” for many years. What I saw was a human disaster unfolding in front of me. I was very close to so many deaths. It was a very sad, very violent time.

And I felt all of it in my body, in my mind. I was becoming quite ill.

At the same time my parents were also becoming very old. They asked me to return to our farm in Brazil. This is where I was born, and where I grew up — in a paradise. We grew beautiful food, we swam in the rivers, we watched amazing animals, we rode horses; the forests that covered our land were healthy and gorgeous.

When I returned, I was shocked by what I saw. It was not the same place. Not just my farm, the entire region. More than 70 percent of our region was covered by the forest when I was growing up; by the time I returned, it was a fraction of its size. Our farm was in an even worse condition. We lost so much.

Your country is the same. Look at the incredible forests you have in Colorado, in the West. It is disappearing. Look at what you are losing. We are destroying our planet.

My wife, Lelia Deluiz Wanick, and I have been together for more than 40 years. She is a designer. We do everything in our lives together. Everything. We work together. She is my partner in every sense.

Lelia said to me, Why don’t we return to Brazil, and plant the rain forest again? It was a brilliant idea.

So you became an Adam and Eve?

We did! And if we can, so many others can do the same.

We are restoring our forests. We raised money from foundations, from the government, and we have planted two million trees to date, with 170 different species of trees. We turned our land into a nature preserve, and created an educational center for the environment, Instituto Terra.

And this is what made me begin this “Genesis” project.

I wanted to photograph the beauty of things born again.

Did you have a goal in mind?

I wanted to show people what we are losing. Our very existence on this planet is in danger.

I wanted to sample many different parts of the world; I went to every different region. I convinced several foundations to participate. I knew it was going to be a long-term commitment. It would take me eight years.

The journey ended up leading me to surprising places.

And was this journey healing for you?

You cannot imagine how this project restored my soul.

When I look back and think what we have done in Brazil, in the last eight years: my wife and I, alone, are producing a forest. We are sequestrating so much carbon with the trees we are planting. If we can do this, just two people, imagine what we all can do together. Imagine what governments can do if they decide it is important.

We can restore the biodiversity we are losing. Now, in Brazil, we are working on a project to restore the headwaters of the Rio Doce.

I believe that all together we are coming to another ideal for our planet. We are waking up.

A big hope began to grow inside me. And I think hope is also growing in the world.

You are living your own Genesis of sorts!

Yes. I am living in Genesis. All of us, we are part of a movement now. We do many things to our planet because we have no information about the problems we cause. We have to make people aware of the damage. Then they will change.

I believe we are living in a bright moment.

How will people be able to see your new work?

There will be a new book. And we have four major museum shows, in London, Toronto, Rome and Rio de Janeiro. But nothing in the United States. I cannot believe the bureaucracy of the

museums there. I have had big museum shows, that's not the problem. They told us they were interested, but for shows in 2017, 2018!

Does your book point a way forward for humankind?

I have no agenda to go back to the way of living that I show. I don't like the word "primitive." What I show is old. We are used to a kind of comfort now, and we are not going to lose that.

But we must become conscious. We must begin to heal our world.

With this project, I fell in love with my planet. This work is not about landscapes. It is about love.

Sebastião Salgado is a documentary photographer and the author of nine books, including the forthcoming "Genesis." A Unicef good-will ambassador, he is an honorary member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences. Dominique Browning is the senior director of MomsCleanAirForce.org. She blogs at SlowLoveLife.com.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/20/opinion/sunday/in-love-with-my-planet.html?_r=0

April 24, 2013

Defying Without Defiance:

Morning-after Reflections on EQAT's Action at the Annual Meeting of PNC Bank

By George Lakey
GreenPNC

We had decided to break the rules. Not a big thing for people whose temperament or life experience leads them to a defiant attitude toward authority. But we happened to be mostly middle class people, heavily conditioned to fit in, to obey the rules. Our socialization had led to professional and, for the students, academic success.

And here we were, with a priority that required breaking the rules. For us, a big thing.

Twice before Earth Quaker Action Team members had gone to the annual shareholders meeting of PNC Bank and obeyed their rules, spoken out during the allotted time in the meeting, expressed our concern about PNC's large role in mountaintop removal coal mining and the climate crisis. We'd supported people from Appalachia to be there, speaking to PNC's board about the injury and death that stems from PNC's choice to put profits first. We'd brought the eighty-year-old grandson of one of PNC's founders to tell them an evil banking practice was not

what his grandpa had in mind.

We even walked 200 miles across Pennsylvania, witnessing in PNC bank branches along the way, to lift up to Pennsylvanians the full reality of the "green bank" that "helps children grow up great."

This time in the shareholders meeting place in downtown Pittsburgh, our hearts were beating fast. The August Wilson Center for African American Culture was closed to visitors so the beautifully coiffed, dark-suited shareholders could survey the coffee, juice, and artistic goodies arrayed for their enjoyment. We'd bought shares, too, but were mostly too nervous to enjoy the pastries. I noticed a hushed atmosphere that matched the subdued tones of the architecture; no one seemed to be there to party.

The sixteen of us, organized into pairs, dispersed ourselves through the auditorium. We'd dressed up for the occasion, although the steely stares of the also-dressed-up security officers seemed to look right through us. My dark blue blazer, I thought, wasn't fooling anyone. I'm not really a PNC loyalist, or even, come to think of it, that loyal to the 1 percent that was slowly filling the room.

A very tall man who I later realized was chief of security came over to me, alongside a shorter man wearing glasses and the obligatory suit and tie. Our plan included presenting an award to outgoing CEO James Rohr for his failing to bank like Appalachia matters and financing instead the ruination of the region. The shorter man, somehow already knowing this, told me that when I presented the award I could give the framed certificate to him because he would represent CEO Rohr and hand it to him later. The tall one facilitated our brief conversation, sizing me up, so I noted to him as we parted that he and I were probably the tallest guys in the room. He smiled.

I joined my partner for the morning, a Haverford College senior, to sit on the end of a row about halfway back from the stage. I wanted room to maneuver because I was to be the first to break into the PNC agenda to start our own, Quaker, agenda.

This was our consultant Daniel Hunter's idea. Quakers are as accustomed to meetings as bankers are, so we would come from our strength, create an agenda, and hold our meeting while PNC was holding its own.

James Rohr called his meeting to order and the shareholders stopped chatting and looked to the stage where Rohr sat flanked by William Demchak, his successor, and corporation secretary George Long. Our Quaker meeting would go into silent worship, out of which would come my vocal ministry in the form of the award to be presented to Rohr.

I was grateful for our silence and the opportunity to sink into it. I was aware of James Rohr outlining his agenda and calling for the reading of the minutes while at the same time I prayed for the courage to rise when the inner bidding came. A steadiness emerged within me at the same time as a rising sense that the moment had come, just as it does for me before sharing vocal ministry back home in Central Philadelphia's worship. I know the attitude of defiance well – that's a familiar part of my life – but that's not what was going on now. Before standing I

flashed for a second on the seventeenth century Friends who interrupted church services with their own ministry, and I thanked God once again for that centuries-old legacy of strength and courage.

Then I rose, stepped into the aisle and made the inaudible Quaker meeting prominent in the auditorium. I took my time, addressing not only the stage but also the assembled shareholders, looking many of them in the eye before introducing Brandon from West Virginia who spoke about the pain, cancer and desolation brought by mountaintop removal coal mining.

James Rohr frequently tried to return the meeting to PNC's agenda, but security people on heightened alert were not asked to enforce his efforts. Amy Ward Brimmer pointed out that already over $3,000,000 has been moved out of PNC because of its willful refusal to bank like Appalachia matters. Other EQAT members addressed board members by name, asking whether they would now commit to a full sectoral exclusion of mountaintop removal. After each of those individual board members had been addressed from wherever in the auditorium that EQAT member was, we all sang softly together, "Which side are you on?"

We took a break at a point where our agenda and PNC's coincided. A representative of Boston Common Asset Management advocated for a shareholders' resolution that called on the bank to note the existence of climate change and to set up a study commission to consider how the bank will respond to increasing crisis. This shareholders' resolution was joined by Friends Fiduciary Corporation, a Quaker agency that invests funds of Quaker groups and meetings. PNC management had refused to accept the shareholders resolution for its agenda until the Security and Exchange Commission ruled that it must. Boston Common's representative noted the bank's effort to green itself through vegetated roofs on its branches and fluorescent lights, but said if it came to a choice, she would rather see it give up the far more significant mountaintop removal.

As in most corporations, PNC management controls the majority of stock. Rohr declared that the majority of the shareholders voted down the resolution to set up a study commission on climate change.

The Quaker meeting agenda then continued to unfold so consistently that Rohr projected a promotional PNC video on a large screen on the stage, cranking up the volume. For the most part we declined to compete with the video, which was soon concluded.

We then went on to call on additional board members (who were seated in front of us in auditorium seats) to accept individual accountability, for which they are well-rewarded by the bank, and take a stand for conscience' sake in the presence of people from Appalachia.

After each board member was addressed by name, we again sang from many parts of the room, "Which side are you on?"

James Rohr threw up his hands and declared the meeting adjourned. Ingrid Lakey began to sing "This little light of mine," we joined in, and sang joyfully as we slowly left the room along with the other shareholders.

On the way out of the room I looked into the eyes of two of the plainclothes police officers, a man and a woman, and saw the coldest, meanest eyes I have ever seen. I have twice been confronted by men with knives drawn, but their eyes were alive
with passion. These two, in their dark suits and hidden guns, gave me the most chilling looks of my life.

But then evil is not really a new thing for Quakers to confront. It's in our cultural DNA, whether we've seen it in Puritan fanatics in Massachusetts or Gestapo officers in Germany or racists in southern U.S. lunch counters. Nor is there anything wrong with evildoers being met by an attitude of defiance, whether it's expressed on a picket line by angry workers once again deprived of justice or by college students seeing boards of directors who prefer business as usual to acting decisively in joining a movement to save the planet.

What I found yesterday, however, was a sweetness in defying without defiance. I watched widely-respected Quaker women like Ann Yasuhara and Carolyn McCoy --brought up to obey the rules -- simply making the truth more important than fitting in. I watched students act on their own behalf, insisting that institutions respect their future rather than protecting the dead hand of the past.

And I enjoyed the solidarity and cooperativeness of EQAT's group culture, which is learning to let go of class-instilled pretense, let go of class-trained timidity, and simply to act as though life is more important than obeying the rules.

http://www.greenpnc.org/blog/defying-without-defiance

May 2013

Water Ethics Newsletter

http://us1.campaign-archive1.com/?u=31982f6e4937945bfaddf6712&id=70bf222ab0&e=495d1f20da

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May 2013

For God So Loved the World

By Rose Marie Berger
Sojourners Magazine

What will it take to push back climate change? A Spirit-driven 'power shift' might be a key.

NEW YORK CITY has been bombed at least twice in the past decade. First by al Qaeda and second by Hurricane Sandy.

In the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks, the United States launched two ground wars and a worldwide "war on terror." Within two months, Congress federalized the Transportation Security Administration to secure airports. More than 263 government organizations were either created or reorganized. Some 1,931 private companies were put to work on counterterrorism, homeland security, and intelligence. Rightly or wrongly, America moved heaven and earth to stop terrorism in its tracks. It was seen as both an ongoing threat and a moral affront that had to be dealt with.

What about Climate Change?

In February, a New York State Senate task force on Superstorm Sandy compared the hurricane that affected 24 states to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. "[On 9/11] there were more than 3,000 souls lost, but in terms of the geographic destruction, it was isolated to Lower Manhattan," said Sen. Andrew Lanza (R-Staten Island). "[After Sandy] we have miles and miles and miles of destruction. Hundreds of thousands of homes affected, 60 ... New Yorkers killed, 250,000 to 260,000 businesses affected."

Hurricane Sandy killed 253 people in seven countries. It was the second largest Atlantic hurricane ever recorded—and the most expensive. It smashed into the East Coast with barely three days' warning. Like hurricanes Katrina and Rita before it, Sandy was a disaster of biblical proportions.

After 9/11, Americans knew in our gut that something was seriously wrong. Our moral intuition had been sucker punched.

Climate change—and its deadly implications—has been harder to grasp. There's a lot of complicated science involved. Instead of a single incident, we're inundated with seemingly disconnected events. And, despite the evidence, we often fail to see it as a "crime."

But global warming is a clear and present danger—with perpetrators, victims, and, most important, solutions.

However, before we tackle this conundrum as Americans, we need to wrestle with it as Christians. We need to understand climate change as a religious and moral issue.

Morality is defined as the relation between a human act and the final destiny of the human being. In secular terms morality is measured by whether a human act is normative for the culture or disruptive of the norm.

The Bible, our Christian tradition, and God's active Spirit in the world today form the foundation for what Christians consider "normative" (a wide, yet recognizable, spectrum, to be sure). We determine if something is a moral issue first by examining what is normative and second by how out of sync the question at hand is from the norm.

In the case of global climate change, we can pose this question: If God is at the center of all, and the world and everything in it are created for God's delight, then does the known trajectory of climate change serve to delight and gladden the heart of God?

If we answer that the trajectory of climate change isn't real or won't bother God, then climate change is not a religious concern. But if we answer that the likely effects will *not* delight God, then climate change *is* a religious and moral issue.

Allen Johnson, of Christians for the Mountains, says that for too long the environmental debate has been between an anthropocentric position, that the earth is only for human use, and a biocentric position, that all living beings are created equal and should be treated equally.

But Judeo-Christian religious teaching pushes us out of this dichotomy toward the theocentric position. God is at the center of all. Creation, the world, nature, and our environment were made by God for God's delight and pleasure. Our human role is to "bring forth its glory," says Johnson, "for the greater glory and honor of God—not primarily for ourselves."

According to scripture, God takes pleas-ure in creation. Genesis 1 repeats seven times, "And God saw everything that God had made, and behold, it was good" (verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 31). Psalm 104 says, "May the glory of the Lord endure forever, may the Lord rejoice in his works" (verse 31). Human-induced climate change is a sin against the delight of God.

If we know the causes of climate change but are too proud or set in our ways to take action to reverse it, what does that say about our personal relationship with God?

Some Christians counter climate change "hysteria" by saying that "God has no limits," implying that God will take care of human beings no matter what limits *we* overrun. This theology holds that God will provide another burnable fuel resource ("just like he did with uranium," one Regent University professor told me some years ago) when oil and coal run out.

But this idea of unlimited human action is anti-biblical. God sets limits on human beings. There are commandments to keep. Natural laws are built into the created order. When there is an unlimited growth in the human body, we call it cancerous. While God may be unlimited, humankind is not. Part of the Christian duty, as fitting for those with "stewardship" responsibilities for creation, is to live within our means—whether as a family or as a species.

"There is a serious misconception [in the evangelical community] ... that we do not have the power or omnipotence to affect this planet in a serious way," says Johnson. "That God created this planet, and it's going to continue its course on a good path, and that human hubris is not that powerful. The reality is quite the contrary. Hubris and self-idolatry of humankind is of such a magnitude that it *does* compete with God. We must not let the idols, especially Mammon—the desire for comfort, wealth, the lust for money—rule us. ... The integrity of our faith is at stake." God's first commandment is clear: You shall have no other gods before me. Human hubris is an idol of the first order.

God *loves* this world. "The skies are my throne, the earth is my footstool, what sort of temple could you mortals build for me that could house my glory? ... I made all this. I own all this!" (Isaiah 66:1-2, paraphrased) To allow the profaning of the Lord's house is an abomination that cannot stand. God demands sanctity around God's throne and holiness upon God's footstool.

American Christians often refer to John 3:16 as a "conversion passage." "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Here's my challenge: If we want abundant life, then we need to love the world the way God does. Either Christianity is a religion that embraces John 3:16 or it is not.

THERE SIMPLY IS no authentic or satisfactory religion or morality that would be knowingly complicit with such a catastrophic destruction of our social and physical environment as climate change will bring on, says moral psychologist Jonathan Webber.

In 2010, the world evangelical movement came to a similar assessment as Webber when more than 4,000 evangelical Christian leaders in the Lausanne Movement met in Cape Town, South Africa, and added "creation care" to the global evangelical agenda. In 2012, a subgroup met in St. Ann, Jamaica, to embrace as a central tenet that "creation care is indeed a gospel issue within the lordship of Christ." As a global body, the Lausanne Movement takes World Health Organization reports seriously: In developing countries, the major killers—diarrheal diseases, malnutrition, malaria, and dengue—"are highly climate-sensitive and are expected to worsen as the climate changes." Climate change already causes more than 140,000 excess deaths annually.

For evangelist Charlotte Keys, fighting global warming is all about life. "We've got to stop 'raping and scraping' the land for whatever we can get," says the founder of Jesus People Against Pollution in Columbia, Miss. "Whatever the problems that we have created, then the Lord has also given us the wisdom, the knowledge, and the understanding to fix it. We have the solution to the pollution."

The Challenge Before Us

Before we can roll up our sleeves, we need to be clear: The obstacles ahead are daunting.

First, we've got to connect the dots. Sept. 11 was a singular event that uncovered a web of international criminal activity. Climate disruption is the culmination of events we often perceive as random that will result in a planet too hot for human life as we've known it since Genesis.

It's taken scientists a while to come to one mind on all this. "Climatologists are very conservative people when it comes to saying that something is happening or not happening," says researcher and geographer Janel Curry, provost at Gordon College in Wenham, Mass. "Over my working career I've seen them move from a position of not having all the data [on climate change] to saying we are 50 percent certain to saying that [these are] human-induced effects."

Normally, our environment absorbs carbon dioxide (CO 2) and other greenhouse gases through forests, oceans, and natural carbon sequestration. But our industrial carbon dioxide waste and other similar "greenhouse" pollutants have overloaded the earth's natural systems to the point where they can't keep up.

As we increase industrial carbon dioxide in our atmosphere and decrease our earth's ability to dispose of the excess, we are straining God's great gift. "We are reaching the tipping point where major climate changes can proceed mostly under their own momentum," says leading NASA climatologist Dr. James Hansen.

If the rate of CO 2 and black carbon emissions don't radically drop in the next 20 years, then the world we leave our grandchildren will be one of massive violent storms, rampant infectious disease, hazardous continually shifting coastlines, armed conflict over water and arable land, starvation due to loss of agricultural, fish, and livestock production, and family and cultural breakdown. "[It] will continue for as many generations as we care to think about," writes Hansen in his prophetic book *Storms of My Grandchildren*. "Global chaos will be difficult to avoid."

It has already begun. For example, coral reefs are a critical part of the ocean food chain. Because the oceans are warming and becoming more acidic, coral reefs are dying; more than half of the coral in the Caribbean is already dead. Nearly half of all the ocean fish we eat depend on coral reefs.

The world has to live within its "carbon budget" and bring CO 2 levels back down to 350 parts per million, the level that climate scientists agree is the maximum conducive to preserving the temperature range of the planet that allowed human civilization to develop and thrive. We are currently hovering around 390 parts per million. "Concentrations of CO 2 in the atmosphere are likely to hit 400 parts per million this coming spring or next," reports David Biello in a *Scientific American* podcast.

This is not the world as God intends.

Some say it will take a miracle to turn this around, which is why it's so important for Christians to lead on reversing climate change. We are people familiar with the mechanics of miracles.

What We Can Do About It

From a scientific perspective, the first thing we must do is slow down the rate of climate change on our way to a low fossil-fuel future.

"From the perspective of climate science," says Texas Tech professor Katharine Hayhoe, "we know that climate change is happening faster now and to a greater degree than science has predicted over the last 20 years. The faster climate changes, the faster the impacts will occur, and the less time we have to prepare and adapt."

"That's why the most important thing we can do right now is to slow the rate of change," Hayhoe says. "We can do this by reducing our emissions of heat-trapping gases such as methane and black carbon particulates. This is not a permanent fix: For that, we have to reduce carbon. But it will buy us some time, and we need that time, very badly, right now."

In the last 40 years, the U.S. has significantly cleaned up its urban air through regulations and new technologies (such as catalytic converters). In December, the EPA set new health standards for airborne fine particulate matter. This provides a regulatory framework for pushing industry to clean up what comes out of smokestacks and tailpipes. In 2012, the Obama administration went further than its predecessors by requiring a doubling of the average fuel economy of new cars and trucks by 2025. But this legislation will only slow, not substantially change, our climate trajectory.

"The U.S. and Canada are both moving ahead in their plans to greatly expand the export to China of coal from Western states and bitumen, a very dirty, high-carbon fossil fuel extracted from the oil sands of Alberta, Canada," says biologist Joseph Sheldon. "In the next two years, both Canada and the United States have an opportunity to lead as responsible global citizens and alter our direction. As a first step, the export of coal and bitumen to China, India, and other countries that lack clean burning technologies should be immediately stopped."

The grassroots movement to stop the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, necessary to transport the high-carbon tar sands fuel from Alberta, is one populist attempt to slow the rate of climate change by stopping the production of black soot and carbon-intensive emissions.

But that's just a precursor to what's needed for the long term: "As a world leader, the U.S. should launch a strategic program for a fossil-fuel-free economy," says Sheldon; "... it's certainly possible to be largely free of fossil fuels by 2030."

Every Choice Matters

Starting now, every decision we make has to advance us toward a society "largely free of fossil fuels by 2030."

For instance, the U.S. must invest heavily in building our capacity for a renewables-based energy system, says Hayhoe. "Electricity generation, transportation, industry: All of these sectors work on lead times of decades, not years. We need to put the framework in place *this year*, to ensure that they are moving toward carbon-neutral energy sources over the next few decades," Hayhoe says.

The current industry strategy is to power up on wind and nuclear power to meet the energy needs in the U.S. However, long-term reliance on nuclear power has major problems (even with recent safety and efficiency improvements), including the massive use of water and the issue of high-level radioactive waste, which is hazardous to most life forms and the environment. The waste problem is nowhere near solved, and the specter of another Fukushima looms large.

However, new low-carbon electricity generation technology is available—and it is already in widespread use in other countries. The barrier for commercial use in the U.S. has been lack of economic incentive. We need to remove that barrier.

"In my view, the most significant actions that could be taken to reduce global warming would be to cut our personal net carbon footprint by 30 percent in two years," says Peter Vander Meulen of the Christian Reformed Church.

But wise electricity use at home needs to move beyond reducing consumption or increasing efficiency, though both are needed. Now energy users can become energy producers as well, nodes in a distributed-generation energy grid.

This is especially critical in low-income communities, where energy generation is also about job creation and pathways to a stable economic future. In Richmond, Calif., for example, more than a third of the city's households earn less than $35,000 a year. But the local startup Solar

Richmond helped that community become first among Bay Area cities in generating watts per capita and second in total watts generated, in addition to providing jobs, training, and a worker-owned clean energy cooperative.

From an economic perspective, the U.S. needs to make dirty energy expensive and clean energy cheap. Right now there are two competing approaches to regulation: "Cap and fee" and removing government subsidies for oil companies will make dirty fuel more expensive. Multiyear extensions of the clean energy Production Tax Credit and Manufacturing Tax Credit, other incentive programs, and significant direct public financing for clean renewable energy technology will make clean energy cheaper. Despite the urgency of our predicament, we spend a lot of political capital fighting over these two approaches. It's time to break the deadlock and do both.

Government policy, regulations, and investments won't be enough to reverse climate change, but climate change won't be reversed without them.

A Christian 'Power Shift'

A century and a half ago, revivalist Charles Finney wrote, "The Christian church has it in her power to reform this nation. ... No [nation] has had strength to resist any reform which God's people have unitedly demanded."

If Christians and other people of faith, here and abroad, decided to "unitedly" rise up and demand that our nation and world turn away from the planet-threatening actions that have fed global warming, it would launch an irresistible force for change.

But such a faith-based uprising will take a "revival" movement every bit as significant as the Great Awakenings led by Finney and others. Some of the actions along the way will be life-giving, even fun. But the movement will also require hard choices, change, compromise, and opting for the common good over individual ease.

Many times in the last two millennia, Christians have risen to similar challenges, and acted to change societies in unpredictable and unexpected ways. When the church has done so, an outpouring of spiritual revival has often accompanied the movement for social change—that is, it wasn't just the world that was changed: Members of the church experienced profound conversion as well.

This is happening already at Austin Heights Baptist Church in Nacogdoches, Texas, where pastor Kyle Childress and his congregation had been praying for a vital young adult ministry. When his church reached out to the young protesters fighting the Keystone XL pipeline under construction just 20 miles away, four showed up in church. The next Sunday there were 30. Isn't this the new life that we owe to ourselves, to our communities, and to God?

Will we meet the Lord in water teeming with living creatures, birds in the vault of the sky, livestock and wild animals moving on the land, each according to their kind? Will we defend climate refugees, the "widows and orphans" of our time? Will we be stewards who practice kindness in the earth, so that God will look and see that it is good, so that God will take delight?

The Christian tradition is raising its voice, naming the undeniable need for just such a movement in our time. We need a faith revival on behalf of the world as God intends, a planet where life not simply survives but thrives, a creation where God is at the center and delights in it.

Can I get an amen? It's going to take all of us, in a massive Spirit-driven power shift. Are you ready?

Rose Marie Berger *is an associate editor of* Sojourners.

http://sojo.net/magazine/2013/05/god-so-loved-world

May 2013

The Gathering Storm

By Janelle Tupper

Sojourners Magazine

Climate change leads to far more consequences than just destructive weather patterns.

Climate scientists have warned that climate change will bring about—and already is bringing about—more frequent and fiercer storms. But climate change leads to far more than just destructive weather patterns, with consequences in almost all aspects of our lives. Here are just a few of the many possible effects of our rising global temperature.

Natural disasters will increase.
Climate change increases the risk of natural disasters that disproportionately affect low-income people who lack the resources to prepare, recover, or relocate.

Food will be scarcer and more expensive.
Food prices increase as farmers face new levels of unpredictability in weather patterns. Drought and floods may cause widespread soil infertility and increased plant diseases.

We'll experience more drought—and floods.
Changes in weather patterns lead to both increased drought and flooding, because warmer air can hold more water. Many dry places will become drier, while others will be inundated with rain.

We'll get sicker.
Warmer temperatures broaden the geographic range of insects that carry deadly diseases such as malaria, affecting more people. Warm air holds pollution closer to the ground, increasing respiratory illness. Diseases such as AIDS, which are linked to migration, poverty, and malnutrition, may also increase.

Human trafficking will increase.
With increased migration and job loss from agricultural instability, populations—and especially women—become increasingly vulnerable. As traditional sources of income evaporate, the incentive to exploit others becomes higher.

Some will have to flee their homes.
As land becomes uninhabitable due to agricultural and water instability, flooding, disease, or the effects of natural disasters, more people will be forced to leave their homes to seek opportunity elsewhere.

More people will be out of work.
Climate change could eliminate whole industries, such as commercial fishing and ecological tourism, and adverse conditions could destroy jobs in agriculture and industry.

The plant and animal world will become less diverse.
Rising temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns have already affected the habitat and range of many species, and ocean acidification due to increased carbon pollution leads to coral reef loss and other adverse outcomes.

Budget deficits will increase.
Climate change will increase costs in many areas, from infrastructure to healthcare, from unemployment and food assistance to disaster response—accompanied by lowered economic productivity.

Energy supplies will drop, and prices will rise.
Water shortages will leave hydroelectric dams under-powered, and natural disasters affect power plants and reduce the capacity to respond—while rising temperatures increase demand for uses such as air conditioning.

The gap between rich and poor will get worse.
The effects of climate change fall disproportionately on the people that have done the least to cause it and have the fewest resources to cope with disruptions—the poor. Social disintegration caused by climate change will widen existing gaps both globally and locally.

International conflicts and wars will multiply.
Decreased food security and water access may lead to resource conflict as people struggle to survive. Some countries may become uninhabitable, while other previously uninhabitable lands may become desirable and fought over. Increased migration also leads to international tension.

... Unless we act.

While many of these effects are already happening, the worst-case scenario isn't at all inevitable. We have the power to end our reliance on fossil fuels and chart a new path toward a sustainable future. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"—let's treat it that way!

Janelle Tupper *is campaigns assistant for Sojourners.*

http://sojo.net/magazine/2013/05/gathering-storm

May 2013

No Time for Arm-Chair Activists

By Julie Polter
Sojourners Magazine

Those who study together can also change together. Here are our recommendations for good books, videos, and online resources for stepping forward to reverse climate change.

BOOKS

Faith meets science

- Scientist Katharine Hayhoe and her spouse, evangelical pastor and writer Andrew Farley, gently and wisely respond to the concerns of those who deny the reality of climate change in **A Climate for Change: Global Warming Facts for Faith-Based Decisions** (FaithWords). An accessible exploration of the science behind climate change and the faith-based reasons why Christians can and must act.

- Ben Lowe, of Young Evangelicals for Climate Action, describes the rise of climate leadership on Christian college campuses in **Green Revolution: Coming Together to Care for Creation** (IVP Books).

- In **Global Warming and the Risen LORD: Christian Discipleship and Climate Change** (Evangelical Environmental Network), Jim Ball offers biblical and spiritual resources needed to meet the challenge.

- **No Oil in the Lamp: Fuel, Faith and the Energy Crisis** (DLT Books), by Andy Mellen and Neil Hollow, is part science manual, part Bible study and points toward a Christian theology for resource depletion and "peak oil." The unexpected foreword by the CEO of a top U.K. energy company adds depth.

- **God, Creation, and Climate Change: A Catholic Response to the Environmental Crisis** (Orbis Books), edited by Richard W. Miller, collects original essays by leading Catholic theologians and ethicists to give theological and biblical perspectives on our environmental crisis.

- **Green Discipleship: Catholic Theological Ethics and the Environment** (Anselm Academic), edited by Tobias Winright, is a compendium drawing on scholars from the fields of ecology, biology, history, and sociology, and includes study group aids.

It also has the text of "If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation," a January 2010 speech by Pope Benedict XVI, which can also be found at www.vatican.va.

- **Sacred Acts: How Churches are Working to Protect Earth's Climate** (New Society), by Mallory McDuff, looks at local churches' best practices to reverse climate change.

Scared Straight

- **In Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet** (St. Martin's Griffin), Bill McKibben explains the drastic ways the planet has already been altered by environmental degradation and argues for scaled-down societies and economies that emphasize community.

- The subtitle of **Storms of My Grandchildren: The Truth About the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our Last Chance to Save Humanity** (Bloomsbury USA) sums up the hard truth and glimmer of hope that James Hansen, the world's leading climatologist, has to offer.

Theological and Ethical Foundations

- In **Earth-Honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key** (Oxford), social ethicist Larry L. Rasmussen asserts that we must expand our understanding of spirituality and ethics to fully embrace creation if we are to find the cultural and moral resources we need to move toward "wise stewardship of all life."

- **Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision**(Eerdmans), by Randy S. Woodley (Keetoowah Cherokee), professor of faith and culture at George Fox Evangelical Seminary, refreshes our understanding of biblical *shalom* and how we might restore right relationship with one another and creation.

- See also **The Blue Sapphire of the Mind: Notes for a Contemplative Ecology**, by Douglas E. Christie (Oxford) and **A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming**, by Sallie McFague (Fortress).

BOOKLETS & FILMLETS

- **Dried Up, Drowned Out** is the title of both a 5-minute video and a 20-page report from the British Christian aid agency Tearfund, which feature voices from the developing world on a changing climate and illustrate the suffering that poor communities already experience due to climate change. www.tearfund.org/en/get_involved/campaign/climatechange/driedup

- **Loving the Least of These: Addressing a Changing Environment**, by Dorothy Boorse, is a booklet from the National Association of Evangelicals that focuses on

the relationship between a changing environment and poverty, offering scientific and biblical insights, along with practical next steps.

FILMS & OTHER VISUALS

- **Chasing Ice**, directed by Jeff Orlowski, is the story of the Extreme Ice Survey: Environmental photographers placed time-lapse cameras on glaciers in Greenland, Iceland, Montana, and Alaska to provide a multiyear record as the glaciers recede. Stunning yet sobering images of rugged beauty—and the earth's natural cooling system—lost forever. The endless rivers of melting ice show us how much damage has already been done.

- **Sun Come Up**, directed by Jennifer Redfearn, is an Academy Award-nominated film that follows the relocation of the Carteret Islanders, a community living on a remote island chain in the South Pacific Ocean, who are some of the world's first climate refugees, forced to leave their ancestral home by rising sea levels.

- Photographer Garth Lenz documents Canada's Alberta Tar Sands mining operations and the boreal forest ecosystem destroyed by them in the traveling exhibition, **The True Cost of Oil: Canada's Tar Sands and the Last Great Forest**. You can view these images and commentary at www.garthlenz.com.

Julie Polter *is an associate editor of* Sojourners *magazine.*

http://sojo.net/magazine/2013/05/no-time-arm-chair-activists

May 2013

Feeding our Imagination

By Mallory McDuff

Sojourners Magazine

Fiction with a climate change theme.

CRITICS HAVE BEMOANED the lack of fiction centered on climate change, which seems to mirror our public sluggishness about this scientific reality. But two recent novels, Barbara Kingsolver's **Flight Behavior** (Harper) and Lauren Groff's **Arcadia** (Voice), artfully integrate climate change into their plotlines, weaving scientific truth about global warming into the lives of fictional characters. Just as compelling, both works of fiction feature spiritual community at the center of critical decisions about the future of the land and its inhabitants.

Flight Behavior is a lyrical story set in rural Tennessee with the fiercely intelligent Dellarobia Turnbow as the main character. She encounters a vast sea of monarch butterflies that seem to have taken a wrong turn on their migratory path, a result of a miracle—or a warming planet. Journalists, ecologists, and locals speculate about the misplaced monarchs. In an impassioned but measured plea for the land, the local pastor invokes a biblical mandate for creation care.

In *Arcadia*, climate change doesn't enter the narrative until the conclusion of the story, which is the tale of an intentional community started in the 1960s. The central character, Bit Stone, returns to a failed commune in upstate New York, where he grew up, to care for his ailing mother. Set in 2018, the dystopian conclusion is marked by climate change and global pandemics, but the values of the original spiritual community set up a struggle between the desire for freedom and the creation of shared life.

Reading both books, I could imagine myself inhabiting these worlds, in ways more personal than when I read a news report about global warming. Fiction allows us to live into a reality relevant to our time and to visualize our own reactions to the events on the page.

In the midst of such chaos, the central place of spiritual community in both books allows us to imagine acting on our collective connection to people and places. We need both values and action to reverse warming, adapt our communities, and build our resilience to the life-altering impacts of climate change.

Mallory McDuff *teaches environmental education at Warren Wilson College in North Carolina. She is the author of S*acred Acts: How Churches are Working to Protect Earth's Climate and Natural Saints. *For a longer review, see her post on the God's Politics blog.*

http://sojo.net/magazine/2013/05/feeding-our-imagination

May 2013

The Battle is Joined

By Bill McKibben
Sojourners Magazine

We can see in our mind's eye all the generations to come, and so we know why we fight.

ALL I EVER wanted to see was a movement of people to stop climate change, and now I've seen it. And it looks so beautiful. It's hometown heroes like our friends in D.C. who've been fighting coal plants, and far-flung heroes like those who've been bravely blocking the Keystone XL pipeline with their bodies in Texas. It's people who understand that the fight against fracking and

coal ports and taking the tops off mountains is ultimately the fight for a living planet; it's people who have lived through Sandy and survived the drought, some of whom I got to go to jail with recently.

It's the students at 252 colleges who are now fighting the fossil fuel industry head on to force divestment of their school's stock—the biggest student movement in decades. It's all of you—you are the antibodies kicking in, as the planet tries to fight its fever.

We've waited a very long time to get started, I fear. We've already watched the Arctic melt; our colleagues in 191 countries tell us daily of some new drought or flood.

Because we've waited this long, the easiest answers are no longer enough; we're going to have to make tough decisions. Our theme has to be: When you're in a hole, stop digging. Above all stop the Keystone XL pipeline. The president can do it with a single stroke of his pen, and if he does he will become the first world leader to veto a big project because it's bad for the climate. That would be a legacy—and a signal to the rest of the world that we're serious about this fight. It's his test.

And so we will keep making our case—we will follow the president and the secretary of state wherever they go this spring. But we'll have actions across the country that focus on all the other holes we're still digging too. And as summer comes on, I hope you'll circle those days toward the end of July that are, on average, the hottest each year. We're going to try and make them politically hot too—maybe set aside a few dollars each week for a bail fund?

SO FAR WE'VE been firm but peaceful, diverse but united. We have to stay that way, because the job we've undertaken is the most important one that any humans have ever been entrusted with. It is our job to make sure that the planet doesn't catastrophically overheat. The oil companies aren't going to do that—their business plan is to wreck the earth. The government isn't going to do that—they're too busy taking money from the oil companies.

But history shows that, though we'll never outspend the fossil fuel industry, we can find other currencies to work with: passion, spirit, creativity; the powerful love for the future that brought us into the struggle. We can see in our mind's eye all the generations to come, and so we know why we fight. We can see the beauty of the world we've been given—the cold of a winter day, the color on an autumn hillside—and so we know why we fight. We know our brothers and sisters in the poorest parts of the world are already suffering—and so we know why we fight.

I can't promise you we're going to win. But I've waited a quarter century, since I wrote the first book about all of this, to see if we were going to fight. And now, having been energized by the biggest climate rally in U.S. history, I know we will. The battle—the most fateful battle in human history—is finally joined. And we will fight it together.

Bill McKibben *is the Schumann Distinguished Scholar at Middlebury College in Vermont and founder of 350.org. This column is adapted from his speech at the largest climate rally in U.S. history, Feb. 17 in Washington, D.C.*

http://sojo.net/magazine/2013/05/battle-joined

May 2, 2013

Episcopal Church, Church of Sweden, ELCA commitment: "Sustaining hope in the face of climate change"

The Episcopal Church
Office of Public Affairs

http://www.episcopalchurch.org/fr/node/15517

The heads of three religious denominations - The Episcopal Church, the Church of Sweden, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) – signed a joint statement "to celebrate our commitment to hope in the face of climate change."

Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, Church of Sweden Archbishop Anders Wejryd and ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson presented the document at the close of the first of a two-day environmental event, "Sustaining hope in the face of climate change" in Washington DC on May 1 and 2.

In the statement the religious leaders vowed, "It is a challenge to commit ourselves to walk a different course and serve as the hands of God in working to heal the brokenness of our hurting world."

The statement follows in full:

A statement to our Churches and to people of faith around the world:

The Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Church of Sweden (Lutheran) meet in Washington, DC this Easter season to celebrate our commitment to hope in the face of climate change. As Christians, we do not live in the despair and melancholy of the tomb, but in the light of the Risen Christ. Our resurrection hope is grounded in the promise of renewal and restoration for all of God's Creation, which gives us energy, strength and perseverance in the face of overwhelming challenge. For us, this promise is more than an abstraction. It is a challenge to commit ourselves to walk a different course and serve as the hands of God in working to heal the brokenness of our hurting world.

We must be clear: the scientific data is stark, as even today we experience the effects of climate change with catastrophic floods, lengthy droughts and historic rainfalls. Scientific research shows that climate change affects nearly all aspects of life. This includes the world's food security and humanity's ability to grow crops to feed a growing world population. Likewise, biodiversity is being destroyed and ecosystems undermined in many parts of the world as species become extinct. Water will continue to become scarcer, causing regional conflicts. Indigenous

people will be forced to leave their traditional lives, as the poorest among us will bear the greatest burdens of the changing climate.

Our goal as Christians is not to ascribe blame but rather to examine our own actions and how they relate to God's will for us and for the created order, and to challenge our communities to a new way of being. We are painfully aware that those of us living in the northern hemisphere are responsible historically for the majority of greenhouse-gas emissions, the major contributor to climate change. Accordingly, we hold a particular responsibility for the changes in practice that will reverse the trajectory of atmospheric warming and safeguard the sanctity of what our God calls "very good." (Genesis 1)

Accordingly, we confess our own role in the crisis facing our world:

We confess that, even as God has entrusted the care of the world to human hands, we have treated this sacred trust as a license to consume rather than build up, to reap rather than to sow.

We confess that we have placed the interests of our own comfort and lifestyle before the good of creation and the wellbeing of others, particularly the most vulnerable among us.

We confess our own indifference to the wellbeing of the countless future generations who will bear the brunt of the choices we make today.

For these things and all else we have done to contribute to the desecration of the world God so loves, we repent and ask forgiveness At the same time, we draw hope – and a grounding for amendment of our own lives – in the growing body of evidence that a transition to a low-carbon society is both feasible and economical, and may help foster a good life. We commit to being the voice that challenges our communities to action: in the global community, in our own political contexts, and in our daily lives.

We commit to being the voice and hands that will witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and build the moral and political will that prompts action from our elected leaders. As international churches with congregations in many nations, we can and will use our global networks to promote a political framework to limit climate change, while in a unified voice we speak to the world about the urgency of committed climate work. We commit to leading a conversion of epic scale, a metanoia, or communal spiritual movement away from sin and despair toward the renewal and healing of all creation.

Specifically, we commit to:

1) Advocate for national and international policies and regulations that enable a swift transition from dependence on fossil fuels to clean, safe, renewable energy, and for economic systems that are fair and just.

2) Sustain an interfaith, international conversation around climate change and social and economic justice while working to keep climate change in the public's attention.

3) Encourage our faith communities to deeper theological reflection on the moral and ethical response to climate change, and then to make public witness about climate change through advocacy at the local, national and international levels.

4) Invite our communities to prayerfully consider how their own actions, lifestyle choices – particularly our energy consumption -- affect the environment.

5) Offer our communities continued opportunities to learn about climate change and the universal church's response to this crisis.

Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori

Church of Sweden Archbishop Anders Wejryd

ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson

http://www.episcopalchurch.org/fr/node/15517

May 2, 2013

Dharma and Ecology Interview with Pankaj Jain

DesiplazaTV

DesiplazaTV is an Indian American TV Company in the Dallas-Fort Worth Area, TX, USA

Part 1
http://www.desiplaza.tv/index.php/media-gallery/32-part-1-interview-with-mr-pankaj-jain-asst-professor-unt

Part2
http://www.desiplaza.tv/index.php/media-gallery/33-part-2-interview-with-mr-pankaj-jain-asst-professor-unt

Part 3
http://www.desiplaza.tv/index.php/media-gallery/34-part-3-interview-with-mr-pankaj-jain-asst-professor-unt

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May 3, 2013

Faith-based groups play key role in advancing development goals, UNDP chief says

United Nations Development Programme

Hamburg—Faith-based organizations are playing a crucial role in efforts to build a more equitable and sustainable future, UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Helen Clark told a Protestant conference here.

“Many faith-based groups and leaders are already part of the drive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, foster peace and reconciliation, and advocate for climate action,” she said, speaking alongside German Chancellor Angela Merkel at the 34th Kirchentag—founded in 1949 as a movement for Protestant lay people.

“Faith-based organizations and gatherings such as the Kirchentag have an important role to play in reminding us to focus on what really matters to us as human beings in search of well-being.”

“Never before have the bonds between us as citizen of one planet mattered so much, and we face transnational challenges which cannot be resolved by each country acting alone,” she said. “The greatest of these challenges lie in the environmental sphere where the consequences of the way we have developed can be seen in significant ecosystem degradation.”

She cited a new awareness worldwide that moving to sustainable development is overdue, but challenges remain in converting good intentions into concrete action.

“We have to believe that just as the decisions and actions of humankind have brought us to where we are today, so we are also capable of making development work for both the planet and its peoples,” she said.

“Leadership and vision at every level—including from faith and civil society organizations of our world—can help us build a more equitable and sustainable common future.”

Helen Clark noted that while Germany had developed with a heavy carbon footprint, it has become a leader in transitioning to sustainable energy. Its renewable energy sources doubled from 2006-2012, she said.

“This suggests to me that with bold leadership and farsighted policies, countries can make the transitions required to become more sustainable,” she said.

“Poor people and poor countries are disproportionately vulnerable to global warming, thought they have contributed little to the problem. That is unjust,” she said.

“I do believe that the developed world has a particular historical responsibility to tackle climate change. It should radically reduce its own emissions of greenhouse gases, and it should also strongly support poor countries to strengthen their resilience to a more erratic climate and pursue low emissions development.”

UNDP works through its teams in 135 developing countries to help them build capacity to integrate environmental considerations into development plans and strategies, establish effective

partnerships, secure resources, and implement programmes to support sustainable, low-carbon, climate-resilient development pathways.

http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/articles/2013/05/03/faith-based-groups-play-key-role-in-advancing-development-goals-undp-chief-says/

May 10, 2013

Exciting results from working with Muslims in Sumatra on eco-programs

Alliance of Religions and Conservation

A new report by the Darwin Initiative (DI) shows the exciting results they saw when they ran a major project to engage faith leaders in Indonesia in environmental action.

Integrating religion within conservation: Islamic beliefs and Sumatran forest management includes significant papers by Fazlun Khalid of IFEES, Professor Stuart Harrop of the Durrell Institute at the University of Kent, Fachruddin Mangunjaya, Yoan Dinata, Erlinda Kartika, Rusdiyan Ritonga, Jeanne McKayNurul Firmansyah, Feri Rolis, Rudi Febriamansyah, Jomi Suhendri, Ari Sutanti, Sandra Winarsa and Yasser Premana

Background

The Indonesian island of Sumatra, Indonesia, is rich in diversity but has an average deforestation rate of two percent a year, which is clearly alarming. Seeing that Islam plays a central role in the daily lives of millions of people in Indonesia, the DI project started a project to promote the importance of biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use to religious leaders who had until then largely been uninvolved in environmental issues.

"By engaging them and their followers in sustainable natural resource management approaches that are explicitly based on their religious principles, the DI project piloted a new conservation model... in a way that was both culturally appropriate (through the teachings of Islam) and replicable across most of Indonesia."

They found that, by directly involving members of the community in activities such as agroforest nurseries, a strong sense of ownership and pride was created towards the project.

It also generated a strong commitment from the two focal communities to continue conducting Green Mosque campaigns, community litter clean-ups and replanting activities around their water sources (using native species from the DI nurseries).

The Green Mosque campaign

The DI Green Mosque campaign in Guguk Malalo was so successful that it received nationwide media attention and went on to win the provincial nomination to represent West Sumatra in a national environmental competition sponsored by the Ministry of Forestry. This then led to Guguk Malalo receiving a special budget allocation and technical support from the Government of Indonesia for its future conservation activities, which will build upon the framework developed by the DI.

Evaluation

Evaluation was important, and this was done through questionnaire surveys before and after each training activity, reporting significant increase in both knowledge of the issues and of the role of Islam in protecting nature.

The pre- and post-questionnaire surveys distributed during a Ramadan campaign conducted in the mosques and pesantrens (religious boarding schools) revealed that in the mosques, Islamic teachings on water conservation had raised levels of concern, as the proportion of people who prioritised funding for watershed forest conservation in the exit group was significantly higher than those in the entry group.

From just the entry group, on the environmental issues, younger and better educated respondents tended to correctly identify the ecosystem services provided by watershed forests than other respondents. Younger and better educated respondents tended to correctly identify the threats to water quality in West Sumatra. **However, on religious issues, women and less educated respondents tended to identify a greater number of correct answers on Islamic teaching towards the environment.**

Women have key impact on Environment thinking

The results from the Ramadan campaign in the pesantrens found that female respondents were more likely to correctly identify the services provided by watershed forests and more likely to contribute their time to conservation activities. As the report observed, this raises an interesting issue when considering the prominent positions that men hold within Islam and the importance of engaging women in a project of this nature.

Further, the Minangkabau culture recognises the importance of women within their matrilineal system. Throughout the project's duration, the involvement of women and their support in the design and implementation of its activities was met with such success and enthusiasm on their behalf that, coupled with the results previously mentioned, a scientific publication on the gender aspects of this project is being prepared.

An unexpected outcome

In closing, a somewhat unexpected outcome of the project was the noted pause for reflection and appreciation received from many religious leaders and devout followers, both men and women (who considered themselves to be well versed on the teachings of the Qur'an) when introduced for the first time to Islam's many environmental teachings.

The future

"This further highlighted the potential that such an approach could have on developing culturally appropriate conservation practices, not only elsewhere within Indonesia, but also throughout the rest of the Muslim world."

More information

Download the full report

http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=614

May 21, 2013

Natural disasters, climate change, and the 'burn it all downers'

By Richard Cizik

The Washington Post

Pastor Mark Driscoll, who ministers in Seattle, told a Catalyst gathering a few days ago that "I know who made the environment and he's coming back and going to burn it all up. So yes, I drive an SUV." No joke. That's what he said. Actually, Driscoll says it was all just a joke.

A lot of people didn't get the humor. Maybe it was because last week scientists declared that CO2 levels had reached 400 parts per million (ppm), and 350.org released their film, "Do the Math" on the crisis of climate change.

Reputable scientists in this impressive film say "civilization is in jeopardy." [Disclaimer: I am in the film saying oil companies should be held liable.]

Researchers at Columbia University, in a study published this week in the journal Nature Climate Change, estimate deaths linked to warming climate may rise by some 20 percent by the 2020s, 90 percent or more 70 years hence.

Adverse health effects from rising temperatures will hit major cities, like New York and other urban areas, especially hard.

"Heat events are one of the greatest hazards faced by urban populations around the globe," said coauthor of the study Radley Horton, a climate scientist at the Earth Institute's Center for Climate Systems Research.

How Americans view these events is strikingly dissimilar, however.

According to Public Religion Research Institute, nearly two-thirds (65%) of white evangelical Protestants believe that the severity of recent natural disasters is evidence of what the Bible calls the end times. By contrast, more than six in 10 (63%) of Americans say the severity of recent natural disasters is evidence of global climate change. Only half (50%) of white evangelical Protestants agree that the severity of recent natural disasters is evidence of global climate change, less than that of Catholics (60%) and religiously unaffiliated Americans (69%). In other words, there's a big disconnect between how a lot of evangelical Protestants view the links between natural disasters and climate change and how most Americans see it. The consequence of this is all too apparent politically.

Nevertheless, Pastor Driscoll got some push-back and tried to respond: "For the record, I really like this planet. God did a good job making this planet. We should take good care of this planet until he comes back to make a new earth, like the Bible says he will." Pastor Driscoll went on to say that his family's green activities would make a "hippy happy," which struck quite a few people as ridicule and got him into more trouble. But I'll take the pastor at his word.

Needless to say, the current political polarization over the environment and climate change has got to change if we are to ever slow the impacts of climate change and the escalating number of deaths already occurring. Evangelicals can be a source of societal healing and political action if they understand their Bible correctly.Alas, we evangelicals (I count myself among this tribe) are still way behind the moral curve.

Speaking in chapel at a few years ago at Harden Simmons University, deep in the heart of Texas, a student walked to the main aisle in the middle of the chapel and shouted as loud as he could, "This [creation care] doesn't matter, Jesus is coming back!"

My audience went instantly quiet, waiting to hear how I would respond.

"Let me answer that question," I said, as if he'd asked one, and went on to cite God's command to "love our neighbor as ourselves." Can you pollute your neighbor's water, air, and land, and still say you love God? Of course not.

Those who ascribe to the "God-will-burn-it-all-down school," pop up everywhere. At a family wedding, an in-law asserted his knowledge of scripture, "Don't you know it's all going to be burned up?, citing as evidence *2 Peter 3:10*: "The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud voice, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up."

The best translation of this passage (Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 12, Frank Gaebelein, General Editor) is "everything in it will be laid bare." It could mean all human products will be destroyed or it could mean that all that man does will be known in the judgment. *(I Corinthians 3: 13-15).*

This is where some knowledge of Greek comes handy. The word for "fire" in the Scriptures is a multivalent symbol and can mean both extinguished and refined, and the latter usage [Peter 3:10] is the best interpretation. The earth will be "refined," not utterly destroyed. Besides, if God was going to destroy the earth as was insinuated by the "burn it downers," why would the Apostle John in *Revelation 11:18* write that there will be a time "for destroying the destroyers of the earth"?

God it seems will hold polluters responsible. The grandfather of the creation care movement, Dr. Cal DeWitt, at the University of Wisconsin, once told me that he had asked Dr. Billy Graham about Revelation 11:18, but the greatest evangelist of the 20th century, possibly of all time, admitted he was unfamiliar with the verse, and replied, "I should preach on it some time." Maybe his son, Franklin Graham, can be persuaded to do so.

A kind of environmental skepticism is associated with the *Left Behind* series that taught a secret rapture of believers from this world prior to a final bloody battle between good and evil known as Armageddon. Dr. Tim LaHaye, the co-author of the book, a well-known conservative, nonetheless claimed no such warrant for apathy was justified.

Evangelicals, aided by good scholarship and biblical hermeneutics, are rejecting pre-millennial pessimism, which holds that the earth is going to hell in a hand basket, and there's nothing we can do about it. One of America's premier pre-millennial dispensational theologians, Dr. Charles Ryrie of Dallas Theological Seminary, author of the *Ryrie Study Bible*, told me over lunch at Palm Beach Atlantic University in Florida that he believes "we need to care for this earth," much as he said he cares for his human body by daily exercise.

About the general principle of creation care, Ryrie was very clear: "The Bible affirms that we must care for the earth as stewards." That prestigious seminary, moreover, is leading the way in greening its facilities, as is another similar theological institution, BIOLA, the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, which is now a liberal arts college with secular academic credentials.

You can even find a *Green Bible* in most Christian bookstores. There are so many "green" verses that call us to environmental stewardship, much like the red-letter Bible which put in red the verses uttered by Jesus, that any faithful Christian would have to be blind not to pay attention.

As a matter of fact, that's exactly true about the skeptics. Larry Schweiger, head of the National Wildlife Federation, says you have to engage in "willful blindness" not to see what's happening to Planet Earth. Turning a blind eye, so easily done just a few years ago, is no longer apparently tolerated even in conservative evangelical circles. And, Pastor Driscoll, it's not about joining the "happy hippie" crowd. It's about joining the most significant new recruits to the environmental movement — faithful Christians. No joke.

The Rev. Richard Cizik served for 10 years as vice president for governmental affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals. He has been an advocate for bringing evangelicals and scientists together on climate change issues.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/on-faith/wp/2013/05/21/natural-disasters-climate-change-and-the-burn-it-all-downers/

May 21, 2013

Traditional Cultures Can Show Wasteful World How to Preserve Food

Ahead of World Environment Day, UNEP Showcases Methods such as Condensing Cows, Storing Seabirds in Sealskins and Freeze-Drying Potatoes in the Open Air

United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi - From condensing the meat of whole cow to the size of a human fist, to preserving seabirds in sealskins, there are hundreds of ways in which traditional cultures can teach the wasteful developed world how to preserve and conserve one of our most-precious yet most-squandered resources: food.

Each year, an estimated one third of all food produced-an astonishing 1.3 billion tonnes, worth around US$1 trillion-ends up rotting in the bins of consumers and retailers or spoiling due to poor transportation and harvesting practices.

Aside from the moral implications of such wastage in a world where almost 900 million people go hungry every day, unconsumed food wastes both the energy put into growing it and the fuel spent on transporting produce across vast distances.

Added to this, significant amounts of the powerful greenhouse gas methane emanate from food decomposing on landfills, while livestock and forests cleared for food production contribute to global warming-for example, agriculture and land-use changes like deforestation account for over 30 per cent of total global greenhouse gas emissions.

World Environment Day 2013, whose global host is the government and people of Mongolia, is focused on the new UN Environment Programme and UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) campaign **Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint,** which is aimed at slashing this wastage.

Mongolia is one of the fastest-growing countries in the world, and is aiming to ensure this growth goes hand in hand with a green economy and civilization. It neither wastes nor loses food at any significant level, but the nomadic life of many of its people does offer some ancient answers to the modern-day challenge of food waste.

As part of the celebrations, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) asked people to submit examples of traditional ways in which food is preserved. While some of the delicacies may not tickle the taste buds of the uninitiated, and are not intended to be replicated in countries adhering to other cultures, they demonstrate how humanity once valued food far more than it does today.

They also highlight the irony that, in an era where technology makes it ever easier to store food for longer, most people make less effort to conserve food and thus waste money-all the more surprising considering the financial crisis that has forced many to tighten their belts and recent reports that world food prices are at a 40-year high.

"Reducing food waste and loss is an economic, ethical and environmental challenge that links to some of the greatest challenges of today, from hunger and nutrition to climate change, deforestation and land degradation," said UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. "One of the ways everyone can contribute to these twin challenges is by looking at how less-wasteful cultures place such value on every morsel of food and considering how to emulate them."

The ways that indigenous peoples create preserved dishes are as many and varied as the cultures and food sources that form the basis of the recipes.

Mongolian general Chinggis Khan and his troops utilized a traditional food called borts to gallop across Asia without depending on elaborate supply chains. Borts is basically concentrated beef equal to the protein of an entire cow condensed and ground down to the size of a human fist. This remarkable method of food preservation, without refrigeration, produced a meal equivalent to several steaks when the protein was shaved into hot water to make soup.

Not too far away, the **Turkish horsemen of Central Asia** had their own solution. According to the Turkish Cultural Foundation, they would preserve meat by placing it in pockets on their saddles to be compressed by their legs as they rode. This meat was a direct ancestor of pastirma, a term which means 'being pressed' in Turkish, and is also believed to be the origin of the Italian pastrami.

Further in the frozen north, the **Inuit from Greenland** dine on a dish called *Kiviak*-a traditional wintertime food made from Auks, a small bird that bears a superficial resemblance to a penguin. Hundreds of whole birds are wrapped in a seal skin, which then has the air removed before being sewn up. The skin is placed in the permafrost under a stone to help keep the air out. The birds then ferment for around seven months before they are dug up and eaten, often at celebrations.

Vegetarians need not despair, for there are plenty of ways to preserve non-meat dishes.

In many countries of **South America**, a freeze-dried potato delicacy known as *chuño,* which pre-dates the Inca Empire, is widely eaten. The potatoes are alternately exposed to the freezing night air and hot daytime sun for five days, being trampled to squeeze out all moisture. Chuño can last for months or years.

In **Nigeria and several other western African countries,** a dry granular foodstuff called *garri* is produced from cassava tubers that are peeled, washed and grated. The resultant mash is placed in a porous bag and allowed to ferment as weights press out the water. Finally it is sieved and roasted for long-term storage.

There are so many more dishes to choose from: *ghee*, a type of butter that needs no refrigeration, milk powders and curds, biltong and other dried meats, pickles, jams, sauerkraut and dozens more.

In industrialized regions, almost half of the total food squandered, around 300 million tonnes annually, occurs because producers, retailers and consumers discard food that is still fit for consumption-more than the net food production of Sub-Saharan Africa and enough to feed the world's hungry.

These figures demonstrate just how much room there is for individual consumers to take the lead from their forebears and change the way they buy, store and consume food.

To find out more and contribute methods of preservation from your own culture, visit the Think.Eat.Save webpage.

Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint

This campaign is a partnership between UNEP, FAO and Messe Düsseldorf in support of the UN Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge. It aims to accelerate action and provide a global vision and information-sharing portal for the many and diverse initiatives currently underway around the world to reduce food loss and food waste. Visit the website.

About World Environment Day

WED aims to be the biggest and most widely celebrated global day for positive environmental action. WED activities take place year round but climax on June 5. WED celebrations began in 1972 and have grown to become the one of the main vehicles through which the UN stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and encourages political attention and action. Through WED, the UN Environment Programme is able to personalize environmental issues and enable everyone to realize not only their responsibility, but also their power to become agents for change in support of sustainable and equitable development. Visit the WED site here.

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May 21, 2013

UNEP Launches Knowledge and Cooperation Platform for a Sustainable Future

"Doing More and Better with Less" Just One Click Away

United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi - In the face of economic crises, increasing environmental degradation and the menace of climate change, the global community needs to do more and better with a more-efficient use of the Earth's natural resources.

In order to advise on the necessary actions that will usher in a more sustainable future, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which serves as the Secretariat of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP), today launched The Global SCP Clearinghouse.

Policymakers and practitioners across the globe have developed initiatives and tools to contribute to Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) down the years, but the existing information is fragmented and bridges to connect people are missing.

The Clearinghouse uses social networking principles to bring together the global SCP community and create a one-stop hub for SCP knowledge and cooperation. It provides a unique place to browse a diverse range of regional and thematic communities, from sustainable public procurement and cities and buildings, to sustainable production, lifestyles and education.

It seeks to inspire governments, the business sector, researchers, civil society and all SCP practitioners or other interested parties to share initiatives, news, ideas, best practices and tools to create a living worldwide database, create a network of experts, and foster and strengthen partnerships through a cooperation marketplace, working groups and forums.

"Sustainable consumption and production is not just about consuming less; it is also about doing more and better with less, about increasing resource efficiency and promoting sustainable lifestyles, and contributing to poverty alleviation," said Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director.

"By bringing everyone together to create a pool of knowledge and a cooperative marketplace, UNEP hopes to hasten the switch to more sustainable lifestyles, and to assist in making these lifestyles also available to people in developing countries," he added.

The science showing that humanity's current lifestyles are unsustainable is overwhelming. The world's population of seven billion people currently needs the resources of one-and-a-half planets to feed itself. If current consumption trends continue, by 2050 - when the population is expected to reach nine billion - resources equivalent to those provided by three Earths will be needed.

Adding to these pressures is rapidly accelerating urbanization. Though cities occupy just three per cent of the Earth's land surface, they consume 75 per cent of natural resources, produce 50 per cent of global waste and account for 60-80 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. Urbanization is only going to further skew the disproportionate rates of consumption.

SCP can help the world's poor by creating new markets, green and decent jobs, (for example, organic food, fair trade, sustainable housing, renewable energy, sustainable transport and tourism) as well as more efficient, and equitable, management of natural resources.

It also offers the possibility for developing countries to "leapfrog" to more resource-efficient, environmentally sound and competitive technologies, bypassing inefficient and polluting phases of development.

When Heads of State gathered in Rio de Janeiro for the Rio+20 summit last year, they recognized the need for change and agreed to implement the 10YFP, a global framework for action that enhances international cooperation to develop, replicate and scale-up SCP and resource-efficiency initiatives at national and regional levels.

Within days of its pre-launch at the UNEP Governing Council meeting in February, the Global SCP Clearinghouse recorded nearly 800 new members, from more than 500 organizations based in about 100 different countries.

Initiatives already submitted to the Clearinghouse include:

- A project to mainstream education for sustainable consumption in Chile, Indonesia and Tanzania, conducted with the support of national ministries of both education and environment;
- The Sustainable Rice Platform launched by UNEP, the International Rice Research Institute, Louis Dreyfus Commodities and Kellogg, aimed at spreading good sustainable technologies and practices for rice - a food crop that feeds half the planet;
- A public campaign in Brazil, supported by the largest supermarket chains, to cut by 40 per plastic bag use in stores by 2015;
- The International Purchasing Network of Japan (IGPN), which promotes the spread of environmentally friendly products and services, share information and know how on green purchasing;

- The National Plan for Preventing Industrial Waste (PNAPRI) in Portugal, an initiative of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning focusing on the reduction of the hazardous nature and quantity of waste generated in production processes associated to industrial activity, by using pollution prevention methodologies and technologies.
- The World Resources Forum (WRF), which is a science-based platform for sharing knowledge about the economic, political, social and environmental implications of global resource use. It promotes innovation for resource productivity and sustainable consumption and production by building bridges among researchers, policymakers, business, small- and medium-enterprises, non-governmental organizations and the public
- The Global Network of Sustainable Lifestyles, which is an initiative of the Collaborating Center on Sustainable Consumption and Production and the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The network is built on the principles of communicating and translating practices of sustainable lifestyles and making them accessible and understandable from the social, economic and environmental perspectives;
- The Earth Charter Initiative, which promotes the transition to sustainable ways of living and a global society founded on a shared ethical framework that includes respect and care for the community of life, ecological integrity, universal human rights, respect for diversity, economic justice, democracy, and a culture of peace.

Interested parties are encouraged to visit the Global SCP Clearinghouse website to find out about SCP worldwide, sign up or register as an expert or resource person.

The development of the Global SCP Clearinghouse was supported by the European Commission, Norway, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, food and Environment, and the Swedish Ministry of the Environment.

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Notes to editors

To learn more about the 10YFP, please visit the website.

About UNEP

Created in 1972, UNEP represents the United Nations' environmental conscience. Based in Nairobi, Kenya, its mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. UNEP's Division of Technology,

Industry and Economics - based in Paris - assists governments, local authorities and decision-makers in business and industry to develop and implement policies and practices focusing on sustainable development. The division leads UNEP's work in the areas of climate change, resource efficiency, harmful substances and hazardous waste.

http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentId=2716&ArticleId=9506

May 21, 2013

The Environmental Sustainability of Indian Spirituality

By Pankaj Jain
Huffington Post

I had arrived at New York's JFK Airport on Nov. 19, 1996 and was immediately struck by the hundreds of cars all around the airport plying on various "spaghetti" flyovers and highways. Born in a small sleepy town of Pali in Rajasthan and having lived most of my life in small towns in India, I was ready for all cultural shocks, the very first being the environmental one. I asked my friend Ajay who had come to pick me up, "How exactly are all these cars be sustained once the fuel supply is over?" Ajay, having arrived just a couple of months before me, also from India as a software engineer like myself, proudly declared, "Oh! This is America! They can run their cars even on water, don't worry!"

Such was the faith of many Indians, Americans and others who rely on modern science and technological aids such as cars and cell phones, mostly invented in America. With the impending environmental crisis looming large over the humankind, is this faith weakening in the second decade of the 21st century, almost 20 years after my first American encounter? Last month, after my latest visit to New York, I posted this on my Facebook:

1st thought whenever I reach NYC, how will all this sustain itself? 1st thought whenever I reach India, how has all this sustained itself?

And immediately, one of the grad students challenged me, "For someone who works and teaches in the Anthropology department, how can you be so comfortable making such a broad, over-simplified, and generalized statement like that?" What ensued was my defense of India as the sustainable country and USA at the other extreme.

First, I compared the meat-consumption of India with the U.S., U.K., China, Brazil and many other countries and concluded that India remains the most vegetarian country in the world, even in the 21st century. Although only a minority of Indians practices asceticism, fasting and celibacy, the main diet of majority of Indians largely consists of rice, wheat, pulses and vegetables. Even those who are classified as "non-vegetarians" depend largely on vegetarian food as the chief components of their diet, while egg, meat and fish are consumed occasionally.

This shows that even after the advent of modernity and globalization, Indians have successfully preserved their vegetarian habits that were laid down by their dharmic traditions several millennia ago. Interestingly, meat eating is now linked to global warming. In a groundbreaking 2006 report, the United Nations said that raising animals for food generates more greenhouse gases than all the cars and trucks in the world combined. Senior U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization official Henning Steinfeld reported that the meat industry is "one of the most significant contributors to today's most serious environmental problems." On the one hand, we find a long tradition of avoiding the meat in Indian dietary habits, and on the other hand, the latest reports from U.N. declare that the meat eating is one of the main reasons for global warming. Even after Western media reported about the connection of meat eating with global warming, leading environmentalists such as Al Gore, who got the Nobel Prize for his work in this regard, failed to take any notice of meat consumption in the food habits of Western society.

Even such clear evidences have so far been ignored by the Western society in general and the environmentalists, such as Gore, in particular. Thomas Friedman, a leading *New York Times* columnist, noted this and even rejected any changes needed in the Western lifestyle, while demanding "greener" initiatives from the U.S. government (April 15, 2007). This Western dichotomy between expecting the "environmentalist" initiatives from the governments and businesses without changing personal lifestyles was the subject of the conclusion of Ramachandra Guha's book with an appropriate title, "How much should a person consume?" Guha observes that the Western society consists of 20 percent of the world but consumes about 80 percent of the production of the world. The rest of the world consisting of the 80 percent of the world population consumes only about 20 percent of the production of the world. Guha agrees with conservationist Ashish Kothari and criticizes the "hypocrisy" of the developed world:

It is, the allegedly civilized, who have decimated forests and the wildlife that previously sustained both tiger and tribal. With rifles and quest for trophies, [they] first hunted wild species to extinction; now [they] disguise [themselves] as conservationists and complain that adivasis are getting in the way. The real "population problem" is in America, where the birth of one child has the same impact on the global environment as the birth of about seventy Indonesian children. Worse, the birth of an American dog or cat was the ecological equivalent of the birth of a dozen Bangladeshi children."

What is even more striking is that due to the dharmic traditions inspired and founded by gurus and sages such as the Buddha and Mahāvīra, Indian society had successfully moved away from animal sacrifices and killings prevalent in the Vedic era to lifestyles largely based on vegetarianism. Ironically, scholars seem to have largely ignored vegetarianism as one of the most important dharmic lessons inspired by Indic tradition that can greatly help reduce global warming. Incidentally, both Bishnois and Swadhyayis are vegetarians and even Bhils have turned into vegetarianism especially after the Bhagat movements' influences on them as I have shown above. Out of several such lifestyle changes that were inspired by the dharmic teachings of the Buddha and others, I have just shown one here. We can similarly note others such as Aparigraha (non-accumulation), which have continued to be an "obstacle" against the

consumerist revolution in India. Only in 1990s, finally, India also started embracing Western capitalist model of economy and now market forces are fast transcending the proverbial "Hindu rate of economic growth." Until this Western market invasion, the so-called Hindu rate of growth might have been both the result and the reason for limited Indian spending for consumer goods as shown by Professor Ann Gold in her 2001 article on how consumption is severely constrained and morally limited by ideals of self-restraint in Hindu traditions (fasting, eating only what is appropriate and so forth).

All the above arguments were verified for four consecutive Greendex Sustainability Survey in 2008, 2009, 2010, as well as in 2012, conducted by *National Geographic* magazine, in which India continues to be at the top and the USA continues to be at the bottom. This survey compares major parameters of a country housing, transportation and food. And in all these areas, Indian habits were observed to be more sustainable compared to the U.S. or U.K. The majority of Indian houses continue to avoid or lack air-conditioning, heating and 24/7 hot water, and the dwelling sizes are much smaller. In terms of transportation, Indians' ownership rates and average usage of personal cars continue to be less compared to other major countries. Indians continue to prefer the public transport for their daily commutes to work or school. In terms of food, Indians' consumption of locally produced foods remains high while their consumption of bottled water, meat and seafood continues to be less than others as the FAO survey also confirmed above.

Follow Pankaj Jain, Ph.D. on Twitter: www.twitter.com/pankajaindia

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pankaj-jain-phd/environmental-sustainability-indian-spirituality_b_3313059.html

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May 23, 2013

Christian charity calls on Liberal Democrats to vote for decarbonisation target

Operation Noah Press Release

Operation Noah calls on Liberal Democrat MPs to vote for a crucial amendment to the Energy Bill in parliament on 3 June, and not to let a once-in-a-generation opportunity slip through their fingers.

The amendment, which sets a target to decarbonise power generation by 2030, has been proposed by Tim Yeo MP, Conservative Chair of the Environment Select Committee.

Isabel Carter, Chair of Operation Noah, said, ‘This amendment is critical to reducing the UK’s reliance on imported fossil fuels, creating new jobs in the renewables sector and meeting the UK’s legally binding cuts to emissions from fossil fuels.’

While some Lib Dem MPs have agreed to support the amendment, which is precisely in line with Liberal Democrat policy, others have argued that doing so would jeopardise the bill, and that – even though it would help to fulfil the coalition agreement – it is not possible for the coalition to carry the amendment. Nevertheless, some Conservative MPs have announced that they will back the amendment.

Dr Carter said, ‘I understand that coalition government is not straightforward, but the Liberal Democrats have been talking about creating a low carbon future for 20 years. That future is now. In a week when atmospheric CO2 levels have reached 400ppm it has become painfully obvious that we need to act to cut pollution from fossil fuels by switching to clean alternatives.

Without this amendment we lock ourselves in to a new generation of gas power stations, which investors and operators will expect to remain operational for 15 to 20 years. This would not just be foolish economically – tying us into unstable gas prices and removing the UK from the huge growth and job opportunities of renewables – but also profoundly immoral, as we would be knowingly giving future generations, and the millions of species with which we share this planet, less chance of survival.

'Supporting the target, however, would allow the UK to show world leadership in the face of climate change, providing leverage for future international negotiations, and certainty for renewable investment. Voting for the amendment is unquestionably the right thing to do. Liberal Democrats passed a very clear resolution on decarbonisation at their last party Conference. This is the moment for the Lib Dems to stand true to their principles, to listen to science rather than the knee-jerk reaction from the Treasury, and to choose basic common sense.’

Operation Noah believes that the UK has a moral responsibility to move as rapidly as possible towards a zero carbon economy. Individuals, churches and communities must play their part, but the magnitude of change that is needed requires courageous government leadership.

‘It is our experience that people are willing to change their behaviour and reduce their use of energy, but they expect the Government to demonstrate leadership and commitment – this is a two-way deal,’ Dr Carter said. ‘Failure to introduce a decarbonisation target now would reveal the soft underbelly of the Government’s green credentials.’

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. MPs will be voting on the decarbonisation target amendment to the Energy Bill on 3 June.

2. Operation Noah is an ecumenical Christian charity providing leadership, focus and inspiration in response to the growing threat of catastrophic climate change.

3. In 2012, Operation Noah published the Ash Wednesday Declaration – Climate change and the purposes of God: a call to the Church. The declaration was signed by many church leaders and challenges the church to realise that care for God’s creation – and concern about climate change – is foundational to the Christian gospel and central to the church’s mission. One practical outworking of this declaration is the call for a decarbonised economy in the UK by 2030.

4. According to the coalition agreement, 'The Government believes that climate change is one of the gravest threats we face, and that urgent action at home and abroad is required.'

5. At the Liberal Democrat Party Conference in Brighton, in October 2012, the following resolution called on the Coalition Government to take action as follows:
Conference calls on the Coalition Government to do everything possible to stimulate growth within its fiscal mandate, including to: ...
2. Stimulate green growth in the economy and create framework where there is greater certainty and confidence among businesses to invest in renewable energy, including by:
a) ...
b) Establishing a target range of 50-100g of CO2 per kwh for the decarbonisation of power sector by 2030 in addition to existing carbon emission reductions.

6. An Energy Bill is currently going through Parliament that will determine how our electricity is produced and regulated. In its current form it does not provide a target for decarbonisation, giving the green light to a new dash for gas. Tim Yeo, Conservative, has proposed a decarbonisation target amendment which should give the investment community the certainty they need to invest in low carbon energy.

7. The Climate Change Committee, the independent, statutory body set up to advise the UK Government on emissions targets, said, 'Early decarbonisation of the power sector should be plan A – and the dash for gas Plan Z … It will be essential going forward to ensure that the Electricity Market Reform is aimed at achieving a carbon intensity of 50 gCO2/kWh in 2030 through investment in a portfolio of low-carbon technologies, rather than a dash for gas which would raise long term costs and risks.'

8. In an open letter from the Climate Change Committee in February, their chair, Lord Deben writes, 'The delay in setting this [target] until 2016 at the earliest means that a high degree of uncertainty about sector development beyond 2020 remains. This will adversely impact on supply chain investment decisions and project development, therefore undermining implementation of the Bill and raising costs for consumers.' http://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Ed-Davey-February13.pdf

9. Speaking at the RSA last week, the former Special Representative for Climate Change at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, John Ashton CBE, said, 'I can't myself see how any MP who votes against the target [in the Energy Bill] will thereafter be able credibly to claim that they support an effective response to climate change.'
http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/john_ashton_speech.pdf

http://www.operationnoah.org/PR_decarbonisation_targets

May 23, 2013

Move Our Money, Protect Our Planet: God, Earth, & Strategy

By Rabbi Arthur Waskow
The Shalom Center

A Spiritually Rooted, Strategically Focused Plan of Action on the Climate Crisis

During the past month, the Board of The Shalom Center and the steering committee of Interfaith Moral Action on Climate have been seeking what might be called a "spiritual strategy" or a "strategic spirituality" aimed at healing God's Creation, our wounded planet, from the dangers of global scorching and the climate crisis.

That process is still under way. This is the direction of our emerging path:

Move Our Money, Protect Our Planet.
Providentially, the initials of this campaign title spell "MOM / POP." (We didn't plan it that way.)

We invite you to join in a campaign to persuade religious groups to move our money away from the Climate Pharaohs that are bringing Plagues upon our planet –- and to move our money instead to invest both in wind and solar energy, and in projects to empower the poor who are most vulnerable to the ravages of modern Climate Plagues.

We especially invite retired clergy to connect across the generations with seminary students and with students in religiously sponsored schools or in secular schools with student religious groups, to organize "Move Our Money/ Protect Our Planet" campaigns.

These MOM/POP campaigns in seminaries and student religious groups could address their own Trustees and administrators about Moving Our Money from Earth-destructive to Earth-healing enterprises.

As flagship campuses of various religious groups thus become centers of debate, wider circles of each religious community might feel drawn to take part.

If you would like to take an active part in such an effort to raise these questions in your own congregation or denomination, please write me at Awaskow@theshalomcenter.org

Now: what brought us to this approach?

There are two ways in which spiritually-rooted communities can act:

- By drawing on the religious traditions of public witness, pray-ins, nonviolent activism, and sacred civil disobedience to work for a strong national enforceable process for major reductions in CO2 & methane production;
- By profoundly shifting the cultural assumptions and citizenly behavior away from the consumerism and materialism that constantly presses for increased burning of fossil

fuels; by making active loving concern for the Earth a moral obligation and disregard of the Earth's needs a moral abomination.

To make this happen despite the present concentrated wealth and power of major corporations in and beyond Big Carbon – for example, Big Banking and Big Media – will take a major involvement of the US public in numbers and intensity at least equal to that of the "civil rights" movement, especially 1960-1968.

Those numbers and intensity brought about both a cultural shift that defined racism as an abomination, and a political shift that outlawed segregation and greatly increased the political power of the Black community.

The religious communities were then a major component of the movement to challenge racism, and now need to be a major component of the climate-healing movement — including both cultural and spiritual redefinitions that in our generation need to make contempt toward and exploitation of the Earth felt as a moral abomination, and the use of active sit-downs, pray-ins, mass mobilizations, lobbying, and electoral action to achieve legal and political change.

Awakening and involving religious communities requires both drawing on their – our – existing teachings, symbols, and practices that evoke concern for the Earth, and weaving new Earth-centered threads into the fabric of religious life.

The seeds – but ONLY the seeds – have been sown of this new direction for churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples, in such forms as –

- The Shalom Center's and IMAC's creation of pre-Passover/ Holy Week religious services focused on the climate crisis, combined with vigils, rallies, and civil disobedience;
- Beginning in the Jewish-renewal community, imagining an "eco-kosher" life practice applied not only to food but to all consumables;
- Interfaith Power and Light's encouragement of annual sermons on climate questions, centered on Valentine's Day.

Such moments and practices need to be enriched and multiplied. In particular, the highest religious intensities and the largest numbers of people religiously involved tend to cluster in the major seasons of fast and festival: Lent, Ramadan and Eid el-Fitr, the High Holy Days, Christmas, Hanukkah, Eid al-Idha, Holy Week, Passover; AND in the strongest moments of sacred intergenerational connection – confirmations, bar/bat mitzvah, etc.

Refocusing some of these festivals, life-cycle events, and daily/ weekly rhythms of prayer and celebration may help change the cultural assumptions that support grabbiness, greed, and destructive domination of the Earth

For example: At the Interfaith Summit on the Climate Crisis called by the Church of Sweden in 2008 and held at the Cathedral of Uppsala, a large green-moss Globe became the central transreligious sacred symbol of the gathering. In several national pray-ins held by Interfaith Moral Action on Climate during the past year and in some regional prayer services for the Earth, a Globe has been shared from hand to hand, while the gathering sang "We Have the Whole World in Our Hands."

In regard to public activist advocacy, the Passover/ Holy Week season may be most appropriate for public action to focus attention on the powerful institutions committed to fossil fuels, vs. the possibility of a healing and healed community.

For that season lifts up the memory of Pharaoh, Plagues, Exodus, Wilderness, Sinai, and Promised Land; and the memory of Caesar and Pontius Pilate, Palm Sunday as nonviolent challenge to the Roman Empire, the Last Supper (a Passover Seder), Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Pentecost.

In these traditions, Sinai, the Promised Land, the Resurrection and Pentecost – the healing alternatives – carry as much energy as the disastrous status quo. So must it be for us.

To make climate-healing the focus of such high-intensity moments requires us to weave it into the fabric of religious life, rather than to focus on a blip here, a blip there – isolated moments alone.

How can we weave into the daily lives of our religious cultures the metaphor of modern Pharaohs and their modern plagues, modern Caesars and their modern oppressions – versus modern healings of the Earth?

One crucial thread in the daily fabric is Money. What do we do with it? The Divestment work of 350.org has shown that challenging the use of money to prop up our Climate Pharaohs can energize people – especially college students.

We believe that religious leaders, congregations, and denominations are called to address the money that they themselves can choose to invest:

Should we invest in the modern Corporate Pharaohs or in the smaller, more nimble, more responsive and responsible companies based on renewable and sustainable sources of energy; and in projects that empower the poor who are already suffering most sharply, and will suffer even more, from the Climate Plagues.

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While we admire and honor 350's initiative, we believe that using the imagery of "Move Our Money/ Protect Our Planet" rather than "Divest" will more fully bring the creation of healing alternatives into this process, balancing elements of opposition with elements of hope. We believe this balance accords better with the moral and religious values lifted up in our traditions as Sinai, Promised Land, Resurrection, Pentecost.

That's why we have settled on "Move Our Money/ Protect Our Planet" MOM/POP campaigns.

We propose that in 2014, when Palm Sunday falls on April 13 and Passover begins with the First Seder on the evening of Monday, April 14), public vigils, interfaith religious services, etc. be held during the week before Passover/ Holy Week as an focus (not a completion) for the Move Our Money campaign, with an expectation that MOM/ POP will continue into the following year(s).

A Move Our Money campaign is not an end in itself. It is not likely to cause enough disruption to Big Oil, Big Coal, etc., to force them to change their business plans, or even to diminish the millions they spend on buying elections and lobbying.

But a Move Our Money campaign can mobilize large numbers of people in many ways that will help delegitimate Big Carbon; could actually help increase investments in smaller wind/solar-energy companies and in projects for empowering the vulnerable poor to act on climate issues; and could provide the cohesion and networks to make the political muscle to change US government policy.

Please remember – If you would like to take an active part in the MOM/POP campaign by raising these questions in your own congregation or denomination, please write me at Awaskow@theshalomcenter.org

With blessings of inspiration from the Spirit, and with commitment to the Rainbow Covenant among the Holy One, the children of Noah, "and every breathing life-form … all life upon the Earth." (Gen 9: 8-10)

https://theshalomcenter.org/content/move-our-money-protect-our-planet-god-earth-strategy

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May 24, 2013

A Vital River, Drained of Wildlife

By Jeff Opperman
New York Times

Jeff Opperman, a senior freshwater scientist with the Nature Conservancy, is taking a once-in-a-lifetime trip down the Mekong River in Southeast Asia with his wife and two children, ages 8 and 10. Previous posts can be found here.

The Irrawaddy dolphin has been called the "smiling face" of the Mekong River. Viewed straight on, its mouth forms a quizzical grin. A river couldn't ask for a more charming mascot: Even a high-definition photo of the dolphin looks like a happy-go-lucky cartoon character from a Pixar movie.

For years, I've told my kids a bedtime story about a girl who lives in a Mekong village and one day meets a magical river dolphin that can shape-change into a boy. When the star of the story first breached in front of our boat, we held our breath.

Later we stood on a high bank overlooking a vast gunmetal gray pool that mirrored a washed-out sky. Pairs of dolphins breached and frolicked below us. Their whimsical play stood in sharp contrast to the dolphins' grim reality, and I thought how they were fortunate that their minds, though intelligent, weren't burdened with oral histories that chronicled their terrifying decline or statistics that quantified their perilous future.

Only 80 to 90 of these dolphins still swim the Mekong, concentrated within deep pools that stretch like beads on a 100-mile string of river in Cambodia, from the border with Laos and south to the town of Kratie (over all, a few thousand Irrawaddy dolphins are spread throughout Southeast Asia in rivers and brackish estuaries).

Once far more numerous and wide-ranging in the lower Mekong basin, the dolphin population declined precipitously in the 1970s, and current numbers are down to a few percent of the original population.

Conservationists who seek to maintain the free-flowing Mekong can draw upon a delightful symbol — the dolphin — and a powerful statistic: Tens of millions of people depend on the protein of the Mekong, an organic machine that churns out the "ecosystem service" of fish harvests valued in the billions. In this 100-mile stretch of river, the symbol and the service have a tough time cohabitating. Today, the primary cause of dolphin mortality is entanglement in fishing nets.

Gordon Congdon was trying to reconcile the Mekong's symbol and service. For the past four years (he just recently returned to the United States), Gordon has been WWF-Cambodia's freshwater conservation specialist. Managing dolphin conservation programs was a key part of his job.

Gordon and his wife, Linda, met us at the Cambodian border crossing and were our hosts for the next four days on the river. Our first night in Cambodia, we stayed in a small village overlooking Anlong Cheuteal (the "pool of the tree"), a deep section of river below Khone Falls at the Laos

border that harbors an isolated population of dolphins that is now believed to number between six and eight.

Within the stretch of river inhabited by dolphins, Gordon and WWF worked with fishermen to find alternatives to gill nets. Because gill nets are among the most efficient ways to catch fish, simply prohibiting this gear would pose a hardship for fishermen. WWF is working with the fishermen to diversify their sources of food and income.

“It’s tough,” Gordon said. “These other options for fisherman have to be real; they can’t just be window dressing.”

At the village, we met Cham Buntheon, who works for the Association of Buddhists for the Environment. Gordon and Cham provided environmental educational materials and training to Buddhist monks, and in turn, the monks teach villagers about the value of dolphins (spiritual, but also as the foundation for the most important tourism in the region) and how to reduce the frequency of dolphin deaths in nets.

The program capitalizes on the monks’ trusted position in society and the fact that they already make the rounds of remote villages, allowing them to function like orange-clad extension agents.

Cham emphasized that because of strong concordance between the principles of conservation and those of Buddhism, the environmental education program is planting seeds in fertile ground: “The Buddha was born in the forest and attained enlightenment in the forest, and he lived as many different animals, including an elephant and a turtle, before being born human.”

Our last days on the river became a tour of a wildlife fauna that also seemed to be winding down its last days on the river. We left the dolphin pool and headed downriver, stopping along the way at a small island that is a nesting site for river terns. The terns were once widely distributed throughout the lower basin, but now this one island supports nearly all the tern nests along the Mekong. Last year there were 26.

A man walked up and offered us some watermelon. Gordon told us that he was a guardian on the island, hired by WWF to watch over the nesting area. Elsewhere on the Mekong the terns’ nests — always constructed on sandbars — are disturbed by children, dogs, buffalo and all the other activity that concentrates on the edge between land and water.

Later, we tramped through the forest to find a white-shouldered ibis nest, hopefully sheltering reinforcements for a Mekong population of only 130 birds (though that still ranks as the third-largest population of white-shouldered Ibis in the world).

Our boat driver, Vanna, told us he grew up near Anlong Cheuteal, and he reminisced that as a teenager he saw a few tigers, and many evenings he’d watch elephants emerge from the forest edge to bathe and drink in the Mekong across from his village. These animals hang on in Cambodia by the slimmest of threads. As Vanna is about my age, his tales aren’t exactly ancient history, only as distant as my memories of seeing the Replacements and R.E.M. on tour in the 1980s.

And now the Mekong River faces an even greater transformation — one that, unlike hunting pressure, is essentially irreversible — with dozens of dams under construction or planned for its main stem and tributaries. The dolphin pools, the terns' sandbars, the floodplain forests of the ibis — not to mention the ecosystem service of the fishery — would all decline, degrade or disappear if all the dams are built.

In my final post, I'll describe the science behind some optimism that a balanced solution can be found — and the frustrating reality of how decisions are made.

http://scientistatwork.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/a-vital-river-drained-of-wildlife/?hp&pagewanted=print

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May 24, 2013

Dolphins gain unprecedented protection in India

By Saroja Coelho
Deutsche Welle

India has officially recognized dolphins as non-human persons, whose rights to life and liberty must be respected. Dolphin parks that were being built across the country will instead be shut down.

India's Ministry of Environment and Forests has advised state governments to ban dolphinariums and other commercial entertainment that involves the capture and confinement of cetacean species such as orcas and bottlenose dolphins. In a statement, the government said research had clearly established cetaceans are highly intelligent and sensitive, and that dolphins "should be seen as 'non-human persons' and as such should have their own specific rights."

The move comes after weeks of protest against a dolphin park in the state of Kerala and several other marine mammal entertainment facilities which were to be built this year. Animal welfare advocates welcomed the decision.

"This opens up a whole new discourse of ethics in the animal protection movement in India," said Puja Mitra from the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organizations (FIAPO). Mitra is a leading voice in the Indian movement to end dolphin captivity.

"The scientific evidence we provided during the campaign talked about cetacean intelligence and introduced the concept of non-human persons," she said in an interview with DW.

Indiais the fourth country in the world to ban the capture and import of cetaceans for the purpose of commercial entertainment - along with Costa Rica, Hungary, and Chile.

Dolphins are persons, not performers

The movement to recognize whale and dolphins as individuals with self-awareness and a set of rights gained momentum three years ago in Helsinki, Finland when scientists and ethicists drafted a Declaration of Rights for Cetaceans. "We affirm that all cetaceans as persons have the right to life, liberty and well-being," they wrote.

The signatories included leading marine scientist Lori Marino who produced evidence that cetaceans have large, complex brains especially in areas involved in communication and cognition. Her work has shown that dolphins have a level of self-awareness similar to that of human beings. Dolphins can recognize their own reflection, use tools and understand abstract concepts. They develop unique signature whistles allowing friends and family members to recognize them, similar to the way human beings use names.

"They share intimate, close bonds with their family groups. They have their own culture, their own hunting practices - even variations in the way they communicate," said FIAPO's Puja Mitra.

But it is precisely this ability to learn tricks and charm audiences that have made whales and dolphins a favorite in aquatic entertainment programs around the world.

Seaworld slaughter

Disposable personal income has increased in India and there is a growing market for entertainment. Dolphin park proposals were being considered in Delhi, Kochi and Mumbai.

"There's nothing like having a few animals on display, particularly ones that are so sensitive and intelligent as these dolphins," said Belinda Wright from the Wildlife Protection Society of India in an interview with DW. "It's a good money making proposition."

But audiences are usually oblivious to the documented suffering of these marine performers.

"The majority of dolphins and whales in captivity have been sourced through wild captures in Japan, in Taiji, in the Caribbean, in the Solomon Islands and parts of Russia. These captures are very violent," Mitra explained.

"They drive groups of dolphins into shallow bay areas where young females whose bodies are unmarked and are thought to be suitable for display are removed. The rest are often slaughtered."

Mitra argued that the experience of captivity is tantamount to torture. She explained that orcas and other dolphins navigate by using sonar signals, but in tanks, the reverberations bounce off the walls, causing them "immense distress". She described dolphins banging their heads on the walls and orcas wearing away their teeth as they pull at bars and bite walls.

Tanks terminated

In response to the new ban, the Greater Cochin Development Authority (CGDA) told DW that it has withdrawn licenses for a dolphin park in the city of Kochi, where there have been massive animal rights demonstrations in recent months.

"It is illegal now," said N. Venugopal, who heads the CGDA. "It is over. We will not allow it anymore."

He said the government hadn't lost money on the development but declined to comment on how much the dolphin park was worth.

Boost for Ganges River dolphin

It's possible that India's new ban on cetacean captivity will lead to renewed interest in protecting the country's own Ganges River dolphin.

"I hope this will put some energy into India's Action Plan for the Gangetic Dolphin, which is supposed to run until 2020," said Belinda Wright from the Wildlife Protection Society of India. "But there's been very little action.

She said the ban was a good first stop, but warned against excessive optimism. "I'm very proud that India has done this," she said. "I'm not trying to be cynical but I have been a conservationist in India for four decades. One gets thrilled with the wording, but I don't think it's going to turn to the tables."

"But dolphins for now are safe from dolphinariums, and that's a good thing," she added.

http://www.dw.de/dolphins-gain-unprecedented-protection-in-india/a-16834519

May 28, 2013

Keystone pipeline foe awarded $100K prize

By Zack Colman
The Hill

Prominent climate activist and Keystone XL oil sands pipeline opponent Bill McKibben has won a Norway-based prize awarded for environmental work.

McKibben received the Sophie Prize — which comes with a cash award of $100,000 — for his work with 350.org, the climate advocacy group he co-founded. McKibben said he would split the prize between his organization and his alma mater, Middlebury College, provided it divests from fossil fuels.

“This is really an award for the millions of people who make up the growing climate movement,” McKibben said Tuesday in a statement.

McKibben was awarded the prize for “pioneering new methods of social protest,” such as university divestment. His group has successfully pushed several institutions of higher education to excise fossil fuel investments from their endowments.

He also has helped lead protests against the Keystone pipeline, which would haul oil sands from Canada to the Gulf Coast.

McKibben organized a protest against the pipeline in August 2011 that ended with him and 1,253 other people being arrested.

Some observers have credited the protest with pushing President Obama to punt a decision on the controversial pipeline project until after the 2012 election.

The project is currently under federal review and is at the center of an intense lobbying and political battle.

Environmentalists oppose the pipeline because they say it would facilitate fossil fuel production that they say would exacerbate climate change.

But some unions that traditionally back Democrats support Keystone because it would provide jobs. The project is also backed by Republican and some Democratic lawmakers, the oil-and gas industry and officials in Canada.

Supporters contend Keystone would provide an injection of short-term construction jobs while also strengthening energy security.

http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/302141-climate-keystone-xl-campaigner-gets-norway-based-prize

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May 30, 2013

It’s time to stop investing in the fossil fuel industry

It makes no sense to pay for one's pension by investing in companies that make sure we won't have a planet to retire on

By Bill McKibben
The Guardian

Earlier this month, the trustees of the city graveyard in Santa Monica, California (final resting place of actor Glenn Ford and tennis star May Sutton) announced they were selling their million dollars worth of stock in fossil fuel companies. As far as I know they were the first cemetery board to do so, but they join a gathering wave of universities, churches and synagogues, city governments and pension funds.

In the last few months, fossil fuel divestment has turned into one of the fastest-growing protest campaigns in recent American history – and it's already reached all the way to Australia, where portions of the Uniting Church have announced they'll sell their fossil fuel stock as well.

It's happening because it's one of the few ways for concerned people and institutions to take a stand on climate change, and confront the enormous power of the fossil fuel industry. But it's also happening because once you run the numbers, there's no way to escape the conclusion that this industry is now an outlaw industry. Not outlaw against the laws of the state – they generally have a large hand in writing those – but outlaw against the laws of physics.

Here's the maths: almost every country on earth, including Australia, has signed on to the idea that we shouldn't raise the planet's temperature more than two degrees – that was the only tangible outcome of the otherwise pointless Copenhagen conference on climate change in 2009. The one degree we've raised so far has already melted the Arctic, not to mention laid the ground for Australia's "angry summer". As such, two degrees is too high but it's the only red line the planet's governments have ever agreed to.

We know roughly how much more carbon we can emit before we go past two degrees: about 500 billion tons. And at current rates of emissions, that will take us less than 40 years. But the math gets really impossible when you consider how much carbon the world's coal, oil and gas industries already have in their reserves. That number is about 2,800 gigatons – five times what the most conservative governments and scientists on earth say would be safe to burn.

And yet, companies will dig it up and burn it – that's what their business plans call for, that's what their share prices depend on, and that's what their government lobbying budgets are spent on making sure happens. Once you know the maths, you know that Exxon, Rio Tinto and Shell and so on aren't like normal companies – they're really rogues. But you also know that our situation is hopeless unless we get to work: the end of this script is written, unless we rewrite it.

Doing so is hard. It requires changes in our personal lives and in our government policy, which Australia has begun to make: the carbon tax, if it survives the next election, is a serious step forward. It also requires that we rein in the plans of, say, those coal companies that want to mine places like the Galilee Valley: if the expansion plans of Australia's miners are carried out, that coal alone will use up almost a third of the atmospheric space between us and those two degrees.

There are a dozen other places like the Australian coalfields around the world, and we have to stop them all. The fossil fuel industry should be turned into an energy industry: we have to take the hundred million dollars a day that Exxon spends on finding new oil, and have them spend it

on solar panels instead. Which is why, for now, we have to divest those stocks.

The idea is not that we can bankrupt these companies; they're the richest enterprises in history. But we can give them a black eye, and begin to undermine their political power. That's what happened a quarter century ago when, around the western world, institutions divested their holdings in companies doing business in apartheid South Africa. Nelson Mandela credited that as a key part of his country's liberation, and Desmond Tutu last year called on all of us to repeat the exercise with the fossil fuel companies.

It will be even harder this time, since this is such a dug-in industry. But their ability to use all those reserves is limited because of climate change, HSBC bank predicted share values of fossil fuel companies would fall by half or more. An investment in a fossil fuel company is a wager that we'll never do anything about climate change, because if we ever even tried to meet that two degree target, those stock values would plummet.

It makes no sense to pay for one's pension by investing in companies that make sure we won't have a planet to retire on. Even the dead won't rest easy if their perpetual care is paid for at the cost of those they left behind– so ask your church, your super-annuation fund, and even your cemetery which side of this wager they're taking.

• Bill McKibben will be giving a series of talks in Australia June 3-9.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/may/30/fossil-fuel-divestment-climate-change

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May 31, 2013

Globe Gears Up For World Environment Day Celebrations

Mongolia Hosting Day Aimed at Reducing Food Waste as Events Take Place across the World

United Nations Environment Programme

NAIROBI – Hundreds of thousands of people are gearing up across the globe to take part in World Environment Day, the biggest and most widely celebrated global day for positive environmental action.

This year the main event is hosted by the Government and people of Mongolia, and focuses on the new UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) campaign **Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint,** which is aimed at slashing food waste.

Each year, an estimated one third of all food produced ends up spoiling in the bins of consumers, retailers, farmers and transporters. This 1.3 billion tonnes, worth around US$1 trillion, is enough to feed the 870 million people who go hungry each day several times over.

This unconsumed food, much of which can be cut out through simple measures, wastes both the energy put into growing it and the fuel spent on transporting produce across vast distances. Additionally, significant amounts of the powerful greenhouse gas methane emanate from food decomposing on landfills, while livestock and forests cleared for food production contribute to global warming.

The new campaign has already made inroads into spreading the message that every individual and organization can make a difference, and World Environment Day aims to further reinforce this idea.

The main celebrations take place on 5 June each year, although events take place before and after this date. Over half a million people have already been registered on http://hqweb.unep.org/wed and it is not too late to get involved. Register your activity on the website and sign up to take part in a WED Thunderclap, which will send a resounding message to the world on 5 June, at http://hqweb.unep.org/wed/thunderclap.

As part of the celebrations, UNEP and partners including the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) will launch two reports: one presenting a menu of solutions to reduce food waste and loss, and one highlighting how smallholder farmers have the potential to lift one billion people out of poverty given the right support and enabling conditions.

MONGOLIA CELEBRATIONS

Mongolia is one of the fastest-growing countries in the world, and is aiming to ensure this growth goes hand in hand with a green economy and civilization. While Mongolia does not waste significant food, the traditional nomadic lifestyle of some of its people—who developed ways to preserve food for long periods—offers some ancient answers to the modern-day challenge of food waste.

Highlights of the WED 2013 programme in Mongolia include:

1 June -- *International Children's Day* -- Various activities for children themed on the environment, including flashmobs, at Central Square, Ulaanbaatar.

2 June -- *Ulaanbaatar-2013 marathon* -- Flagged off by current marathon world record holder Patrick Makau, the UNEP Patron for Clean Air, the marathon will see thousands of runners wind through the city on a day where the city centre has been designated car free.

3 June -- *Green Development National Forum*-- Mongolia, which has placed a moratorium on new mining concessions while looking to a more sustainable future, will unveil its new green development plans—which include a focus on renewable energy and eco-tourism.

4 June -- *Launch of First Wind Farm* -- As part of its transition to a low-carbon future, Mongolia launches its first wind farm on Salhit Mountain in Tuv Province. Later in the day, the joint IFAD and UNEP-WCMC 'Smallholders, Food Security and the Environment' report will be launched.

5 June -- *Official WED Celebrations*-- The official WED celebrations take place, including the release of the joint UNEP-WRI working paper 'Sustainable Food Futures'.

(For daily coverage of the Mongolia events, visit hqweb.unep.org/wed/news/hostcountry2013.asp)

GLOBAL CELEBRATIONS

Events are taking place in hundreds of countries, spanning every continent. Below are just a few of these celebrations.

Afghanistan -- UNEP Afghanistan is combining WED with a workshop on Afghanistan's Sustainable Development Public Private Partnership (PPP). The workshop will take place at Kabul University and will address topics such as: Waste Management; Sanitation; CO_2 Reduction and Recycling in Afghanistan.

Australia -- On 5 June, the University of South Wales is hosting a debate with political, academic and social leaders, Oz Harvest and UNEP on what's wrong—and what could be right—about food, waste and our future. Email sustainability@unsw.edu.au for details.

On 1 June, the Conservation Council is holding a four-course, zero-waste meal prepared from the sustainable kitchen of Canberra's Merici College. All funds raised for the night go to support the Conservation Council's vital work. http://worldenvironmentdayact.eventbrite.com.au/

Bosnia and Herzegovina -- Bosnia and Herzegovina's capital and largest city Sarajevo will be the European host of this year's World Environment Day celebrations. On 5 June, the city will host environmental experts in a series of events focused on engaging citizens on food waste and its environmental impact.

Brazil -- The organization ADEC will promote food and nutritional awareness on organic cotton farms and organic cotton-growing communities and their schools around the world. Each child from 10-12 designated schools gets to create a poster, art work or sculpture promoting the different food crops grown alongside organic cotton. The competition will see the children pitch the advantages of local, safe and fresh food production to their peers.

China -- Tongji University in Shanghai's International Student Conference on Environment and Sustainability (ISCES) will coincide with the global WED event on and around 5 June. ISCES 2013, starting on 5 June and lasting for four days, is set to focus on "Food, Health and Sustainable Development". Supported and funded by UNEP, Tongji University and Beijing Green Future Environmental Foundation, and organized by UNEP-Tongji Institute of Environment for Sustainable Development, the conferences held thus far attracted over 400 students from more than 40 countries across the globe.

http://unep-iesd.tongji.edu.cn/index.php?classid=875

Other events include a series of campaigns including the designation of Environmental Protection Envoys and a WED-themed concert. The UN Forum on Sustainable Consumption will also be held on 5 June in Beijing.

France -- UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics in Paris is running a competition called *Love Your Leftovers*, which asks global citizens to show their love for leftovers and submit a recipe that will clean out the fridge. The overall winning recipe and contributor will be announced on 5 June, with a top mystery first prize up for grabs and 20 exclusive Vivienne Westwood *GreenUp!* t-shirts going to runners-up. The competition is supported by 20Minutes, a free newspaper that can be picked up around Paris and on the Metro. On 5 June, 20 Minutes will also publish an article to announce the winner and to propose some practical tips to prevent food waste. In addition, hundreds of electronic billboards around Paris will feature the Think.Eat.Save campaign slogan and a link to the WED website.

The GoodPlanet Foundation, in conjunction with France's Casino supermarket group, is running a campaign called "To Choose is To Act" until 9 June. The campaign is taking place in all of Casino's stores, and calls for consumers to opt for products that respect the environment. The Foundation informed Casino which products are most environmentally friendly, and the supermarket is promoting these products during the campaign.

Haiti and Dominican Republic -- Haiti's Ministry of the Environment will launch—in conjunction with the Ministry of the Environment in the Dominican Republic, UNEP and the UN Development Programme (UNDP)—a report on the border zone between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The report presents the findings and recommendations of an 18-month long assessment of the 380-km border between Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and the Dominican Republic, a middle-income country.

India -- From Bangalore to Chennai, tens of thousands of young people will take part in runs, awareness-raising events and tree-planting ceremonies to highlight the issue of food waste and other pressing environmental concerns.

Kenya -- More than 2,000 volunteers from Action Green for Trade and Sustainable Development (AGTSD) will reach supermarkets, restaurants and hotels with the message that reducing food waste and loss could have a significant impact on world hunger levels.

Mexico -- On 5 June, the new edition of the International Poster Biennial will be launched during one of the events celebrating WED in Mexico. The environmental category will be themed on Think.Eat.Save, and two awards will be handed out: one for best poster by a professional and one for best poster by a student.

Thailand -- The UN is working with the caterer Sodexo to run a waste-free environment at UN facilities in Bangkok from 3 to 7 June.

United States -- The City of Portland, Oregon will host this year's North American WED

celebrations. Activities to be held in Portland on 5 June include:

International Children's Painting Competition award ceremony at Portland State University Native American Community Center;
Rose Festival Parade—Portland's largest public event—is holding this year's event in honor of WED, including a float;
A rally in the RoZone of Tom McCall Waterfront Park with fun and educational activities for children of all ages free to the public. Activities include storytelling, mask-making, fly casting, fly tying, trash art and the chance to be part of the Procession of the Species, a mini-parade around the waterfront featuring folks dressed as their favorite animals.
Visit http://www.portlandoregon.gov/wed/ for details.

On 4 June, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in collaboration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), will launch the U.S. Food Waste Challenge, which invites producer groups, processors, manufacturers, retailers, communities and other government agencies to join efforts to reduce food loss and waste, recover wholesome food for human consumption, and recycle discards for animal feed, composting and energy generation. To join the challenge, participants list the activities they will undertake to help reduce, recover, or recycle food waste. At the launch event, USDA, EPA and founding U.S. Food Waste Challenge participants will announce their commitment and invite others to join in reducing, recovering, and recycling food waste across the U.S. food chain, from farm to final disposition. e-mail FoodWasteChallenge@oce.usda.gov for details.

UN Agencies

Think.Eat.Save, ties in with the 'Bon Appetit' theme of Greening the Blue, the programme aimed at making the UN more environmentally friendly. The campaign is asking people to make a food-waste related pledge, take a photo of this pledge, and enter a draw.

From **Beirut**, the UN is conducting an awareness campaign in the Arab region focusing on eliminating hunger and reducing food waste. Famous Lebanese singer Ragheb Alama agreed to be the advocate of the campaign, which consists of a one-month campaign on Future TV and Radio Orient, production of a 30-minute TV spot by Ragheb Alama, and partnerships with airlines.

In the **Nordic-Baltic region, a** new advertising competition will be launched on June 5, calling on professionals and non-professionals to create a newspaper ad that will inspire people to think about the detrimental effects of food waste and loss. The contest, to be kicked off by the United Nations Regional Information Center (UNRIC), the Nordic Council of Ministers and UNEP, will be open to participants from Nordic countries and its Baltic partners (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Baltic Russia, including St Petersburg). The winner will be announced at a Feeding the 5000 (one of the partners in Think.Eat.Save) event in Copenhagen on October 4 and will be awarded the Nordic Council of Ministers Prize of 5,000 Euros. Visit www.thinkeatsave.org/nordiccompetition for more details.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint: The campaign harnesses the expertise of organizations such as WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), Feeding the 5,000 and other partners, including national Governments, who have considerable experience targeting and changing wasteful practices. It aims to accelerate action and provide a global vision and information-sharing portal for the many and diverse initiatives currently underway around the world. Visit www.thinkeatsave.org

About World Environment Day: WED aims to be the biggest and most widely celebrated global day for positive environmental action. WED activities take place year round but climax on 5 June. WED celebrations began in 1972 and have grown to become the one of the main vehicles through which the UN stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and encourages political attention and action. Through WED, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) is able to personalize environmental issues and enable everyone to realize not only their responsibility, but also their power to become agents for change in support of sustainable and equitable development. Visit the WED site: hqweb.unep.org/wed/

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http://rona.unep.org/documents/news/Globe%20Gears%20Up%20For%20World%20Environment%20Day%20Celebrations.pdf

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June 2013

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=38&key=c8d2bc4848016f88d75fb6442e1ca00d&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

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June 2013

World Environment Week Newsletter 2013

SAFCEI (South African Faith Communities Institute)

http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=a6183d82b6&e=d85b57a294

June 2013

Water Ethics Newsletter

http://us1.campaign-archive1.com/?u=31982f6e4937945bfaddf6712&id=eb5dbb2059&e=495d1f20da

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June 2013

"Wherefore Environmental Studies in a 21st Century City?"

By Julianne Lutz Warren
Center for Humans & Nature

Those familiar with the works of Aldo Leopold will see that the idea and title for this writing spring from his 1947 "Wherefore Wildlife Ecology?" written to his students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The following words are dedicated to the young adults of another century in another place—my undergraduate students at New York University.

Not all of you signed up for this course because you were excited about it. It was to fulfill a general education science requirement. You are smart and eager to go forward in your lives. What does studying the environment in college have to offer that you haven't already learned in secondary schools?

You already knew there were lots of environmental problems—like toxic pollution, deforestation, species extinctions, human illness, and climate change. In response, you've tried recycling, unplugging things, eating some organic food, donating your money, and volunteering your time to good causes. You've cared. But the issues are mostly too many, too distant, and too big for you to solve, maybe for anyone to solve. And so far, you've had pretty okay lives—none of us is starving or homeless. Even through superstorm Sandy, we all came out all right.

And isn't a tree a tree? The soil lies under the sidewalk, and out there somewhere grows your food. Though you have traveled the world, only one out of twenty-two of you has stood amidst corn stubble. And perhaps you have felt that you have outgrown an earlier interest in stars, dinosaurs, fishes and frogs, and little chirping birds. Whales, polar bears, and pandas might be interesting; you care about them, but what do they really have to do with real life? Isn't that only kid stuff?

After all, you have grown-up ambitions to become economists, psychologists, mathematicians, poets, journalists and a host of other impressive dreams. You work hard and want to try out new ideas while hanging on to some old ones. Your skins are of all shades. You cross genders. You speak multiple languages. You originate from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe. You enjoy movies and museums, shopping and people-watching. Many of you are in love with cities—Abu Dhabi, Accra, Berlin, London, Madrid, to name just a few. Indeed, you came here because Manhattan is a stunning place to be. I did too. So wherefore environmental studies in this urban jungle?

In our first day together, I explained to you that we would be exploring relationships of all sorts. I also asked you if you disagreed with this premise: *Life is good*. I waited for your responses. No one contradicted going forward with this assumption. Indeed, many of you nodded your heads affirmatively. No one dropped the class. We established that we held a shared value—that life is good—and that the class was about relationships.

What I have tried to teach you, then, is that the smallest unit of life is a self-organizing host of dynamically complex relationships unfolding out of the 14-billion-year history of our universe encompassing over 100 billion galaxies. This means that to support the good of life—to skillfully live out our shared value—requires deepening our study of and respect for interdependency. Indoors and out we have been learning together what it means to belong to an old planet made of even older stardust, out of which, bearing a cosmos of history, emerge new things, like this city:

Laboratory

earth's moon that waxes and wanes no matter what
the colossal, war-storied english elm growing here
in the lenape-less northwest corner of washington square park
red-tailed hawks and squirrels hiding from each other in its branches
leaves sucking in sunlight and air too-fertilized with ancestors' fumes
rooted above a belowground maze of once loamy-sand glacial soil
subway rats carrying aboveground life down to this dark concrete space
on the platform a yellow-bearded man misting dead ferns potted in a stroller
surfacing to songs of white-throated sparrows ferrying atoms of big apple blossoms
to the boreal returning with those of digested tiger swallowtails in the fall
one great egret in late april gobbling a few shining fish from central park lake
whose leaving white shadow reflected in grey water drops the word "grace"
the words "cash" or "credit" with earth reckoning that they mean the same thing
in the course of snow-muffled mornings
pink cherry-blossom dawns
hot, sunny days, humid air,
superstorm-darkened, moon-pulled
flooding sea night.

In other words, paradoxically, the evidences of science have helped us learn about how the observable natural world is put together and works while also deepening our perception of mystery. We have discovered that

1. The universe, Earth, and the life embedded within it are self-organizing and interdependent.
2. Self-organizing processes lead to increasing diversity of things and complexity of relationships, including the seeming tangles of co-evolved life through which energy flows—bedrock-soils-waters-plants-animals-air-sunlight—characterized as "biotic pyramids" with self-renewing capacities, and human symbolic consciousness itself.
3. The vastness of time, space, and complexity is far beyond human comprehension.
4. Because of "chaos," even had we perfect knowledge of the past and the present, the future is uncertain.
5. Some events leave no observable traces of themselves, leaving blanks in discoverable history.
6. Supernatural beings may or may not exist and may or may not act in particular ways.
7. Each wild being may respond uniquely to what is both known and unknown.

Knowledge and ignorance have always been part of the human condition. But it is also true that science has helped us to understand what is now unprecedented:

1. There are more than seven billion humans, with our population nearly septupling in just the past two centuries.
2. Atmosphere to ocean to bedrock, the whole Earth has been altered by human activities, but not by all humans, in ways that have simplified and reorganized biological complexity and diversity, diminished soil fertility, and loaded the air with greenhouse gases, affecting everyone, including future generations.
3. At a global scale, cultures and societies can falter and have, causing unintended global consequences because they strayed from aligning with Earth's self-organizing capacities for self-renewal.

We thus understand another paradox of modern science. Though its method was intended by its Enlightenment inventors to help humankind progress toward greater mastery and possession of a mechanical nature, it has helped us to understand that such a worldview was in error. While there have been short-term benefits for some, the collective consequences of living by the principle of "alienation for domination"—that is, of humans over others, useful over non-useful "resources," machines over bodies, individuals over communities, profit over compassion, wealth over health—are terminal. When we discover ourselves alone, in other words, we discover ourselves dead, or at least ineffectual. The good of life depends on trying something different. It hangs on humanity everywhere working together intentionally to re-intimate ourselves creatively amongst what remains of Earth's self-organizing interdependencies—fossils stay buried; it's "the fierce green fire" that burns—to respectfully receive humanity's shared belonging.

As we consider the future, there is plenty to fear and much need for hope. Discovering new–old stories about how to live amidst ambiguity—that is, renovating used-up tales of simple-minded alienation and domination—is a job for the humanities, for all humanity's storytellers. Science and humanities, after all, are separate here only in that they have been helping us have rigor in exploring different perspectives on the same thing—how to orient ourselves within a universe of relationships to actively support the good of life. What I have tried to say is that science has

helped explain that the story of expanding human empire is finished. Respecting the good of life demands that we now expand human compassion.

We observed birds, though you might have resisted. Birding is resistance—to Empire. If not birds, you might prefer looking into the eyes of all kinds of people or notice flowers, trees, butterflies, the moon, or sunlight falling on pavement. Find something that seems so unlike you it is almost unrecognizable. And if you let childlike wonder lead you from there to deepening intimacy with that other, you will discover the whole world of interdependencies sustaining it and the universe besides. Then, valuing the good of life, as you do, with empathy you will want to enrich it. Your compassion will become more encompassing and more skillful. You will be able to imagine fresh possibilities coming forth. Others will join you. Whatever the future holds, you will have discovered that you are not alone, that you depend on a whole community of life that depends on your uniqueness. You will act on this shared belonging and do well by it.

http://www.humansandnature.org/urban-ethic---julianne-lutz-warren-response-69.php

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June 1, 2013

Back to the Basics

By Pankaj Jain
Speaking Tree

PANKAJ JAIN writes that the philosophy of contemporary ecologists echoes M K Gandhi's promotion and practise of ahimsa

An eminent scholar recently came to our university and spoke about the role of diverse religious communities of the world and their attitudes toward the environment. He showed examples from several indigenous communities from the Americas, Africa and Asia. Yet, when he referred to the traditions of India, he used these words: "India has the most bizarre culture in the world where even a cobra is worshipped. This is a bit of an overshoot." It amazes me that even in a supposedly globalised world, India continues to mystify scholars.

The Greatest Dharma

While most Americans are familiar with yoga and Bollywood, Indian perspectives towards the ecology seem to be largely unknown. Although yoga is widely known in the west as a practice centred around physical postures, many westerners do not realise that yoga is actually a system of eight limbs or components. The first step of the first limb of yoga is ahimsa, the practice of nonviolence. Unless one is firmly rooted in ahimsa in one's thoughts, speech, and actions, true practice of yoga cannot begin. Through yoga, practitioners develop harmony with and reverence for nature.

For more than 2,500 years, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain teachers have expressed the value of ahimsa as a core principle of philosophy, spirituality, and ethics. Mahavira, the last great teacher of Jainism, even proclaimed that ahimsa is the greatest dharma, a term whose meanings include religion, ethics, duty, virtue, and cosmic law. According to most of these texts, ahimsa improves one's karma;hurting another being damages one's karma and obstructs advancement toward moksha or liberation. To prevent the accrual of bad karma, practitioners avoid activities associated with violence, follow a vegetarian diet, and oppose the institutionalised breeding and killing of animals, birds, and fish for human consumption.

Festivals For All

Despite our visiting scholar's concerns, the protection of the cobra and other animals has a long celebrated Indic history. Cobras have a specific festival dedicated to them just as there are specific festivals for mountains, rivers, cows, trees, and hundreds of other gods and goddesses throughout India. M K Gandhi once had a brief encounter with a cobra at his ashram, and he did not want it to be killed. Gandhi's principled practise of ahimsa aligns with the prevailing values of contemporary ecologists. Scientific studies suggest that every being in nature is valuable because all species are directly or indirectly dependent on each other's survival; this is one fundamental reason why scientists and environmentalists seek to protect the biodiversity of our planet.

When I first mentioned this story, one of my students asked, "If Indians are not following the principles of Gandhi, how can we expect others to do so?" Similarly, at a conference on World Religions and Ecology, a participant asked what nonwestern countries expect of the west. If the rest of the world is eager to make the same mistakes as the west did, what route should the west take to ensure the planet's survival? One answer might be for the west to learn from Gandhi's ecological practices. If the west is to remain an intellectual leader of the world, it must reform and transform itself. The west has led the world with its scientific and technological innovations for the last several centuries. Now it needs to emerge as ecological leader, inspired by Gandhi's lifestyle. Without deep transformation, all voices to save the planet's ecology remain hollow rhetoric.

Gandhi's entire life can be seen as an ecological treatise. He functioned much like an ecosystem: his small meals of nuts and fruits, his morning ablution, his everyday bodily practises, his periodic observances of silence, morning walks, his spinning wheel and his abhorrence of waste were all rooted in Indic values of truth and nonviolence. Gandhi's example could prove to be a powerful inspiration even in today's India, helping the people resist the pressure of global consumerism and lack of responsibility towards the environment.

Sunderlal Bahuguna's Chipko Movement in north India used Gandhi-inspired ahimsa to protect trees from being cut down. Pandurang Hegde leads a Chipko-style movement in south India. Dozens of institutions in several Indian towns founded by Gandhi continue to flourish with their

own small-scale production of textiles and agriculture. The dharmic traditions of India are still alive; we just need to create greater awareness and encourage eco-friendly practices.
It is time to go back to these cherished values and practise nonviolence not just toward other human beings but also toward entire earth.

The writer teaches anthropology in the University of North Texas

http://www.speakingtree.in/spiritual-articles/new-age/back-to-basics-195305/

June 4, 2013

Backing and Enabling Smallholders Can Unleash New and Sustainable Agricultural Revolution

United Nations Environment Programme

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia – Supporting smallholder farmers to play a greater role in food production and natural resource stewardship is one of the quickest ways to lift over one billion people out of poverty and sustainably nourish a growing world population, a new United Nations report released today said.

Most of the 1.4 billion people living on under US$1.25 a day live in rural areas and depend largely on agriculture for their livelihoods, while an estimated 2.5 billion people are involved in full- or part-time smallholder agriculture.

These smallholders manage approximately 500 million small farms and provide over 80 per cent of the food consumed in large parts of the developing world, particularly Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, thus contributing to food security and poverty reduction.

A previous study showed that a one-per-cent increase in agricultural per-capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reduced the poverty gap five times more than a one-per-cent increase in GDP in other sectors, especially amongst the poorest people. Another study demonstrated that for every ten-per-cent increase in farm yields, there was a seven-per-cent reduction in poverty in Africa, and a reduction of over five-per-cent in Asia.

However, increasing fragmentation of land, reduced investment support and the marginalization of small farms in economic and development policy have hampered the development of this vital contribution and left many smallholders vulnerable.

Given the right enabling conditions and targeted support, these often-neglected farmers can transform the rural landscape and unleash a new and sustainable agricultural revolution, according to *Smallholders, Food Security and the Environment*—a report commissioned by the UN Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

“Two decades of underinvestment in agriculture, growing competition for land and water, rising fuel and fertilizer prices, and climate change have left smallholders less able to escape poverty,” said Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director.

“Following the Rio+20 Summit and as part of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, including developing a set of Sustainable Development Goals, there is a growing and powerful focus on sustainable food systems. This includes the UN Secretary-General’s Zero Hunger Challenge and UNEP and the Food and Agricultural Organization’s *Think Eat Save: Reduce Your Foodprint* campaign,” he added.

“Smallholder farmers can continue to be marginalized or be recognized as catalysts for a transformation of the way the world manages the supply of food and the environmental services that underpin agriculture in the first place” said Mr Steiner. “ Above all, this report makes it clear that investing in this sector offers the highest rate of return for those interested in overcoming poverty and realizing and building upon the Millennium Development Goals, including MDG-7 on environmental sustainability.”

The agricultural ‘green revolution’ that swept large parts of the developing world during the 1960s and 1970s dramatically increased agricultural productivity and reduced poverty, with smallholder farmers seeing many benefits. However, these achievements also helped undermine the very resource base that made the revolution possible.

While smallholder agriculture depends on the services provided by well-functioning ecosystems, agricultural practices can, and have had, impacts on these ecosystems as poverty drives smallholders to modify habitats and thus harm biodiversity, overuse water and nutrients and pollute water and soil.
The pressures placed on land and other resources are set to grow over the next 40 years as agriculture must feed a larger and more-urbanized world population.

Current practices are undermining the ecological foundation of the global food system through overuse and the effects of agricultural pollution, thereby enhancing degradation, reducing ecosystem capacity to generate sustainable yields and threatening to negatively impact food security and poverty reduction.

Sustainable agricultural intensification—scaling up farming practices that maintain the resources base upon which smallholders depend so that it continues to support food security and rural development—can be the answer to enhanced food security, environmental protection and poverty reduction. Smallholders have a key role to play in this process.

“Smallholder farmers hold a massive collective store of experience and local knowledge that can provide the practical solutions needed to put agriculture on a more sustainable and equitable footing,” said Elwyn Grainger Jones, Director of IFAD’s Environment and Climate Division. “To place these smallholders at the forefront of a transformation in world agriculture, they need appropriate support to overcome the many challenges they face.”

The report—which aims to improve understanding among policymakers and practitioners of the relationships between smallholders, food security and the environment—made a series of recommendations, including:

- The promotion of sustainable agriculture has focused on minimizing the impacts of agriculture on the environment and many smallholders feel this robs them of limited opportunities for growth. Farm- and community-level mechanisms that take these concerns into account while scaling up a sustainability landscape approach need to be developed.
- Removing policy barriers to sustainable agricultural growth requires market-based mechanisms that provide smallholders with incentives to invest in sustainability, such as: removing subsidies on unsustainable fertilizers; subsidizing practices that encourage soil and water conservation; and expanding fair or green certification schemes that allow smallholders to compete in new niche markets locally and internationally.
- In order to provide smallholders with the information they need, investing in approaches such as farmer field schools and the use of rural radios and other mobile telecommunication methods is essential.
- Additional research is needed on the drivers of change that influence smallholder practices–both negative (e.g. agriculture policies and subsidies) and positive (e.g. secure land rights, collective institutions and cultural values).

The report was released as part of the celebrations of World Environment Day (WED), whose global host this year is the government and people of Mongolia. WED's theme is closely linked to food security, focusing on reducing the estimated one third of all food produced—an astonishing 1.3 billion tonnes, worth around US$1 trillion—that is wasted or lost each year.

Earlier this year, UNEP and the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) launched a campaign called **Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint,** which is aimed at slashing this wastage.
Aside from the moral implications of such wastage in a world where almost 900 million people go hungry every day, unconsumed food wastes both the energy put into growing it and the fuel spent on transporting produce across vast distances.

NOTES TO EDITORS
The report will be available for download from www.ifad.org from June 4.
Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint

The campaign harnesses the expertise of organizations such as WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), Feeding the 5,000 and other partners, including national governments, who have considerable experience targeting and changing wasteful practices. It aims to accelerate action and provide a global vision and information-sharing portal for the many and diverse initiatives currently underway around the world. Visit www.thinkeatsave.org

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http://www.unep.org/wed/news/small-holder-farmers-out-of-poverty.asp

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June 5, 2013

From Australia to Afghanistan, New Research Spotlights Low-Cost Actions for Delivering Major Benefits for Development, Environment and Livelihoods

United Nations Environment Programme

Washington DC / Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia) / Portland / Nairobi – One out of every four calories produced by the global agricultural system is being lost or wasted, according to new analysis. This poses a serious challenge to the planet's ability to reduce hunger and meet the food needs of a rapidly-expanding global population.

Released on World Environment Day (WED), which this year carries the theme 'Think.Eat.Save - Reduce Your Foodprint', the new working paper, Reducing Food Loss and Waste, shows that more than half of the food lost and wasted in Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia occurs close to the fork—at the consumption stage. By contrast, in developing countries, about two-thirds of the food lost and wasted occurs close to the farm—after harvest and storage.

Reducing Food Loss and Waste was produced by the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and draws on research from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

It makes a range of recommendations including the development of a "food loss and waste protocol"—a global standard for how to measure, monitor, and report food loss and waste. If what gets measured gets managed, then such a protocol could go a long way toward helping governments and companies implement targeted efforts to reduce food loss and waste.

According to the study, which was released today in Mongolia, global host of WED 2013, the world will need about 60 percent more food calories in 2050 compared to 2006 if global demand continues on its current trajectory.

Halving current rates of food loss and waste, say the authors, would reduce this gap by a fifth. This would also result in major savings in water use, energy, pesticides and fertilizers, and would be a boost for global food security.

"Beyond all the environmental benefits, reducing food loss and waste will save money for people and companies," said Craig Hanson, Director of WRI's People & Ecosystems Program and a co-author of the study. "The world needs urgent solutions to feed its growing population and reducing loss and waste is a critical piece toward a more sustainable food future."

"It is an extraordinary fact that in the 21st century, close to 25 per cent of all the calories linked with growing and producing food are lost or wasted between the farm and the fork—food that could feed the hungry, food that has required energy, water and soils in a world of increasing natural resource scarcities and environmental concerns including climate change," said Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director.

"Yet within the challenge of food are the seeds of a more cooperative and sustainable future—in short it is an issue that unites everyone today and generations to come. The menu of case studies and recommendations in this study provide national and community-led solutions that ally smart policies with traditional knowledge, modern science and common sense," he added.

"Everyone--from farmers and food companies to retailers, shipping lines, packagers, hotels, restaurants and households--has a role to play, and, in doing so, can contribute to maximizing the opportunities of the Millennium Development Goals, eradicating inequalities in rich and poor countries alike and laying the foundations of a more environmentally sustainable pathway for billions of people," said Mr. Steiner.

From community food banks in Australia, to the use of metal grain silos by farmers in Afghanistan, the WRI and UNEP study showcases simple, low-cost solutions for reducing food loss and waste that are already delivering significant environmental and economic benefits to communities across the globe.
Replicating and expanding these initiatives could significantly reduce the 1.3 billion tons of food lost or discarded worldwide every year, and make major improvements to global resource efficiency.

The report shows, for example, that water used to produce lost or wasted food around the world each year could fill 70 million Olympic-sized swimming pools, while the amount of cropland used to produce wasted food is equivalent to the size of Mexico. Some 28 million tons of fertilizer are used annually to grow this lost and wasted food. The inefficient use of fertilizers is linked to the growth of 'dead' coastal zones around the globe and to climate change.

Separate analysis coordinated by the FAO to be published soon indicates that if food loss and waste were a country, it would be the third highest emitter of greenhouse gases after the United States and China.

Case studies highlighted in the report include:

United States: To reduce portion sizes and therefore the amount of food thrown away each day in their cafeterias, some universities have discontinued the use of trays and introduced 'pay by weight' schemes and other incentives. One university found that after going 'trayless', it discarded almost 13 metric tons less food than in previous years, and conserved over 100,000 litres of water annually. Financial savings amounted to US$79,000 per year.

Afghanistan: Insufficient storage can be a major source of food loss for farmers in developing countries, where structures often do not keep produce in airtight conditions. A FAO project in Afghanistan provided metal silos to 18,000 rural households. Recipients of the silos soon reported higher net incomes due to lower food losses, which decreased from 15 to 20 percent to 1 to 2 percent per year.

Sri Lanka: Introducing studier plastic crates to replace bags or sacks previously used to transport food reduced vegetable losses by weight from 30 percent to 5 percent. A similar project in the Philippines using plastic crates increased the value of a kilogram of fruit and vegetables by 16 per cent.

Australia: The non-profit organization SecondBite collects food from farmers, retailers, and other donors and distributes it to community groups in need. Last year, SecondBite reused and redirected 3,000 tons of fresh food that would otherwise have been discarded.

Nigeria: The 'zeer' evaporative cooler system, developed by a teacher in Nigeria, can preserve fruit and vegetables without refrigeration. The system costs less than US $2 and can hold up to 12kg of produce. Tomatoes and guavas, which would last around two days without storage, last up to 20 days in a zeer.

The paper include a number of recommendations, including

1. Developing a common global standard for measuring and reporting food loss and waste by governments and the private sector;
2. Setting global, national, and corporate food loss and waste reduction targets on the order of 50 percent;
3. Doubling investment in reducing post-harvest losses in developing countries; and
4. Establishing agencies and organizations in developed countries tasked with reducing food waste.

In addition, UNEP is currently developing a new food waste prevention and reduction tool kit, together with experts, supermarkets, governments and other partners. The initiative will support governments, companies and cities to better assess their own levels of food waste, pinpoint areas in their businesses and communities where food is being needlessly wasted, and devise strategies

to reduce this waste. The tool kit is expected to be available for widespread deployment before the end of 2013, and aims to underpin a transition to a less wasteful world.

World Environment Day

From the traditional knowledge of indigenous communities in remote rural areas, to major conferences in the fast-expanding capital Ulaanbaatar, issues around food security and sustainability are featuring high on the agenda for World Environment Day (5 June) in global host country Mongolia.

Events with the country's ancient herding communities highlighted age-old techniques that have been used for centuries to preserve food and avoid waste.

In the past, Mongolia's traditional horsemen frequently relied on 'borts' to sustain them over long journeys. The foodstuff consists of concentrated beef equal to the protein of an entire cow condensed and ground down to the size of a plate. This method of food preservation could produce a meal equivalent to several steaks when the protein was shaved into hot water to make soup.

In the run-up to World Environment Day, internet users have been submitting a host of traditional food-saving ideas and traditions via UNEP's Facebook page. These include chuño from South America, which involves exposing potatoes to the freezing night air and hot daytime sun for five days, before trampling them to squeeze out any moisture. Chuño can last for several months, or even years.
Beyond Mongolia, thousands of people across the world are taking part in World Environment Day activities to highlight the need to consume and produce food more sustainably.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the capital city Sarajevo will host environmental experts in a series of events focused on engaging citizens on food waste and its environmental impact.

In China, Shanghai's International Student Conference on Environment and Sustainability (ISCES) will see hundreds of students debate and discuss the theme of 'Food, Health and Sustainable Development'.

UNEP's Geneva-based Regional Office for Europe is running a competition called Love Your Leftovers, where people can submit a recipe that they use to clean out the fridge. The competition will be judged by a top chef at the famous Cafe de la Paix in central Paris.

Notes to Editors

The new working paper Reducing Food Loss and Waste, is available at: www.wri.org and www.unep.org

About World Environment Day (WED)
WED aims to be the biggest and most widely celebrated global day for positive environmental action. WED activities take place year round but climax on 5 June. WED celebrations began in

1972 and have grown to become the one of the main vehicles through which the UN stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and encourages political attention and action. The WED 2013 theme is in support on the Think.Eat.Save campaign. For more information on activities in the host country Mongolia, and on hundreds of other global events, visit the WED site at: www.unep.org/wed/

About the Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint campaign
The campaign harnesses the expertise of organizations such as WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), Feeding the 5,000 and other partners, including national governments, who have considerable experience targeting and changing wasteful practices. It aims to accelerate action and provide a global vision and information-sharing portal for the many initiatives currently underway around the world that aim to reduce food waste and food loss. Visit:www.thinkeatsave.org

More examples of traditional techniques to preserve food and reduce waste are available at: http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2716&ArticleID=9507&l=en

UNEP's Resource Efficiency website is available at: www.unep.org/resourceefficiency

World Resources Institute
WRI (www.wri.org) focuses on the intersection of the environment and socio-economic development. We go beyond research to put ideas into action, working globally with governments, business, and civil society to build transformative solutions that protect the earth and improve people's lives.

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June 5, 2013

Pope at audience: Counter a culture of waste with solidarity

Vatican Radio

When stock markets drop ten points its ‘a tragedy’ but starving children, homeless people dying on our streets, people disposed of like trash - such as the unborn or the elderly - has become the norm.

This is the result of a culture of waste, of our being unable to ‘read the signs’ of God’s creation, His free gift to us, and of allowing money and not man rule society. A culture of solidarity should prevail over our culture of waste, because when we care for and cultivate creation – including the human person – when we share our resources, we all have enough.

This Wednesday Pope Francis dedicated his general audience with thousands of pilgrims and visitors to St Peter’s square to the UN World Environment Day. Emer McCarthy reports: (Audio: http://media01.radiovaticana.va/audio/ra/00375427.RM)

Below please find a Vatican Radio translation of the Holy Father’s catechesis:

Catechesis

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today I want to focus on the issue of the environment, which I have already spoken of on several occasions. Today we also mark World Environment Day, sponsored by the United Nations, which sends a strong reminder of the need to eliminate the waste and disposal of food.

When we talk about the environment, about creation, my thoughts turn to the first pages of the Bible, the Book of Genesis, which states that God placed man and woman on earth to cultivate and care for it (cf. 2:15). And the question comes to my mind: What does cultivating and caring for the earth mean? Are we truly cultivating and caring for creation? Or are we exploiting and neglecting it? The verb "to cultivate" reminds me of the care that the farmer has for his land so that it bear fruit, and it is shared: how much attention, passion and dedication! Cultivating and caring for creation is God’s indication given to each one of us not only at the beginning of history; it is part of His project; it means nurturing the world with responsibility and transforming it into a garden, a habitable place for everyone. Benedict XVI recalled several times that this task entrusted to us by God the Creator requires us to grasp the rhythm and logic of creation. But we are often driven by pride of domination, of possessions, manipulation, of exploitation; we do not “care” for it, we do not respect it, we do not consider it as a free gift that we must care for. We are losing the attitude of wonder, contemplation, listening to creation; thus we are no longer able to read what Benedict XVI calls "the rhythm of the love story of God and

man." Why does this happen? Why do we think and live in a horizontal manner, we have moved away from God, we no longer read His signs.

But to "cultivate and care" encompasses not only the relationship between us and the environment, between man and creation, it also regards human relationships. The Popes have spoken of *human ecology*, closely linked to *environmental ecology*. We are living in a time of crisis: we see this in the environment, but above all we see this in mankind. The human person is in danger: this is certain, the human person is in danger today, here is the urgency of human ecology! And it is a serious danger because the cause of the problem is not superficial but profound: it is not just a matter of economics, but of ethics and anthropology. The Church has stressed this several times, and many say, yes, that's right, it's true ... but the system continues as before, because it is dominated by the dynamics of an economy and finance that lack ethics. Man is not in charge today, money is in charge, money rules. God our Father did not give the task of caring for the earth to money, but to us, to men and women: we have this task! Instead, men and women are sacrificed to the idols of profit and consumption: it is the "culture of waste." If you break a computer it is a tragedy, but poverty, the needs, the dramas of so many people end up becoming the norm. If on a winter's night, here nearby in Via Ottaviano, for example, a person dies, that is not news. If in so many parts of the world there are children who have nothing to eat, that's not news, it seems normal. It cannot be this way! Yet these things become the norm: that some homeless people die of cold on the streets is not news. In contrast, a ten point drop on the stock markets of some cities, is a tragedy. A person dying is not news, but if the stock markets drop ten points it is a tragedy! Thus people are disposed of, as if they were trash.

This "culture of waste" tends to become the common mentality that infects everyone. Human life, the person is no longer perceived as a primary value to be respected and protected, especially if poor or disabled, if not yet useful - such as the unborn child - or no longer needed - such as the elderly. This culture of waste has made us insensitive even to the waste and disposal of food, which is even more despicable when all over the world, unfortunately, many individuals and families are suffering from hunger and malnutrition. Once our grandparents were very careful not to throw away any leftover food. Consumerism has led us to become used to an excess and daily waste of food, to which, at times, we are no longer able to give a just value, which goes well beyond mere economic parameters. We should all remember, however, that throwing food away is like stealing from the tables of the the poor, the hungry! I encourage everyone to reflect on the problem of thrown away and wasted food to identify ways and means that, by seriously addressing this issue, are a vehicle of solidarity and sharing with the needy.

A few days ago, on the Feast of Corpus Christi, we read the story of the miracle of the loaves: Jesus feeds the crowd with five loaves and two fishes. And the conclusion of the piece is important: " They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets" (Lk 9:17). Jesus asks his disciples not to throw anything away: no waste! There is this fact of twelve baskets: Why twelve? What does this mean? Twelve is the number of the tribes of Israel, which symbolically represent all people. And this tells us that when food is shared in a fair way, with solidarity, when no one is deprived, every community can meet the needs of the poorest. Human ecology and environmental ecology walk together.

So I would like us all to make a serious commitment to respect and protect creation, to be

attentive to every person, to counter the culture of waste and disposable, to promote a culture of solidarity and of encounter. Thank you.

http://en.radiovaticana.va/Articolo.asp?c=698604

June 10, 2013

Supplying the Demand: Respectfully

The pressures of intensive agrochemical farming are taking their toll in Asia

The Guardian

Two neighbouring mosques mark the first October morning in rural north-east India. The united prayer calls of both Muslim and Hindu faiths capture the hope that surrounds the rice harvest. Single rows of millet separate the 500 varieties of rice growing on the small organic farm of Navdanya outside of Dehrahdun. The harvest is symbolic of the progress that scientist and environmentalist Dr Vandana Shiva has made since 1982, in providing an alternative structure to tackle hunger and poverty in India.

"Non-violent farming which protects biodiversity, the earth and our small farmers," is what Dr Shiva states as the paradigm shift in the practice of agriculture in a report reflecting upon two decades of Navdanya's service to the earth. The global network of small farms in the developing world is estimated to be 500 million, together supporting two billion people, one-third of humanity. Globally, of the 870 million people who go hungry everyday, three-quarters live in rural areas and half are from smallholder communities. This extensive community forms the growing sector opposing agriculture as a commercial entity, having directly suffered from failed policies and structures of the past. The growth of Navdanya from a garden farm to a 45 acre plot of land with 750,000 farming members is indicative of the trust current farming communities have in an alternative local method to tackle hunger.

The 250,000 Indian farmers that committed suicide between 1990 and 2012 by drinking poisonous pesticide represent the increased pressures felt by farmers due to dependency on agrochemical and petrochemical industries. This loss of life was a result of the 'Green Revolution', the name given to the intensive engineering that was applied to traditional farming practices to boost agricultural production, forcing farmers into a system of monoculture. A United Nations (UN) report confirms that excessive amounts of fertiliser and subsequently pesticides to tackle disease raised average global grain yields by 24 percent between 1950-1981. Whilst an achievement was made in increasing calories per acre, a fundamental issue arose that continues to have an impact on global development today: micronutrient deficiencies; notably vitamin A and iron, compromising children's immune systems and lowering national IQs. Micronutrient deficiencies are deemed by Dr Aguayo, a UNICEF nutritional advisor as "an issue that prevents a third of the world's children from reaching their intellectual and physical potential."

Organic solutions to hunger put nutrition central to their system. A report published in 2011 by the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology measured industrial, chemically intensive systems against bio diverse and ecologically intensive systems in terms of contribution to nutrition, health and rural incomes. The findings confirmed industrial systems to have very low productivity in comparison to "polycultures of ecological agriculture, because more output can be harvested from a given area planted with diverse crops…it is output that feeds the soil and people."

Dr Vaibhav Singh whose chosen field is public health produced a report titled 'Health per Acre' in 2011 that explained how India could produce additional protein for 2.5 billion adults per year from 'mixed-cropping' or polyculture techniques. Whilst the Department for International Development (DFID) looks to focus on "rewarding the use of evidence in delivery" to tackle worldwide hunger, Dr Singh's findings show evidence in increasing production of the building blocks of life through alternative methods of farming.

Navdanya is proving that change possible and that small farming communities are taking control of their own future. Dr Shiva's commitment to changing the reality of hunger on the ground in India provides an evidence-based approach of polyculture. A UN report submitted to Olivier de Schutter, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, highlights: "ecological interventions such as resource conserving and low-input techniques have proven potential to improve yields, on 12.6 million farms globally by 79 percent." In Africa this figure rises to 116 percent. The International Fund for Agriculture Development is in agreement with these findings in saying: "supporting smallholder farmers would enhance world food security, leaving them out of the equation will push many into greater poverty and hunger."

An initiative of Navdanya's that provides welcome opportunity to suffering farmers is the provision of free seeds to those willing to undertake organic farming practices; the incentive being seeds can be returned for interest or passed onto new farmers willing to join this organic movement as well as creating biodiversity production cycles. In stark contrast to the price increase in farming resources of 600 percent throughout the Green Revolution, this initiative is based on supplying without fee to, "smallholders, those who face severe constraints," as reported by the FAO in a 2012 report on agriculture investment. These are the farmers who have grown 54 seed banks across 16 Indian states to restore agricultural biodiversity in the form of 2,000 varieties of rice.

The world's population is estimated to increase by 50 percent by 2050. It is said our food production will have to rise by 50 percent by 2030, Navdanya provides real time evidence in being able to supply this demand nutritionally and ecologically with a substance that can end the condition of hunger.

The lifework of Dr Shiva is a tireless passion for helping towards the cure for a human catastrophe that affects so many individuals in the world we all live in. She is testament that we can learn and grow from global mistakes, and taking a step backwards towards localised responsible farming is positive. It has taken just two decades for Dr Shiva to be able to implement her evidence into the future of another national community, without government policies or legislations.

Just as the prayer calls of two religions unite, so do figureheads of adversity and hope. Dr Shiva and Samdhong Rinpoche, Prime Minister of the Tibetan government in exile now work together in passing a sustainable resolution to convert Tibetan land previously cultivated with conventional farming methods to organic as well as creating seed banks. Dr Vandana Shiva says the initiative will, "Protect the health of future generations"; something past agricultural movements have failed to do.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development-professionals-network/2013/jun/06/supplying-demand-respectfully

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June 12, 2013

Unlikely Alliances: Idle No More and Building Bridges Through Native Sovereignty

By Zoltan Grossman
CounterPunch

"The natural resources we all depend upon must be protected for future generations….to bring us to a place where there is a quality of life, and where Indians and non-Indians are to understand one another and work together."

– Billy Frank, Jr. (Nisqually)

In the 2010s, new "unlikely alliances" of Native peoples and their rural white neighbors are standing strong against fossil fuel and mining projects. In the Great Plains, grassroots coalitions of Native peoples and white ranchers and farmers (including the aptly named "Cowboy and Indian Alliance") are blocking the Keystone XL oil pipeline and coal mining. In the Pacific Northwest, Native nations are using their treaties against plans for coal and oil terminals, partly because shipping and burning fossil fuels threatens their treaty fishery. In the Great Lakes, Bad River Ojibwe are leading the fight to stop metallic mining, drawing on past anti-mining alliances of Ojibwe and white fishers. In the Maritimes, Mi'kmaq and Maliseet are confronting shale gas fracking, joined by non-Native neighbors.

The Idle No More movement similarly connects First Nations' sovereignty to the protection of the Earth for all people—Native and non-Native alike. Idle No More co-founder Sylvia McAdam states, "Indigenous sovereignty is all about protecting the land, the water, the animals, and all the environment we share." Gyasi Ross observes that Idle No More "is about protecting the Earth for all people from the carnivorous and capitalistic spirit that wants to exploit and extract every last bit of resources from the land…. It's not a Native thing or a white thing, it's an Indigenous worldview thing. It's a 'protect the Earth' thing."

A debate around Idle No More discusses how the movement can reach the non-Native public. In any alliance, the same question always arises at the intersection of unity and autonomy. Should the so-called "minority" partners in the alliance set aside their own distinct issues in order to

build bridges to the “majority” over common-ground concerns, such as protecting the Earth? Should Native leadership, for example, not as strongly assert treaty rights and tribal sovereignty to avoid alienating potential allies among their white neighbors? Conventional wisdom says that we should all “get along” for the greater good, and that different peoples should only talk about “universalist” similarities that unite them, not “particularist” differences that separate them.

In my both my activism and academic studies, I’ve often wrestled with this question, and spoken with many Native and non-Native activists and scholars who also deal with it. Based on their stories and experiences, I’ve concluded that the conventional wisdom is largely bullshit. Emphasizing unity over diversity can actually be harmful to building deep, lasting alliances between Native and non-Native communities. History shows the opposite to be true: the stronger that Native peoples assert their nationhood, the stronger their alliances with non-Indian neighbors.

Unlikely Alliances

Since the 1970s, unlikely alliances have joined Native communities with their rural white neighbors (some of whom had been their worst enemies) to protect their common lands and waters. These unique convergences have confronted mines, dams, logging, power lines, nuclear waste, military projects, and other threats. My main education has been as an activist in unlikely alliances in South Dakota and Wisconsin. As a geography grad student I later studied them in other states (such as Montana, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington) where they took different paths from treaty conflict to environmental cooperation, and had varying degrees of success.

* In South Dakota in the late 1970s, Lakota communities and white ranchers were often at odds over water rights and the tribal claim to the sacred Black Hills. Yet despite the intense Indian-white conflicts, the two groups came together against coal and uranium mining, which would endanger the groundwater. The Native activists and conservative-looking ranchers formed the Black Hills Alliance (where I began my activism 35 years ago) to halt the mining plans, and later formed the Cowboy and Indian Alliance (or CIA), which has since worked to stop a bombing range, coal trains, and oil pipeline.

* In roughly the same era of the 1960s and ‘70s, a fishing rights conflict had torn apart Washington State. The federal courts recognized treaty rights in 1974, and by the 1980s the tribes began to use treaties as a legal tool to protect and restore fish habitat. The result was State-Tribal “co-management,” recognizing that the tribes have a seat at the table on natural resource issues outside the reservations. The Nisqually Tribe, for instance, is today recognized in its watershed as the lead entity in creating salmon habitat management plans for private farm owners, and state and federal agencies. The watershed is healing because the Tribe is beginning to decolonize its historic lands.

* Another treaty confrontation erupted in northern Wisconsin in the late 1980s, when crowds of white sportsmen gathered to protest Ojibwe treaty rights to spear fish. Even as the racist harassment and violence raged, tribes presented their sovereignty as a legal obstacles to mining plans, and formed alliances such as the Midwest Treaty Network. Instead of continuing to argue over the fish, some white fishing groups began to cooperate with tribes to protect the fish, and

won victories against the world's largest mining companies. After witnessing the fishing war, seeing the 2003 defeat of the Crandon mine gave us some real hope.

In each of these cases, Native peoples and their rural white neighbors found common cause to defend their mutual place, and unexpectedly came together to protect their environment and economy from an outside threat, and a common enemy. They knew that if they continued to fight over resources, there may not be any left to fight over. Some rural whites began to see Native treaties and sovereignty as better protectors of common ground than their own governments. Racial prejudice is still alive and well in these regions, but the organized racist groups are weaker because they have lost many of their followers to these alliances.

Cooperation growing from conflict

It would make logical sense that the greatest cooperation would develop in the areas with the least prior conflict. Yet a recurring irony is that cooperation more easily developed in areas where tribes had most strongly asserted their rights, and the white backlash had been the most intense. Treaty claims in the short run caused conflict, but in the long run educated whites about tribal cultures and legal powers, and strengthened the commitment of both communities to value the resources. A common "sense of place" extended beyond the immediate threat, and redefined their idea of "home" to include their neighbors. As Mole Lake Ojibwe elder Frances Van Zile said, "This is my home; when it's your home you try to take as good care of it as how can, including all the people in it."

These alliances challenge the idea that "particularism" (such as Native identity) is always in contradiction to "universalism" (such as environmental protection). The assertion of Indigenous political strength does not weaken the idea of joining with non-Natives to defend the land, and can even strengthen it. The stories of these alliances may identify ways to weave together the assertion of differences between cultures with the goal of finding common-ground similarities between them. (I'm perhaps drawn to this hope because of my own Hungarian background, with a Jewish father whose family was decimated by genocide, and a Catholic mother whose family valued its cultural identity, and my attempts to navigate between the fear and celebration of ethnic pride.)

Alliances based on "universalist" similarities tend to fail without respecting "particularist" differences. The idea of "why can't we all just get along" (like "United We Stand") is often used to suppress marginalized voices, asking them to sideline their demands. This overemphasis on unity makes alliances more vulnerable, since authorities may try to divide them by meeting the demands of the (relatively assertingadvantaged) white members. A few alliances (such as against low-level military flights) floundered because the white "allies" declared victory and went home, and did not keep up the fight to also win the demands of their Native neighbors. "Unity" is not enough when it is a unity of unequal partners; Native leadership needs to always be involved in the decision-making process.

But successful alliances can go beyond temporary "alliances of convenience" to building lasting connections. In Washington State, local tribal/non-tribal cooperation to restore salmon habitat provides a template for collaboration in response to climate change. The Tulalip Tribes, for

example, are cooperating with dairy farmers to keep cattle waste out of the Snohomish watershed's salmon streams, by converting it into biogas energy. Farmers who had battled tribes now benefit from tribal sustainable practices. The anthology we recently edited at The Evergreen State College, Asserting Native Resilience, tells some of these stories of local and regional collaboration for resilience.

Idle No More and "Occupy"

With the rise of the Idle No More and Occupy movements, we have an unprecedented opportunity to grow this cooperation beyond local and regional levels, to national and global scales. Whether Occupy or Idle No More still draw huge crowds is beside the point, because they both have popularized powerful ideas that were not widely discussed even three years ago. The Occupy movement (despite its unfortunately inappropriate name) questions the concentration of wealth under capitalism, the economic system that has also occupied and exploited Native nations. Although a few protest camps (like in Albuquerque), changed their name to "(un)Occupy" to make this point, other camps rarely extended the discussion beyond class inequalities.

Idle No More deals with the flip side of the coin: how to make an understanding of colonization relevant to the majority struggling to live day-to-day under capitalism. Leanne Simpson sees Idle No More as "an opportunity for the environmental movement, for social-justice groups, and for mainstream Canadians to stand with us…. We have a lot of ideas about how to live gently within our territory in a way where we have separate jurisdictions and separate nations but over a shared territory. I think there's a responsibility on the part of mainstream community and society to figure out a way of living more sustainably and extracting themselves from extractivist thinking."

While the Occupy movement has questioned the unequal distribution of wealth in Western capitalism, Idle No More confronts the colonization of land and extraction of the resources that are the basis of that wealth. While thinking about fairly distributing the stuff, think about where the stuff comes from in the first place—as the spoils of empire. Idle No More's seemingly "particularist" message actually advances the universalist goals of the global anti-capitalist movement. Our solutions should not aim for a more egalitarian society that continues to exploit the Earth, nor a more sustainable society that continues to exploit human beings—the world needs both social equality and ecological resilience. And both movements have common historical roots, because the class system and large-scale natural resources extraction both originated in Europe at roughly the same time.

Colonizing Europe

To witness the decolonization of Native lands is to see a small reversal in the process of European colonization that began centuries ago, within Europe itself. In her classic study The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution, Carolyn Merchant documents how Western European elites suppressed the remnants of European indigenous knowledge, as a key element of colonizing villagers' lands and resources in the 17th century. Merchant saw links between the mass executions of women healers (who used ancient herbal knowledge), the

draining of wetlands, metallic mining, the restriction of villagers' hunting, fishing, and gathering rights on lands they had held in common, and the division of the Commons into private plots.

This "enclosure of the Commons" sparked peasant rebellions and Robin Hood-style rebel movements. The Irish resisted English settler colonization, which was a testing ground for methods of control later used in Native America, against clan structures, collective lands, knowledge systems, and spiritual beliefs. In the meantime, the European encounter with more egalitarian Indigenous societies convinced some scholars (such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Lewis Henry Morgan) that class hierarchy was not the natural order, and they in turn influenced many of the social philosophers and rebels of the 19th century.

The elites' promise of settling stolen Native land became a "safety valve" to defuse working-class unrest in Europe and the East Coast. But even at the height of the Indian Wars, a small minority of settlers sympathized with Native resistance, or opposed the forced removal of their Indigenous neighbors. Some Europeans and Africans attracted to freer Native societies even became kin to Native families. We never read these stories of Native/non-Native cooperation in history books, because they undercut the myth of colonization as an inevitable "Manifest Destiny." But there were always better paths not followed.

Non-Native Responsibilities

The continued existence of Native nationhood today, as Audra Simpson points out, undermines the claims of settler colonial states to the land. Unlikely alliances can help chip away at the legitimacy of colonial structures, even among the settlers themselves. To stand in solidarity with Indigenous nations is not just to "support Native rights," but to strike at the very underpinnings of the Western social order, and begin to free Native and non-Native peoples. As Harsha Walia writes, "I have been encouraged to think of human interconnectedness and kinship in building alliances with Indigenous communities… striving toward decolonization and walking together toward transformation requires us to challenge a dehumanizing social organization that perpetuates our isolation from each other and normalizes a lack of responsibility to one another and the Earth."

By asserting their treaty rights and sovereignty, Indigenous nations are benefiting not only themselves, but also their treaty partners. Since Europeans in North America are more separated in time and place from their indigenous origins, they need to respectfully ally with Native nations to help find their own path to what it means to be a human being living on the Earth–without appropriating Native cultures. It is not the role of non-Natives to dissect Native cultures, but to study Native/non-Native relations, and white attitudes and policies. The responsibility of non-Natives is to help remove the barriers and obstacles to Native sovereignty in their own governments and communities.

Non-Native neighbors can begin to look to Native nations for models to make their own communities more socially just, more ecologically resilient, and more hopeful. As Red Cliff Ojibwe organizer Walt Bresette once told Wisconsin non-Natives fighting a proposed mine, "You can all love this land as much as we do."

Zoltan Grossman is a Professor of Geography and Native Studies at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington (http://academic.evergreen.edu/g/grossmaz). He is a longtime community organizer, and was a co-founder of the Midwest Treaty Network in Wisconsin. His dissertation explored Unlikely Alliances: Treaty Conflicts and Environmental Cooperation Between Rural Native and White Communities (University of Wisconsin Department of Geography, 2002). He is co-editor (with Alan Parker) of Asserting Native Resilience: Pacific Rim Indigenous Nations Face the Climate Crisis (Oregon State University Press, 2012).

http://portside.org/2013-06-12/unlikely-alliances-idle-no-more-and-building-bridges-through-native-sovereignty

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June 12, 2013

Sustainability: A spiritual perspective

Interview with John Grim
Fire it up with CJ

Is it fair or right that we shift the burden of taking care of the earth to our children? How does one spirituality or religion come into answering this question? What are our moral obligations to the plants and animals on this planet? Join us when we talk to Dr. John Grim, the co-founder of the Yale Forum of Religion and Ecology, and one of the leading scholars on this topic. We'll take a scholarly look at Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism and resurrect some of the traditions and values related to our role as stewards of the earth and our connection to the earth.

Listen to the interview:

http://www.fireitupwithcj.com/2013/06/10/sustainability-a-spiritual-perspective/#

June 17, 2013

Religions seen slow to go green; Pope has chance to inspire

By Environment Correspondent Alister Doyle
Reuters

OSLO (Reuters) - Few religious communities have gone as far in fighting climate change as a church in Queensland, Australia, which has 24 solar panels bolted to the roof in the shape of a Christian cross.

"It's very effective. It's inspired some members of our congregation to install panels on their homes," Reverend David Lowry said of the "solar cross" mounted in 2009 on the Caloundra Uniting Church, which groups three Protestant denominations.

Many religions have been wary of moving to install renewable energy sources on their places of worship, from cathedrals to mosques - or of taking a strong stand on climate change in general - despite teachings that people should be custodians of nature.

But slowly, that may be changing, thanks to new religious leaders including Pope Francis, the head of the Roman Catholic Church.

Francis's stress on environmental protection since he was elected in March and his choice of the name of a 13th century nature lover - Saint Francis of Assisi - may make a difference for all religions trying to work out how to safeguard the planet from threats including climate change.

Under his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, the Vatican took green steps such as installing solar panels on the roof of the Papal Audience Hall in 2008. It says it wants to cut greenhouse gas emissions, but has no formal target.

"Religious environmentalism is slowly increasing," said John Grim, a coordinator of the forum on religion and ecology at Yale University in the United States. "It's very uneven. Religions tend to be very conservative in their practice and doctrine."

SAFEGUARD THE EARTH

Grim said the pope's influence was significant since few other religions recognize a single earthly leader - and there are 1.2 billion Catholics, amounting to a sixth of humanity, according to the Vatican.

In his inaugural homily, Pope Francis stressed that people should safeguard the Earth.

"Let us be 'protectors' of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment. Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world!" he said.

In a 2010 book "On Heaven and Earth", when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires, he said mankind sometimes lost respect for nature. "Then ecological problems arise, like global warming."

Some religions have been reluctant to be associated with climate change policies because of divisions among believers. A 2012 Pew Research Center poll showed that only 42 percent of Americans agree global warming is mainly man-made, a view overwhelmingly held by climate scientists, for example.

The Church of England says it aims to cut its carbon emissions by 42 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050 across widely varying energy use in 16,000 buildings, but it is an exception.

"Some churches are used all week and others used very occasionally, with only one light bulb," said David Shreeve, environmental advisor to the Archbishops' Council. He said other religions were now asking for advice on emissions cuts. Irrespective of climate change, big savings can be made by plugging draughts and improving heating and lighting.

Some believers object that solar panels can damage or disfigure fragile historic buildings. Some cathedrals, like the Catholic Saint Stephens in Vienna, have elaborate patterns on the roof.

Bradford Cathedral, where the oldest parts of the Nave date from 1458, installed solar panels in 2011 and said it was the first cathedral in England - and perhaps in the world - to generate its own power.

Among other examples, a planned mosque in Bursa, west Turkey, aims to use solar panels and install a vertical axis wind turbine - without big revolving blades - on a minaret.

"Mosques ... can be covered with photovoltaic panels," the mosque's architect Çelik Erengezgin said.

Green initiatives by religious leaders and groups are not new.

The Jewish Temple Emanuel in Lowell, Mass., installed solar panels in 1978 in what is believed to be the first such system on a religious building in North America, the Lowell Green Building Commission says.

And Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, has long been called the "Green Patriarch" for seeking to protect the environment, from organizing conferences about fresh water to writing an encyclical in 2012 urging repentance for "our sinfulness in destroying the world".

Saint Francis has long been a green inspiration.

In what are known as the Assisi Declarations from 1986, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Islamic leaders called for people to live in harmony with nature. Baha'i, Jainism and Sikhism later added their own declarations.

HOLY SEE

In the United States, many evangelical Christians stress a broad need for "stewardship of creation", rather than man-made climate change, as a spur to action.

Many evangelical Christians are Republicans who are more likely than Democrats to doubt that climate change is mostly caused by human activity, such as burning fossil fuels.

"Americans allow their politics to inform their faith," said Katharine Hayhoe, an evangelical Christian and climate scientist at Texas Tech University.

In Australia, Lowry said the solar panels were saving money and cutting greenhouse gas emissions for the Uniting Church, which brings together Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians.

"The solar cross ... doesn't bring hordes of people into the church," he said. "But it helps people understand that God is a presence in the world in which we live."

The Vatican has an observer seat at U.N. talks among 200 nations who have agreed to work out, by the end of 2015, a climate deal to avert more floods, droughts and rising sea levels.

Pope Francis himself has focused on environmental protection without yet spelling out clear solutions.

Raising awareness of the environment could be a step to modernize the Church, besieged by scandal for covering up sexual abuse of children by priests and whose strict moral traditions are often at odds with a increasingly secular society.

"With Pope Francis there is new hope," said Reverend Henrik Grape of the Church of Sweden, who is also a member of the World Council of Churches' climate change group.

(Additional reporting by Tom Heneghan in Paris; Editing by Sonya Hepinstall)

http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/17/us-environment-religion-idUSBRE95G0J920130617

June 19, 2013

‘Every Plant and Tree Died:’ Huge Alberta Pipeline Spill Raises Safety Questions as Keystone Decision Looms

By Kiley Kroh
Nation of Change

As the Obama administration’s decision regarding whether to approve the controversial Keystone XL pipeline draws nearer, the latest disaster is raising serious concerns about the safety of Canada’s rapidly expanding pipeline network.

A massive toxic waste spill from an oil and gas operation in northern Alberta is being called one of the largest recent environmental disasters in North America. First reported on June 1, the Texas-based Apache Corp. didn’t reveal the size of the spill until June 12, which is said to cover more than 1,000 acres.

Members of the Dene Tha First Nation tribe are outraged that it took several days before they were informed that 9.5 million liters of salt and heavy-metal-laced wastewater had leaked onto wetlands they use for hunting and trapping.

“Every plant and tree died” in the area touched by the spill, said James Ahnassay, chief of the Dene Tha.

As the Globe and Mail reports, the Apache disaster is not an anomaly:

The leak follows a pair of other major spills in the region, including 800,000 litres of an oil-water mixture from Pace Oil and Gas Ltd., and nearly 3.5 million litres of oil from a pipeline run by Plains Midstream Canada.

After those accidents, the Dene Tha had asked the Energy Resources Conservation Board, Alberta’s energy regulator, to require installation of pressure and volume monitors, as well as emergency shutoff devices, on aging oil and gas infrastructure. The Apache spill has renewed calls for change.

Following initial speculation that the leak stemmed from aging infrastructure, officials from Apache Corp. revealed that the pipeline was only five years old and had been designed to last for 30.

The incident comes on the heels of accusations from the provincial New Democratic Party that Alberta Energy Minister Ken Hughes is withholding the results of an internal pipeline safety report pending the U.S. government’s decision regarding Keystone XL. The report was commissioned last summer by Alberta Energy following a series of toxic spills — including the Plains Midstream Canada spill that leached 475,000 liters of oil into the Red Deer River, a major source of drinking water for central Alberta.

According to Winnipeg Free Press, “an engineering firm completed the technical report last fall and presented the findings to the government, which sent the findings to the Energy Resources Conservation Board for a review that was to be completed by March 31.”

Hughes denied delaying the report but declined to give a release date, saying only that it would come "fairly soon."
A recent Global News investigation found that over the past 37 years, Alberta's extensive network of pipelines has experienced 28,666 crude oil spills in total, plus another 31,453 spills of a variety of other liquids used in oil and gas production — from salt water to liquid petroleum. That averages out to two crude oil spills a day, every day.
As concerns mount over Apache's delay in detecting and reporting its extensive toxic waste spill, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday that TransCanada is not planning to use the external leak detection tools recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency for its proposed Keystone XL pipeline. As a result, the State Department concludes "Keystone XL would have to be spilling more than 12,000 barrels a day — or 1.5 percent of its 830,000 barrel capacity — before its currently planned internal spill-detection systems would trigger an alarm."

http://www.nationofchange.org/every-plant-and-tree-died-huge-alberta-pipeline-spill-raises-safety-questions-keystone-decision-loom

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June 20, 2013

Faith And Fracking: A Religious Case For The Environment

By Trisha Marczak
Mint Press News

The hydraulic fracking debate has already gotten political. Now it's getting religious.

A Catholic diocese in England is stepping up to the front lines of the fracking debate, urging parishioners to think twice before supporting a drilling practice that injects chemicals and silica sand into the earth to break up rock formations where oil is hidden.

"It may appear … that the church's approach to an issue like fracking is negative, but this stems from a sincere conviction to take seriously the challenges of caring for God's fragile creation," the Rev. Chris Halliwell of the Blackburn Diocese told the Lancashire Telegraph.

Halliwell was speaking of concerns related to oil spills, water contamination and air pollution, all of which have been linked to the fracking boom. A study published by the U.S. Geological Survey tied fracking to earthquakes.

The U.K. is in the midst of a fracking battle similar to the one underway in the U.S. Fracking operations are currently on hold following seismic tremors, allegedly caused by exploratory drilling, according to The Conversation.

Now the debate is over whether or not the industry should return under the guise of new proposals. Like in the U.S., debate is split.

Halliwell isn't the only member of the Catholic Church taking a stand. Here in the U.S., Ohio's fracking boom has overflowed into the church, with affected Catholics urging their fellow brothers and sisters of faith to heed caution when told of the industry's benefits.

David Andrews, former director of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, now works at Food and Water Watch. In a column recently published in the National Catholic Reporter, Andrews echoes Halliwell's concerns.

"Most religious groups recognize moral principles such as the dignity of the human person, the care for creation and an appreciation of the welfare of animals. On all of these concerns, fracking comes up short," he writes. "It harms communities and harms creation. We don't know what the long term effects will be, but we know enough to challenge that it benefits anyone except the corporations that make huge profits off of the energy production and does little for the health of the people, animals and nature."

In February, a coalition of seven faith leaders in New York came together to put out a documentary making the case against fracking. While stemming from different religions, the religious leaders highlighted their common concerns, molding the political and environmental issue into one that also encompasses religion.

"Emotions are running high, there's a lot of money at stake, it seems to be all about politics and quiet voices of spirituality and religious thought are being drowned out," Doug Wood, the film's producer and association director of Grassroots Environmental Education, told EcoWatch. "We thought it was really important to give our faith leaders an opportunity to be heard on the issue before any final decision is made by the governor."

An issue uniting faiths

Methodist Rev. Craig Schwalenberg has taken on an approach that focuses on the moral obligation to look out for future generations.

"We can't say for sure what will happen with hydrofracking, but there's enough incidences out there for us to be terribly concerned. And it's one of those situations where if we're wrong about it being bad, we don't lose as much, but if we're right about it being bad, we lose our water, we lose the earth," he says in the documentary.

Karin Friedemann, writing for The Muslim Observer, makes the same case, claiming that the fracking boom needs oversight to protect future generations from the long-term consequences of the industry.

"If steps are not taken to regulate this growing industry more effectively, the results of fracking could end up being far more costly in the long run than any short term economic benefits," she writes.

The incidents Schwalenberg speaks of are numerous.

As of June 11, Colorado had seen more than 160 fracking oil spills in 2013 alone, stemming from 50,000 oil and gas wells throughout the state, according to the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission's oil and gas database published in the Coloradoan.

In Pennsylvania, oil spills have also led to evacuations and concerns among residents. This year, Carrizo Oil and Gas dumped more than 22,000 gallons of fracking fluid onto farmland and residential areas.

One study produced by Earthworks determined that inspection of wells and fines for violations in Pennsylvania were inadequate and infrequent. While the industry lambasted the study, saying it was not supported by scientific facts, residents of Pennsylvania say their experiences are proof enough that something is amiss.

In an interview with The Huffington Post, the McIntyre family of Butler County, Penn., told their own story — one that includes mysterious illnesses from frequent vomiting to skin rashes. Like other families living in the area, they link the onslaught of their illness with the beginning of the fracking boom.

"We use water for nothing other than flushing the commode," Janet McIntyre told the news organization.

Rabbi Douglas Krantz is a prominent anti-fracking voice in the Jewish community, particularly in New York, where residents are lobbying Gov. Andrew Cuomo to extend the existing moratorium indefinitely. In his state, Pennsylvania is used as a key example of what residents do not want to see happen. He's in that same boat, yet sees his case through the lens of his faith.

"I tend to view all issues like fracking from the lens of religious issues that are about how we comport ourselves as human beings, how we have a relationship to the world we live in, meaning the people in the world and the physical world," Krantz said in a documentary. "How am I going to be more fulfilled as a human being and its not by pillaging? it's not by taking advantage of, it's not by exploitation."

Badass nuns say frack no

Sister Mary Cunningham, a nun and former pastoral associate at St. Michael's Church in Ohio, penned an essay intended for members of the church. Now posted on the church website, Cunningham gives a compelling case of her own story in the midst of the fracking boom.

Cunningham lives three miles from a fracking well in Youngstown, Ohio, an area also deemed an earthquake hotspot. In the last 10 years, it's been hit with a dozen earthquakes. Because of the propensity for quakes, Gov. John Kasich ordered a halt to fracking in the area.

This threat, along with issues relating to groundwater contamination and air quality, has Cunningham joining the ranks of those who are painting the fracking debate in a spiritual light.

“Catholic social teaching reminds us to ‘care for the earth … it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental, moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored,’” she wrote.

In 2011, at a time when more than 3,000 wells had already been drilled in Pennsylvania,Sister Nora Nash recognized her call to action. In an interview with The New York Times, Nash claimed she was already taking part in anti-fracking protests, and had even submitted resolutions to Chevron and Exxon Mobil urging the oil companies to act under more stringent regulations.

Nash is still of that mindset.

“Our major role at this time is to do everything possible to make sure that companies are monitored and required to meet key performance standards in every area,” she wrote in a blog post.

In terms of experience with the industry, Nash is no stranger. Having taken her concerns directly to oil companies, including Anadarko Petroleum Company, she’s also put herself in the midst of the action — both at fracking sites and in the communities they operate in.

Her efforts took her to Pennsylvania’s Tiadaghton Forest, where she saw the fracking operations firsthand.

“The fact that I had to wear a fire retardant suit and a hard hat was enough evidence for me that danger was possible and even more so when I stood at the top of a gas rig,” she wrote.

http://www.mintpressnews.com/faith-and-fracking-a-religious-case-for-the-environment/

June 27, 2013

Religions speak with one voice on climate policy

By Thea Ormerod and Neil Ormerod
ABC Religion and Ethics

In the popular secular imagination, religion is seen as a source of conflict - particularly conflict between competing religious truth claims. So when leaders from various religious traditions speak with a common voice, something significant is happening. To speak on what they declare to be "one of the most urgent moral issues facing us in the upcoming election" is unprecedented. And, contrary to expectations, the issue is not sexual morality or social policy on marriage, but on the impact of global warming on our planet.

Many religious groups - Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, Uniting Church, Baptists, Salvation Army, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, Baha'i - have statements upholding

humanity's responsibility to protect the environment on which life depends. While these statements are often not well known or widely proclaimed, increasingly these traditions are beginning to appreciate the importance of protecting the environment, and especially facing up to the urgent question of climate change caused by carbon pollution.

One of the key values embedded in all religious traditions is *justice*. Concern for this value points people of faith in the direction of both intergenerational justice, a concern for our children and our children's children, and justice towards the poorest of the poor who suffer the worst impacts of climate change and yet have the least capacity to adapt. This is the "main event," as it were - not our hip pockets, not maintaining our lifestyles, not even the protection of jobs in carbon-intensive industries. The future of our delicate ecosystems that sustain life on our planet is at stake.

Now leaders from a range of traditions, many of them very senior, have come to a stage of taking a stand on public policy. They are taking their place behind the overwhelming majority of scientists and analysts who warn us that, unless we keep much of our fossil fuels in the ground, the world is on track for 4 degrees Celsius of global warming. This would spell disaster for the poor of the world, for future generations and for ourselves.

In an open letter to both sides of the political divide ahead of the upcoming federal election, they are unequivocal about human-induced climate change. They call for bipartisan support for carbon pricing, the fast-tracking of renewable energy and the winding back of coal exports.

"We must wind back our exports of cheap coal which are currently hindering the global drive for renewable energy. We must diminish our reliance on fossil fuels and replace them with clean, renewable sources of energy. As part of this, carbon pricing must be given bipartisan support. Only then will Australia be part of the solution."

For some time, this concern has translated into public statements by leaders of all the major religions, supporting the protection of the world's ecosystems. In the Climate Institute's *Common Belief* discussion paper, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils wrote: "People of religion must forget their theological differences and save the world from climatic ruin." Various official statements affirm that climate change is real, it's largely anthropogenic, it disproportionately affects the poor and human beings have a moral responsibility to address it.

The last two popes along with the Australian Catholic Bishops have repeatedly talked about the need for urgent action to prevent catastrophic climate change. In 2005, the Australian Catholic Bishops wrote about "global warming as one of the major issues of our time ... We now urge Catholics as an essential part of their faith commitment to respond with sound judgments and resolute action to the reality of climate change." Indeed, Pope Francis referred to his environmental concerns in his post-election press conference.

In the 2011 Census, over 67% of Australians identified themselves with the religions from which the signatories are drawn. The open letter urges all "all Australians to give this moral issue the attention it demands. Our world is a blessing, a gift, and a responsibility. We must act now if we

are to protect this sacred trust." Political parties of all persuasions need to attend to this concern in the upcoming election.

20 June 2013

An open letter from Australian religious leaders

As people of faith, we draw attention to one of the most urgent moral issues facing us in the upcoming election.

The International Energy Agency and other influential bodies are now warning us about an unthinkable 4 degree Celsius rise in temperatures if greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase. Recent experiences of extreme weather events, both here and overseas, are a mild foretaste of what this will mean. We are despoiling the world given to us as a sacred trust for future generations.

The world is already moving to take strong preventative action. Ninety countries, representing 90% of global emissions, have carbon reduction programs in place and Australia now has price on carbon. However our country continues to be a significant contributor to the problem. With our small population, we are among the world's 20 largest emitters and one of the two largest coal exporters.

We must wind back our exports of cheap coal which are currently hindering the global drive for renewable energy. We must diminish our reliance on fossil fuels and replace them with clean, renewable sources of energy. As part of this, carbon pricing must be given bipartisan support. Only then will Australia be part of the solution.

In the upcoming election we urge all Australians to give this moral issue the attention it demands. Our world is a blessing, a gift, and a responsibility. We must act now if we are to protect this sacred trust.

Signatories

- **Rev Professor Andrew Dutney** | President, Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly
- **Archbishop Philip Wilson** | Archbishop of Adelaide and Chair of Catholic Earthcare Australia
- **Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohammad** | Grand Mufti of Australia
- **Professor Nihal Agar** | Chairman, Hindu Council of Australia
- **Ajahn Brahm** | Chair, Australian Sangha Association, Abbot of Bodhinyana Monastery
- **Sr Annette Cunliffe RSC** | President, Catholic Religious Australia
- **Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence** | Senior Rabbi, the Great Synagogue, Sydney
- **Rev Dr Brian Brown** | Moderator, Uniting Church in Australia, New South Wales and ACT Synod
- **Bishop George Browning** | Convenor, Anglican Communion Environmental Network
- **Professor Neil Ormerod** | Professor of Theology, Australian Catholic University

- **Mr Hafez Kassem** | President, Australian Federation of Islamic Councils
- **Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins** | Senior Rabbi, Emanuel Synagogue
- **Rabbi Shoshana Kaminsky** | Chairperson, Rabbinic Council of Progressive Rabbis
- **Graeme Lyall AM** | President, Amitabha Buddhist Association of New South Wales
- **Rev Professor James Haire AC AM** | Director, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture
- **Rev Rod Benson** | Ethicist and public theologian, Australian Baptist Ministries

This open letter was organised by Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC). Thea Ormerod is the President of ARRCC, and Neil Ormerod is Professor of Theology at the Australian Catholic University. His most recent book, written with Cynthia Crysdale, is Creator God, Evolving World.

http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/06/27/3791330.htm

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June 29, 2013

Faith & Works | Activist sees climate change as a spiritual issue

By Peter Smith

The Courier-Journal

Tim DeChristopher was a University of Utah student and had been studying the role of civil disobedience in historical social movements when, in December 2008, he became part of that history.

DeChristopher walked into a federal auction of oil-and-gas leases in Salt Lake City, represented himself as a bidder and received auction paddle No. 70. After watching for about 20 minutes, he ground the auction to a halt.

He bid on one parcel after another, winning 14 worth nearly $1.8 million, which he had neither the means nor the intention of paying for. Other bidders walked out, the proceedings were halted and DeChristopher soon enough found himself under arrest.

He was convicted in a jury trial on two federal counts — violating the leasing law and making a false statement (for signing a federal form saying he was bidding in good faith). DeChristopher finished his 21-month sentence in April.

DeChristopher, now 31, spoke in an interview during visit to Louisville last week, when he also appeared at a clean-energy rally sponsored by local environmental groups and participants in the Unitarian Universalist Association's national general assembly.

He said he wanted to confront the fossil-fuel industry and the government over the scientific consensus on the link between carbon emissions and global warming, with such consequences as disastrous weather extremes, coastal erosion, species extinction and the rupturing of delicate ecological cycles.

DeChristopher is also critical of current legal practices whose flaws, he says, were exposed at his trial. But his next stop is neither the science lab nor law school.

It's seminary.

The earnest, smooth-headed DeChristopher, 31, with a muscular physique reflecting his years as a wilderness guide and in the prison exercise area, said he believes spirituality can help embolden people to take actions that may require personal sacrifice.

"Most social movements in this country have had a strong spiritual element and have had strong support from some religious institution," he said. "For the climate movement to really be successful, it's going to need that as well."

He added: "The heart of the spiritual issue ... is whether we have faith that our moral values actually matter. Our government really discourages us from having faith in our own moral values and says if people trusted their own moral agency there would be anarchy. I don't think that's true."

DeChristopher is scheduled to begin Harvard Divinity School later this year and to seek ordination as a minister in the Unitarian Universalist Association — a small, non-creedal liberal denomination united more by common political and social causes than by common religious beliefs. He said fellow Unitarians in Utah were among his biggest supporters during his trial and imprisonment.

Unitarian Universalists, in their assembly in Louisville, voted Sunday to launch a dialogue on whether congregations should pull their investments entirely from fossil-fuel corporations or use shareholder influence to steer them toward renewable energies.

People's views on global warming continue to divide along political and religious lines. Recent surveys have shown a majority of Protestant ministers and of Republicans disbelieve in man-made global warming.

DeChristopher isn't surprised by such disparities. Religious movements have stood on both sides of past social movements, he said.

He said the current challenge is not only to prevent worsening climate change but to deal with the inevitable effects of the warming already underway.

"That's a question that has a lot of spiritual elements and is going to require us to reconnect with our shared moral values," he said.

Born in West Virginia and raised in Pennsylvania, DeChristopher said he grew up without a religious background but became a Christian around age 18. He promotes cooperating with people of various religions (and none) because he sees that diversity as evidence "of the strength of those values."

DeChristopher — whose case is featured in a new documentary, "Bidder 70" — doesn't plan to run afoul of laws anytime during his three years of post-prison probation, but he doesn't rule out an eventual return to civil disobedience.

DeChristopher said during his federal trial, jurors agreed to follow court instructions to decide only on the facts of the case, not to be "judges of the law" itself. DeChristopher was denied his attempt to argue that he violated the law out of necessity to prevent ecological harm.

An appeals court upheld his conviction, saying DeChristopher could have used legal means against the leases, such as joining other environmentalists who had filed suit. As it happened, the Obama administration later revoked the leases being auctioned that day.

DeChristopher contended jurors should be able to evaluate laws themselves and use the same discretion that police, prosecutors and judges use in weighing whether to bring charges and what sentences to mete out.

"There are very few problems with our legal system which couldn't have been anticipated by our founding fathers, which is why they insisted on jury trials," he said.

Peter Smith is the religion writer for The Courier-Journal. This column is adapted from his Faith & Works blog at faith.courier-journal.com. He can be reached at (502) 582-4469. Follow him on Twitter @faithandworks.

http://www.courier-journal.com/article/20130628/COLUMNISTS22/306280094/?nclick_check=1

July 2013

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI) Newsletter

http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=c25b480e90&e=a758405790

July 2013

Sacred Sites Research Newsletter (SSIREN)

http://fore.research.yale.edu/files/SSIREN_July_2013.pdf

July 2013

Turning Up the Heat

By Bill McKibben
Sojourners Magazine

No one wants to spend summer vacation in the clink, but that's where a lot us are going to find ourselves.

STATISTICALLY, the last couple of weeks of July are the hottest months of the year. In recent decades, the fossil fuel industry has been making them steadily hotter by burning huge amounts of coal, gas, and oil: Last year was by the far the warmest year in American history, and it came complete with biblical-scale fire, drought, and storm.

But this summer it's the environmental movement that's going to turn up the heat. Summer Heat is what folks are calling it: a collection of actions taking on the fossil fuel industry in every corner of the country.

Some of the action will stay focused on the route of the Keystone pipeline, but the emerging fossil fuel resistance is much broader than a single project: We'll be at refineries and power plants and proposed coal ports, and we'll be making clear that climate change is just part of the spectrum of damage that includes everything from air pollution to political corruption.

These battles have been led on the local level for years now by climate justice groups, by farmers and ranchers, by indigenous activists—by the folks on the frontlines of the damage from fossil fuels. But they deserve backup and reinforcement from the rest of us. And, of course, in an age of global warming, all of us are potentially on the front lines: Until Hurricane Sandy broke over their heads, most people in lower Manhattan thought the world was treating them pretty well.

If this fossil fuel resistance works, it will help shut down these local disasters. But playing defense is only half the battle: We also have to go on offense, showing the planet that these fossil fuel companies are the opposition to a decent future. That future isn't impossible—Germany, for example, already generates a quarter of its power from renewables. In Portugal this winter, that figure was more than 70 percent.

But we won't get there in time as long as the coal and gas and oil barons dominate our political life. Two weeks before the last election, Chevron gave the largest corporate political donation ever. We can't outspend them, but we do have to stand up strong against that kind of arrogance.

And we may, in the process, have to spend our bodies. We shouldn't have to go to jail to fight global warming: It should be a rational process, where scientists and economists explain the problem to political leaders, who then take action. But that process hasn't worked for a quarter century, so it's time for us to force the pace. Nonviolently, but firmly.

If the Keystone fight proved anything, it's that citizens are ready to go to jail on behalf of their children and grandchildren, on behalf of a working planet. No one really wants to spend their summer vacation in the clink, but this year, I think, that's where a lot of us are going to find ourselves.

Bill McKibben *is founder of 350.org. For more information, visit joinsummerheat.org*

http://sojo.net/magazine/2013/07/turning-heat

July 2013

Cultivating a Better America

By Danny Duncan Collum
Sojourners Magazine

According to Wendell Berry, all you need to have hope is one good example.

WENDELL BERRY was on stage being interviewed by Bill Moyers when the old Baptist minister (Moyers) asked the unchurched Christian (Berry) about his faith. "The world is maintained every day by the force that created it," Berry intoned solemnly. In the Old Testament, he noted, "Elihu says to Job, if God gathers his breath, all creatures fail. All creatures live," Berry emphasized, "by breathing God's breath, breathing his spirit. It's all holy—the whole shooting match."

At 78, Wendell Berry shows no sign of failing, either in his breath or his spirit. But the Kentucky writer-activist-farmer is already enjoying a sort of immortality as the namesake of a degree program in ecological agrarianism at St. Catharine College. In April, that small Catholic institution in Springfield, Ky., hosted a conference titled "From Unsettling to Resettling: What Will It Take to Resettle America?" in honor of the 35th anniversary of Berry's landmark book, *The Unsettling of America.* The interview with Moyers was part of the conference program.

Drastically oversimplified, the thesis of *The Unsettling of America* held that two types of Europeans came to America. Elsewhere, citing his teacher Wallace Stegner, Berry has called them the "boomers" and the "stickers." The boomers were the unsettlers. They moved into the New World, cut down the trees, extracted the minerals, used up the land, and then moved on in search of new places to despoil. The stickers, however, settled into a place and made it their own. They cooperated with the land and the local resources to make a life and a livelihood that could be sustained over generations. Our problem, Berry contended, is that in America the boomers, backed by the power of money, have for too long set the agenda and won most of the fights.

In 1978, there were signs that the boomers' path was reaching a dead end. In the prior few years, Americans had glimpsed the finitude of the earth's resources during the OPEC oil embargo, the limits of economic growth in the accompanying recession, and the limits of American military power through the defeat in Vietnam. In agriculture, we had begun pursuing a chemical-addicted, export-driven strategy of industrial farming that would simultaneously destroy both the land and the communities that depended upon it. In short, the time seemed ripe for reconsidering the national mission statement. In those days, Berry was already a noted poet and fiction writer, but *The Unsettling of America* made him one of the nation's most important prophetic voices, too.

As we all know now, America did not heed the voice crying out from Port Royal, Ky. Instead, we bought a recycled fantasy of American exceptionalism from a retired movie star and proceeded to waste the next three decades trying to recapture a glory that never was. As a result, we now face a truly apocalyptic climate crisis, and our food system has given us a population so unhealthy and obese that, in the lower economic classes, average life expectancy is actually beginning to decline.

All this and more was on the minds of the people who came to St. Catharine to hear Bill McKibben, Wes Jackson, and others join Berry in searching for a way back to the future. One direction, promoted by both Berry and Jackson, was for "A 50-Year Farm Bill" that would return vast acreages of U.S. cropland to grass and refocus American agriculture on diversified food production that would require millions of new farmers.

A pretty dream, one might say, but, as Berry told Moyers that day, all you need to have hope is one good example. Fittingly the conference ended with Berry's reading of his poem, "A Vision," which concludes:

... The abundance of this place,
the songs of its people and its birds,
will be health and wisdom and indwelling / light. This is no paradisal dream.
Its hardship is its possibility.

Danny Duncan Collum *teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort. He is the author of the novel* White Boy.

http://sojo.net/magazine/2013/07/cultivating-better-america

July 2013

When creation speaks to us

Can we listen to others as we discover responsibility?

By Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
The Lutheran

As I read "Environmental urgency" (page 20), I asked my wife Ione, "What do you think I could write about creation that would be hopeful and helpful?"

Immediately she responded: "Creation speaks to us without words."

I should not have been surprised to hear this from a spouse raised on the prairies of western North Dakota, someone who asks for silence whenever we begin to drive west of the Missouri River. She is beholding shadows dancing on the buttes, badlands emerging, crops ripening and now the rapid changes in silence brought by the increased activity of expanding oil production.

What do you hear when you just listen to creation? Do you hear creation telling us of the wonder of God's grace?

When we listen to creation, we hear that God continues to create life. "O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. ... When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground" (Psalm 104:24, 30).

When we listen to creation and hear of the giftedness of life, something happens. Lutheran theologian Joseph Sittler described it this way: "The change in the spirit of our minds must come about by putting the grace of God behind the eyes with which we look at the world and into the hands with which we touch the world" (Gravity and Grace, page 20).

Creation speaks to us of beauty. One great loss is when we fail to have moments of awe in response to creation's beauty because the pace of our living and our preoccupation with what we need to do next gets in the way.

Creation speaks of simplicity and complexity. Often a child's delight reminds us of its simplicity — discovering a caterpillar, chasing a butterfly, splashing water, smelling a flower, crying over the death of a pet hamster. As we grow older, we become aware of creation's complexity, how life is woven into complex webs of interdependence. Choices we make each day have consequences for life forms now and in the future.

I wonder if we hear creation crying out for mercy. The same creation that speaks of God's bounty and beauty can groan under the weight of our consuming. Yet too often creation's voice is drowned out by the rancor of our debates and disagreements, and it tragically suffers in silence. Can we find ways to listen not only to creation but also to one another as we discover how to live responsibly as stewards of God's goodness in creation?

Often what stands in the way of productive partnership in caring for the creation is our

moralizing debates. When dominated by suspicion and recrimination of others, they keep us locked into cycles of hostility and withdrawal and paralyze us. Yet, when we listen to creation, it speaks of our unity. No matter how rich life's diversity and how deep our differences, there is only one creation.

In listening to creation and one another, we can also give account for the hope that is in us. Our hope is in Christ, through whom God is at work to break down the walls of hostility that divide us and reconcile humankind with the message of forgiveness. The new creation we are in Christ is not an escape from the physical world we inhabit. This new creation is God's work among us to make the creation whole and good — right with God and with itself.

When you listen to creation speaking without words, what do you hear? Do you hear creation calling for your love? Could it be that the neighbor we are called and freed in Christ to love includes all that constitutes the wonder, beauty, simplicity and complexity of creation?

Rather than begin our conversations on the environment with condemnations and judgments, what if we invited each other to reflect on how we show love for the creation? God loved the world in Christ's self-emptying, God's humble relinquishing of power. What would such self-emptying love toward creation mean for us?

Shhh. Are you listening? Creation is trying to speak to us. What do you hear?

http://www.thelutheran.org/article/article.cfm?article_id=11530

July 2013

The 4th Annual Healing Walk near Fort McMurray Alberta

A Different Way to Protect our Land, Air, Water and Climate from Tar Sands Expansion

HealingWalk.org

The tar sands are growing out of control, destroying the climate for all Canadians and poisoning the water of everyone living downstream.

On July 5th and 6th, people will come together from coast to coast to join First Nations and Metis in the Healing Walk, a gathering focused on healing the environment and the people who are suffering from tar sands expansion.

Let's call on the Alberta and Canadian governments to stop the reckless mismanagement of these resources. We need our governments to work with First Nations and bring people together to make wise choices about stewarding the land in ways that are sustainable and fair.

Indigenous tradition asserts that it is a human responsibility to protect land, air, and water for future generations. Many other Canadians agree. Over the past decade First Nations communities, non-native communities, scientists, politicians, and others are recognizing that the expansion of the tar sands is betraying this responsibility.

No one feels this more then the people that have lived in the Athabasca River region for generations. They have watched their land get destroyed, they are forced to breathe dirty air, and in many communities they can no longer drink the water. The wildlife they have traditionally harvested are getting scarce, the fish they harvest have tumours, and the medicinal plants are disappearing along with the permanently changed landscape.

There are protests against the tar sands taking place around the world. From the streets of London to the treetops in Texas, people are coming out to protest tar sands expansion. In British Columbia there is a wall of opposition blocking tar sands pipelines and oil tankers, in the United States records numbers of people are protesting the KXL pipeline, and there is growing opposition to stop Line 9 in Ontario, Quebec, and the New England states. These protests are helping. Thank you.

On July 5 & 6 2013 there will be a different kind of event taking place in Northern Alberta in the heart of the destruction. The 4th Annual Healing Walk is an opportunity for people from all walks of life to join First Nations and Metis in a spiritual gathering that will focus on healing the land and the people who are suffering from tar sands expansion.

This is a different kind of event. Everyone is asked to participate but please leave your protest signs and organizational banners at home. Come and see the impacts of the tar sands and be a part of the healing. First Nations leaders will conduct a traditional healing ceremony on the walk but everyone is encouraged to bring their own spirituality, their own customs, and their own beliefs.

Hope to see you there on July 5 & 6. Become part of the solution to protecting land, air, water, and our climate by getting involved in the Healing Walk.

- View the program
- Find out all the details about attending
- Register to attend
- Or, take action from home if you can't attend.

The Healing Walk is sponsored by the Keepers of the Athabasca. Keepers of the Athabasca is a collection of First Nations, Metis, Inuit, environmental groups, and watershed citizens working

together for the protection of water, land and air, and thus for all living things today and tomorrow in the Athabasca River Watershed.

http://www.healingwalk.org/

July 1, 2013

Moccasins on the Ground at Takini on the Cheyenne River Reservation

By Owe Aku International Justice Project
Red Nations Rising

In our effort to be true to our principal objective to preserve sacred water and protect Ina Maka for future generations, working within the protocol of our traditions and responsibilities must always be our first priority. While journeying through the land after the Cheyenne River Moccasins on the Ground training, Obama made indications that he will not approve the Keystone XL Pipeline. That would be a great victory. However, our victory does not come until all sacred water is protected from tarsands, uranium mining, coal extraction and the myriad ways fat takers destroy Ina Maka.

The Moccasins on the Ground Tour of Resistance, in conjunction with many allies and relatives, was on the move again with more non-violent direct action training on the Cheyenne River territory of the Lakota Nation from June 14th through 16th. These educational and informative gatherings are designed to prepare people to protect water and their communities in opposition to the Keystone XL Pipeline ("KXL") proposed by Transcanada currently under review by the Obama administration (the first application was denied in January 2012).

The Pipeline's construction is in itself dangerous to communities along the route and the slurrying process is known to be hazardous to ground and surface water. Dozens of "man camps" will be set up to house the thousands of Union workers imported to run the enormous equipment used to claw holes in the Earth. These camps are reputed to bring prostitution, trafficking of women and children, violence, and deaths from equipment/truck drivers not experienced in operating big haul trucks in isolated areas. If the KXL becomes operational, the bitumen, which is what the tarsands oil is called, must be heated to over 150 degrees Fahrenheit, resulting in the KXL pipes being 16 more times likely to rupture than regular crude oil lines. This is no ordinary oil. It contains dozens of toxic chemicals that are not only used in extracting oil from the rock but also in melting the bitumen to force it through the pipes. It is not a question of whether or not the Pipeline will leak but rather when, where and how much will be leaked. Tantoo Cardinal, who was introduced by Debra White Plume and is on the frontline of resistance in her own homeland, talked personally about it:

"I am from the area around the Tarsands mine and I'm here to tell you the water is contaminated for at least 100 kilometers all around the mine site. We are like the polar bears who are also being threatened by climate change because the ice flows they depend on get smaller and

smaller; our territory shrinks from government and corporate assaults by the fattakers and we are left with less and less." (Tantoo Cardinal)

The oil spill in Mayflower, Arkansas consisted of tarsands bitumen and to hide the destruction from the public and media, a news blackout was enforced by militarized police and national guard while a no-fly zone was enforced to make sure no photographs of the devastation were released. This is just one of dozens of leaks that has happened.

The Moccasins on the Ground training in Bridger was on the traditional 1851 and 1868 treaty territory of the Lakota Oyate (called the Sioux Nation by the uninitiated). Treaty status is recognized under international law as well as by the United States, although the US government is famous for the ongoing violations to all the treaties it has made with Red Nations as well as with other nations around the world. The treaties identify the inherently sovereign land of the Lakota people and preserve that land for Lakota people to exercise a responsibility for protecting sacred water for future generations. This is Lakota law and tradition.

"I'm in South Dakota today, sort of a ground zero for the XL Keystone Pipeline, that pipeline, owned by a Canadian Corporation which will export tar sands oil to the rest of the world. This is the heart of the North American continent here. Bwaan Akiing is what we call this land-Land of the Lakota. There are no pipelines across it, and beneath it is the Oglalla Aquifer wherein lies the vast majority of the water for this region. The Lakota understand that water is life, and that there is no new water. It turns out, tar sands carrying pipelines are sixteen times more likely to break than a conventional pipeline, and it seems that some ranchers and Native people, in a new Cowboy and Indian Alliance, are intent upon protecting that water." (Militarizing Fossil Fuels in the East, Winona LaDuke with Frank Molley, see http://westcoastnativenews.com/when-drones-guard-the-pipeline/.)

The Pipeline will cross the territory of the Lakota Oyate for hundreds of miles. Not only does it pass over the Oglala Aquifer, it crosses the Mni Wiconi Project which supplies drinking water to the Cheyenne River, Rosebud, and Pine Ridge Indian Reservations.

"Our people are suffering way beyond their age. Illnesses caused by poisoned water and the weight of the trauma from generations of suffering lie under the sicknesses that plague us. This Pipeline is just one more step in their attempts to remove us from the land." (Nina Washtay, Idle No More).

Non-violent direct action, the right to assembly and the right to free speech are all principles being employed by Owe Aku and its allies in an attempt to take action to protect sacred water which goes beyond proclamations, petitions and resolutions. At Moccasins on the Ground a National Lawyer's Guild attorney explained that rights normally reserved under the U.S. Constitution are not only threatened but have been virtually annihilated. Under the Patriot Act any interference with state, local or national policy is considered an act of terror.

"Twenty years ago this region was determined to be a national sacrifice area. You cannot regulate the Pipeline. All you can do is stop it but protection under traditional law or treaty law

will not be from the courts. It's easy to define legal rights [for participants] in non-violent direct action: there are none left."

As evidenced by the tarsands spill in Arkansas and the bombing in Boston, the militarized police force of the United States does not hesitate to use police-state policies to protect the corporations. The training of Moccasins on the Ground is designed to instill discipline and a sense of responsibility in strategies for stopping the pipeline through the return of traditional values and decolonization. The balance between speakers and hands-on training is what makes Moccasins on the Ground so effective. As explained by several of the elders present, this is a spiritual movement based in the ancient Lakota tradition of relationships between human beings, plants, animals, water and rock. In talking about a ceremony that closed the three-day training, Rocky Afraid of Hawk explained that:

"We are not allies. We are relatives. Allies may be together, but still apart. In the Lakota way, relatives are with us. The Hunka ceremony (the making of relatives) is not about individuals but about tiyospaye (the extended family). This is the way we should think about what we are doing and how we should conduct ourselves to always be good relatives with each other and the water."

Representatives of many Red Nations including the Nakota, Dakota, and Lakota peoples, Northern Cheyenne, Dine, Anishinabe, Cree, along with representatives from Protecting the Sacred, Tar Sands Blockade, Tar Sands Resistance Movement, Utah Tarsands Resistance, Lakota Media Project, Prairie Dust Films, Idle No More, and Colorado AIM, Barrio Warriors, and many other organizations, all participated in the event as well as the Hunka ceremony.

A water ceremony was held along the Cheyenne River, Lakota families from the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe made their vow to protect their water and their people from the KXL.

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http://lastrealindians.com/red-nations-rising/

July 1, 2013

News Release: Is Religion Good for Your Cat and Dog?

Oxford Animal Ethics

A new research project at Oxford will examine whether animals benefit or suffer thanks to religion.

Inspired by Baptist Preacher Charles Spurgeon's claim that a person cannot be a true Christian if his dog or cat is not the better off for it, the Centre will explore whether religious traditions are animal-friendly. The questions to be addressed include whether religious people and religious institutions benefit animals? Are they more or less likely to be respectful to animals – either those kept as companions or those used for other human purposes?

The project is being organised by the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. It will be multidisciplinary, multifaith, and draw in not only theologians and religious thinkers, but also other academics including social scientists, psychologists, historians, and criminologists. "We want to know whether religion makes any difference for animals", says Oxford theologian, Professor Andrew Linzey, who is Director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. "We often hear of how religion is detrimental to human rights, but is it also detrimental to animal protection?"

The first stage of the project will culminate in a Summer School on Religion and Animal Protection at St Stephen's House, Oxford, from 21-23rd July 2014. St Stephen's is an Anglican Theological College and a Hall of the University of Oxford.

Academics interested in contributing to the project should contact the Centre's Deputy Director, Clair Linzey, in the first instance depdirector@oxfordanimalethics.com or (+44) (0)1865 201565.

For more press information please contact Sam Calvert, Samantha Calvert Marketing & PR, sam@samcalvert.plus.com / +44 (0)1782 505430 / +44 (0)7967 042050.

http://www.oxfordanimalethics.com/2013/07/news-release-is-religion-good-for-your-cat-and-dog/

July 1, 2013

United Church of Christ to become first U.S. denomination to move toward divestment from fossil fuel companies

By Micki Carter
United Church of Christ

A set of strategies to attack climate change — which includes a path to divestment from fossil fuel companies — was passed by General Synod 2013 Monday afternoon at the Long Beach Convention Center. This action on July 1 makes the United Church of Christ the first major religious body in the U.S. to vote to divest from fossil fuel companies.

The resolution, brought by the Massachusetts Conference and backed by 10 other conferences, calls for enhanced shareholder engagement in fossil fuel companies, an intensive search for fossil fuel-free investment vehicles and the identification of "best in class" fossil fuel companies by General Synod 2015.

By June 2018, a plan would be prepared to divest UCC funds in any fossil-fuel company, except for those identified as "best in class" which the Rev. Jim Antal, the major proponent of the resolution, called an "oxymoron," noting that no such fossil fuel companies are likely to exist.

"Today, the national Synod of the UCC added another 'first' when it became the first national faith communion to vote to divest from fossil fuel companies – and to do it with the support of its major investment institution, United Church Funds," Antal said.

"This resolution becomes a model for all faith communities who care about God's creation and recognize the urgent scientific mandate to keep at least 80 percent of the known oil, gas and coal reserves in the ground. . . This vote expresses our commitment to the future. By this vote, we are amplifying our conviction with our money."

The original proposal brought to General Synod called for a five-year movement toward divestment. In committee, a substitute resolution that Antal and the leadership of United Church Funds collaborated on to address the UCF and Pension Boards concerns of their fiduciary responsibility to maximize investment.

"This resolution calls on each and all of us to make difficult changes to the way we live each day of our lives," said Donald Hart, UCF president. "Implementing the multiple strategies outlined in this resolution will demand time, money and care — but we believe Creation deserves no less."

The Pension Boards didn't participate in the negotiations that led to the substitution resolution that was ultimately adopted. After the vote, Michael A. Downs, Pension Boards CEO issued a statement that his organization "will support and implement the resolution, to the extent possible, within our legal responsibilities as fiduciaries of the Annuity Plan for the UCC, acting on behalf of the active and retired members who have entrusted their retirement assets to us."

During the floor debate, a number of delegates urged consideration of the economic impact this course of action will have on jobs and the economies of states like Montana, Wyoming and Kentucky, which are heavily dependent on the fossil fuel industry.

"Let’s talk real divestment here," Mark Wampler of Iowa Conference said. "Divest yourself of your airline tickets and find a non-carbon way to go home."

The General Synod also passed a resolution on making UCC church buildings more carbon-neutral. Earlier in the week, the committee amended the proposal to call on UCC congregations to conduct energy audits on their facilities as the first step toward carbon neutrality. Sara Brace, committee chair and delegate from the Pennsylvania Northeast Conference of the UCC, also stressed that achieving carbon neutrality can be a gradual process for congregations.

"The encouragement portions of the resolution are what resonated with many committee members," said Brace. "By reducing our carbon footprint, we are helping the environment one step at a time."

http://www.ucc.org/news/GS2013-fossil-fuel-divestment-vote.html

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July 3, 2013

Church Dropping Fossil Fuel Investments

By The Associated Press

New York Times

The United Church of Christ has become the first American religious body to vote to divest its pension funds and investments from fossil fuel companies because of climate change concerns. The Protestant denomination, which traces its origins to the Pilgrims in 1620 and has about 1.1 million members, voted on Monday to divest in stages over the next five years. But it left open the possibility of keeping some investments if the fossil fuel companies meet certain standards. The Rev. Jim Antal, who is president of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ and who helped lead the divestment campaign, said it was motivated by the 350.org climate change campaign, which is also urging colleges and universities to divest from fossil fuel companies.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/04/us/church-dropping-fossil-fuel-investments.html?_r=0

July 5, 2013

CoE to debate disinvestment from fossil fuels

Independent Catholic News

The Anglican Diocese of Southwark passed a resolution yesterday calling on the General Synod of the Church of England to consider disinvestment from fossil fuels.

Welcoming the resolution Mark Letcher of Operation Noah said: “We are delighted that Southwark has passed this resolution. The Church must be consistent in word and deed. Global reserves of fossil fuels far exceed that which can be burned without triggering catastrophic damage to the climate system. Yet companies such as BP and Shell continue to invest billions in the development of new reserves of fossil fuels in the sure knowledge that these will push us far beyond the 2 degree C warming threshold”.

The resolution proposed by Canon Giles Goddard and Bishop David Atkinson, responds to calls for the Church of England to disinvest completely on ethical grounds from companies extracting fossil fuels, and to develop a climate friendly investment portfolio.

The resolution and background document draws attention to a proposal in the Church of England’s seven-year plan on climate change and the environment that the Church disinvest from fossil fuels by 2020[2]. This proposal will now go forward for debate at the General Synod of the Church of England.

At the Southwark Diocese Synod yesterday April Alexander – on behalf of the Church Commissioners – revealed that the Church of England has reduced its investments in oil and gas by 62% on financial rather than ethical grounds over the past three years. This is part of a strategy to move funds from volatile holdings into more stable investments.

Meanwhile the Church of England is seeking to invest in less damaging alternatives to oil and gas, such as those offered by Generation Investment Management LLP, founded by Al Gore and David Blood in which the Church is reported to have invested £230 million.

Mark Letcher added: “A growing number of financial institutions are demonstrating that it is possible to make a profit while avoiding the fossil fuel sector”.

Later this year Operation Noah will launch a national campaign calling on UK Churches to disinvest from the fossil fuel sector.

http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=22894

July 11, 2013

Reflections After Independence Day

By Miriam MacGillis
Genesis Farm

Somehow the spirit of the original Declaration of Independence carries an invitation to revisit it often. It is a living legacy whose potential is ever emerging in the unfolding of history. Like all visionary proclamations, it draws in its wake the unfinished aspirations of those early founders who shifted the human venture into new dimensions of possibility and choice.

In a certain sense “The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America” was an agreement to quit. To quit believing and assenting to a way of thinking which was no longer consistent with the self-evident truths the new colonists held. Those truths were that all people “are created equal and are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights” such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and that to secure these rights, people would institute governments which would derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. Since the states had suffered a long train of abuses and usurpations, they felt compelled after a prudent period of time and with a careful sense of duty to dissolve their political bonds to their former systems of government.

They quit believing change would happen by waiting.

The Declaration of Independence cited twenty-eight reasons why the colonists should quit believing that their repeated injuries and usurpations would be heard or honored by the King of Great Britain. They quit believing, not just in their monarchy, but in the idea that it was a proper form of government for people who believed in the “self-evident truth” that people had inalienable rights endowed by their Creator.

Months earlier, in January of 1776, when Thomas Paine wrote his 48-page pamphlet *Common Sense*, the decision to seek independence from England had not yet been finalized. Writing anonymously, Paine described in plain language, for ordinary people, why they should quit believing in old forms of thinking such as the divine rights of kings, or hereditary monarchy. He also spelled out the consequences of continuing to live as though conflicting sets of beliefs about human rights could be accommodated. He cited seven well-documented reasons for the colonies to quit being colonies and declare their independence as a new union of self-governed states.

It is now 237 years since both *Common Sense* and the Declaration of Independence affirmed the rights of humans to individuate themselves from an oppressive ruler and pursue the freedoms to which the “Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them.”

On June 10th, a decision on a motion to dismiss in *Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association et al. v. Monsanto*, the case in which Genesis Farm is a co-plaintiff, was handed down. The Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, DC, ruled that the plaintiffs, a group of about eighty organic and non-GMO farmers and seed companies, cannot pursue a lawsuit to protect themselves from Monsanto's transgenic seed patents because — and this is an important statement — Monsanto recently promised to take no legal action against growers whose crops inadvertently contain traces of these seeds.

In the ruling, a panel of judges affirmed the New York trial court’s previous decision to dismiss

our complaint due to our lack of standing. In that sense it was disappointing. However, it did so because Monsanto made repeated and legally binding commitments during the lawsuit to not sue farmers with "trace amounts" — defined as 1% or less — of crop contamination.

Our attorney, Dan Ravicher of the Public Patent Foundation (PUBPAT), views the decision as a partial victory. "Before this suit, the *Organic Seed* plaintiffs were forced to take expensive precautions and avoid full use of their land in order to not be falsely accused of patent infringement by Monsanto," said Ravicher. "The decision means that the farmers did have the right to bring the suit to protect themselves, but now that Monsanto has bound itself to not suing the plaintiffs, the Court of Appeals believes the suit should not move forward." Ravicher also noted that any farmer who is contaminated by trace amounts of Monsanto seed might now sue for that harm without fear of a retaliation patent infringement claim.

This partial victory against the international agriculture giant is certainly significant. But as the use of biotech crops continues to spread – about 50% of American farmland is now devoted to growing them – we must all come to terms with the possibility that farmers who are trying to protect their crops from any transgenic seed contamination are fighting what could become a futile effort.

This spring a farmer in Oregon discovered that his wheat field had become contaminated with GMO wheat, a product Monsanto field tested with USDA approval in 16 states from 1998 through 2005. The GMO wheat was never granted commercial approval, and Monsanto claims its use never became widespread. How far it has spread is anyone's guess. As this story illustrates, once the altered genes are released from the laboratory, they are difficult, if not impossible, to contain. This kind of inadvertent contamination problem could end up disrupting the entire wheat industry since many international importers ban all GMO crops.

But there are far greater disruptions at stake. The genetic integrity of some of our most important food crops is increasingly at risk. If this continues, even the most conscientious will not be able to avoid eating GMO products. Furthermore, whether they're approved or not, these foods have never been proven to be safe for long-term consumption. The necessary precautionary testing has simply not been done. We must all come to grips with this reality.

It must be asked: how could any business assume and receive the "authority" to act without our public or democratic consent and thereby usurp our own inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? Are not the air, soil, water, oceans, birds, fish, forests and all living beings in the web of life essential to the health of Earth? And is not the health of Earth essential to the human pursuit of human life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?

And how do we, the governed, protect ourselves against a violation of our right to health if we

are not given accurate information about the basic nature of our food? Genetically engineered food is not labeled anywhere in these United States. This is the willful intention of its corporate producers, who hold sway over our representatives and laws. So even the freedom to choose to avoid eating this unsafe food has been preempted by this business "authority." How can this be? We all have a right as well as an obligation to ask these questions.

The takeover of our agricultural system, our health, our governments, our prisons, our military, our airwaves, our privacy, and our universities and schools by a handful of corporate interests is assaulting many of the planet's life systems. These systems, natural and human, are becoming increasingly volatile. People and nature are being forced to conform to patterns of control deeply inconsistent with five billion years of evolution, with our basic human instincts, with our deepest spiritual values, and with rigorous and objective scientific observation. Our government representatives are supposed to protect our freedom, health, safety, privacy and access to truth, and we pay them handsome salaries, pensions, and benefits to do this. But many of our expectations are wildly backfiring. The news is filled with bleak reports.

Nor can our kings, queens, presidents, prime ministers, warlords, CEOs, regulatory committees, governors, czars, religious leaders, bankers, financiers, and public relations firms fulfill the assurances that our institutions once promised us. Too often, their old forms of thinking now directly conflict with the realities of everyday life. The many billions of dollars spent each week on propping up old promises and old ideas can only delay the inevitable. As the old nursery rhyme reminds us, Humpty Dumpty simply cannot be put back together again.

One of the most abiding of these promises is our right to freedom and independence. Independence is defined as a state of not being influenced or controlled by others; of thinking or acting for oneself; of not being dependent or contingent upon something else; or, of not relying on another for aid or support. Much could be written about how government and business interests have colluded to usurp the average citizen's independence in society. But independence can also imply a false separation from the web of interdependence which holds the Universe together.

It is just this belief in separation that keeps pushing us further and further into crisis. Independence is a worldview held by a culture that has not yet made the distinction between independence and individuation. Individuation is the unique capacity of a living being to evolve within the interdependent web of life in which it exists. For humans, individuation is the unique, unrepeatable, irreplaceable precious capacity to unfold one's mind, body, spirit, memory, imagination, attitudes beliefs, choices and creative contributions in response to the unique conditions of one's life.

The differences between independence and interdependence may at first seem small; it's just one

small syllable, after all. But the distinction can be life altering. One ideal celebrates individual human endeavor but remains silent about how those endeavors are derived from or affect other life systems. Independence is a fiction, a mental fiction born of human consciousness. Interdependence, on the other hand, recognizes that human fate is inextricably linked to all the other life systems on the planet. When our individual actions are mutually enhancing, the web of life is supported. But when we ignore the scientific reality of an interdependent web of life, we do so at our own peril and at the peril of the web.

Quitting old ways of thinking is like quitting any old habit – it is difficult and stressful. But in making the change from independence to interdependence, enormous freedom may be gained.

Humans share an indestructible longing for a meaningful soul life. In spite of appearances to the contrary, a mysterious ineffable domain of the human longs to give itself into something bigger than an individual's small self, isolated from the whole. It is this search for deeper meaning that is often unsatisfied by the offerings of old forms, even though, in the past, they may have provided a deep sense of meaning. This search compels us to keep learning, to search for further perspectives, to discover what was not before realized, to honor the beauty and integrity emerging from these discoveries, and to constantly transcend the limitations of the present. The Universe is still expanding and becoming itself. Earth is a planet of highly evolved and complex living relationships intimately bound together. There is an inherent interdependence of all beings.

So at what point does a reasonable person quit? Quit believing in frozen ideas, in dying forms?

We might cite, as did the architects of the Declaration of Independence, a handful of powerful but ancient forms that can no longer, as they said, "provide new guards for the future security." These include:

• the idea that human beings are separate from everything else in the world; or
• that a spiritual creator bestowed a spiritual nature exclusively on humans to the exclusion of all other beings, or
• that certain humans are predestined to be of more value than others, and are therefore entitled to special authority; or
• that the world is under the powerful influence of evil forces which, regardless of what humans do, will inflict ultimate destruction from which only certain favored humans will be rescued.

Some of these ideas have had a cruel history. In some instances, everything — common sense, common decency, and common good became collateral damage in their service. Even when people realize that some of their ideas are inaccurate, outdated and misguided, it is possible to remain committed to their defense. It may defy logic to remain loyal to them, yet history demonstrates that good, upright civilizations have sacrificed some of their deepest values to do just that.

So, when does a reasonable person finally quit believing that such restricted forms of meaning can be, or even should be, brought back to life?

Perhaps when the new forms speak to us and touch us so profoundly that we are drawn to pursue them wholeheartedly. The story of an evolving Universe and the mysterious dynamics that infuse Earth has illumined the imagination of countless legions of searchers whose gaze was caught by the outer and inner visions of deep time and space.

One of the most compelling voices interpreting these new revelations was that of Thomas Berry's. He synthesized modern scientific insights about the nature of time, space, and the emerging processes of life with his uncommon appreciation of the spiritual wisdom of the world's diverse human cultures and religions. His observations about how human behavior and ideas often collided with reality are inspirational, engaging and always challenging. They have become the bedrock of our defense and protection of the integrity of seeds and the genetic memory of all Earth's diverse life expressions. They frame our commitment to the distinction between individuation and independence.

Inspired by Berry's work, groundbreaking materials were created by Brian Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker to deepen our exploration and understanding. The words and images in their Journey of the Universe series have truly made the concept of interdependence more accessible to the world. We can think of no better resources to help us re-weave our minds and hearts into its interdependent web of life.

The Declaration of Independence itself suggests that change does not come easily to the human race. "Mankind is more disposed to suffer," it states, "…than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed." But what lies beyond our present accustomed forms is a new frontier, full of possibility if only we consent to its existence. Finally we have the opportunity to consent to a new governance without leaving everything behind. We do not abandon the treasured essence of what we are, or the many-faceted wisdoms about living with the sacred legacy of our human ancestors. We can carry the many-faceted faces and names of the Divine into new depths of humility, awe and appreciation. Perhaps most importantly we can now grasp and embrace vast new glimpses into the nature of the world and the rare privilege of our own existence.

http://hosted.verticalresponse.com/857531/85b1f7b642/1634009901/d32c77a1c6/

July 13, 2013

Interfaith Perspectives on Our Ecological Disaster

By John Dear
Huffington Post

"Everybody's told me over and over and over again, it's a done deal, it's going to happen, how childish it is for everyone to protest it." That's what Bill McKibben, founder of the group 350.org and one of our leading environmental activists, told the *New York Times* a few days ago, referring to President Obama's upcoming announcement about whether or not to go ahead with the destructive 1,700 mile cross-border Keystone XL pipeline.

"But it never seemed like a done deal to me because it's so illogical," McKibben continued. "This is the dirtiest oil anyone has ever managed to find on the face of the earth, and it's always seemed to me that given even a remotely fair hearing people would figure that out."

Anyone who is paying attention and cares for the earth--and not oil company profits--realizes that this pipeline will be an environmental disaster for North America and a huge threat to the global climate. As NASA scientist and prophetic leader James Hansen told Bill McKibben a few years ago, the Keystone XL pipeline will be "game over for the planet."

I fully support the ongoing protests against the Keystone XL pipeline, and hope and pray that Obama administration will do the right thing and refuse to go ahead with it, and make even tougher decisions to reduce carbon emissions and fossil fuels and protect creation.

That would be the conclusion of anyone who reads the wise new book, Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth (edited by Llewellyn Vaughn-Lee, Golden Sufi Center, www.goldensufi.org), a beautiful collection of interfaith essays by some of our greatest thinkers about the environment, spirituality and catastrophic climate change. Contributors include Thich Nhat Hanh, Joanna Macy, Wendell Berry, Richard Rohr, Brian Swimme, Thomas Berry, Vandana Shiva, Bill Plotkin, Miriam MacGillis, and Winona LaDuke among others.

"The world is not a problem to be solved; it is a living being to which we belong," editor Llewellyn Vaughn-Lee writes in his introduction. "The world is part of our own self and we are a part of its suffering wholeness. Until we go to the root of our image of separateness, there can be no healing...Only when our feet learn once again how to walk in a sacred manner, and our hearts hear the real music of creation, can we bring the world back into balance."

Spiritual Ecology addresses one key aspect of our global environmental crisis--our forgetfulness of the sacred nature of creation, and how this affects our relationship to the environment. It tries to articulate a spiritual response to the ecological disaster we have made, and offers many stimulating insights.

"The bells of mindfulness are sounding," Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh writes. "All over the earth, we are experiencing floods, droughts, and massive wildfires. Sea ice is melting in the Arctic and hurricanes and heat waves are killing thousands. The forests are fast disappearing, the deserts are growing, species are becoming extinct every day, and yet we continue to consume, ignoring the ringing bells.

"We need a collective awakening," Nhat Hanh continues. "Most people are still sleeping. We all have a great desire to be able to live in peace and to have environmental sustainability. What most of us don't yet have are concrete ways of making our commitment to sustainable living a

reality in our daily lives. It's time for each of us to wake up and take action in our own lives. If we awaken to our true situation, there will be a change in our collective consciousness."

"We are moving from an era dominated by competing nation states to one that is birthing a sustainable multicultural planetary civilization," Mary Evelyn Tucker and Brian Swimme write.

"There can never be world peace as long as you make war against Mother Earth," writes Chief Oren Lyons of the Onondaga Nation. "To make war against Mother Earth is to destroy and to corrupt, to kill, to poison. When we do that, we will not have peace. The first peace comes with your mother, Mother Earth."

"The dream of an infinitely expandable planet placed entirely at our disposal was always just that, a dream, and it's fast becoming a nightmare," writes Zen teacher Susan Murphy. "Tumultuous change on a vast scale grows increasingly likely with every day of business as usual. The only question is what form it will take, which order of climate shocks and political crises will start to shake our world apart, and how people will react as the market collapses and the source of plenty evaporates."

"We are living in what must surely be the most daunting and arresting moment we have ever faced as a species," Murphy continues. "We face a developing reality that can either condemn human beings to oblivion or inspire us to wake up to our lives in a dramatically more interesting way. A way that begins in living soberly and creatively towards the crisis of our planet--not as a problem to be solved by engineering an ever better, safer human 'bubble,' but as a constantly unfolding obligation to begin considering the remaking of ourselves as ecologically awaken human beings... When the stakes are life on earth, all else is a diversion."

"I don't know what is going to happen," Sister Miriam MacGillis of Genesis Farm confesses. "It's a great sorrow. Letting the pain of this into one's psyche--it's a lot.... What we're doing to each other, and whether we can possibly wake up in time... You must do your little part, and you've got to be very, very humble and realize that there are limitations. And yet the love that I experience for life--I just want it to go on! That's all I care about."

"The Earth is going through terrible devastation, which is being caused by the society, and culture, and a way of life we are all implicated in," she continues. "We're not redeemed out of this. We're implicit, we're in it. We need all the wisdom, all the support we can get. We need each other... We also need the capacity to see that the present moment is not the final word, that there is always the possibility that we can transcend our own limitations--the planet, the Earth, the society can do that. It's possible to believe that and work toward it. That's all we can do."

"The earth and its life systems, on which we all entirely depend (just like God!), might soon become the very thing that will convert us to a simple lifestyle, to necessary community, and to an inherent and universal sense of reverence for the Holy," writes Franciscan Father Richard Rohr. "We all breathe the same air and drink the same water. There are no Jewish, Christian, or Muslim versions of these universal elements."

"I know it is no longer words, doctrines, and mental belief systems that can or will reveal the fullness of this Cosmic Christ," he concludes. "This earth indeed is the very Body of God, and it is from this body that we are born, live, suffer and resurrect to eternal life. Either all is God's Great Project, or we may rightly wonder whether anything is."

"At the level of survival we are fast approaching, our attempts to distinguish ourselves by accidental and historical differences and theological subtleties--while ignoring the clear 'bottom line'--are becoming an almost blasphemous waste of time and a shocking disrespect for God's one, beautiful, and multitudinous life. I do still believe that grace is inherent to creation, and that God and goodness will still have the final word."

Spiritual Ecology helps me to ponder our present ecological disaster and the future catastrophe we are bringing upon ourselves, to meditate on this scary reality through the wisdom of the world's religions and some of our best spiritual writers. I recommend it for all those seeking spiritual understanding in light of this catastrophe, and for all who are trying to simplify their lives, protest the Keystone XL pipeline and other destructive acts, and wake up to the needs of Mother Earth.

"May we remember our role as guardians of the Earth, custodians of its sacred ways, and return once again to live in harmony with its natural rhythms and laws." That's the final epilogue of the book--a good prayer for all of us, and a way forward.

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(This first appeared in The National Catholic Reporter at www.ncronline.org on July 8, 2013).

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-dear/interfaith-perspective-on_b_3593215.html

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July 15, 2013

'Blessing the facts,' evangelical scientists urge Congress to reduce carbon emissions

By Coleen Jose, E&E reporter
Environmental & Energy Daily

Evangelical scientists have urged members of Congress to act on climate change in a letter calling for legislation to reduce carbon emissions and protect the environment.

The 200 signatories said they aim to bridge the gap between science and religion.

"There's a sense that scientists are not a part of the evangelical community," said Katharine Hayhoe, the director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University and lead author of the "National Climate Assessment," a federal scientific report assessing climate change impacts and current trends in the United States.

"Climate change gets turned into a polarizing issue," she said. "There are 200 of us, people who specifically have climate science expertise. We wanted to tell our community and nation that not only does science compel us to get involved, but that also faith compels us."

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life reports that 78.4 percent of U.S. adults identify as Christian, and 26.3 percent specifically identify as evangelical Protestants.

The letter cites climbing global temperatures, droughts, wildfires and "once in a lifetime" storms that became the new normal last year as strong signals for urgent action.

Biblical references pepper the call to Congress. "We as a society risk being counted among 'those who destroy the earth,'" it says, an allusion to the book of Revelation. And, it warns, Americans' lifestyles walk the opposite path of a verse in Romans saying "love does no harm to its neighbor."

Do political parties hold more sway than religion?

Collecting 200 signatories for the letter took six months, and a vetting process was led by Dorothy Boorse, chairwoman of the biology department at Gordon College in Massachusetts.

Signers hold master's degrees or doctorates in fields including climate science, biology and chemistry. Scientists from Cornell University and the University of Wisconsin, Madison, joined the campaign, but the majority of signers are from religiously affiliated colleges and universities.

"The biggest thing I hope to see is that people realize how the evangelical voice is more modern and nuanced," Boorse said. "The people who understand the science and who care about God are calling on Congress to act."

The leading authors of the letter pointed to their upbringing as a prime driver of their advocacy. Hayhoe, now an adviser to multiple federal initiatives on climate change adaptation, grew up in Canada and Colombia.

Her parents, both from the United States, were evangelical missionaries who taught science. It was not until she moved back to the United States in 1995 for graduate school and her doctorate in atmospheric science that she encountered people who denied scientific evidence about climate change.

"That was when it dawned on me that I had a responsibility," she said. "My neighbors and church friends were being lied to by scientists and the media."

Over the last 15 years living within the religious and scientific communities, Hayhoe said, she observed that affiliation was the primary indicator for individual opinion on climate change.

'A matter of trust'

The research arm of LifeWay Christian Resources, an affiliate of the Southern Baptist Convention, found that the majority of evangelical pastors doubt global warming.

The poll used data from the Pew Research Center to discern political leanings. Of those surveyed, 76 percent of pastors identifying as Democrats strongly agreed with the validity of man-made global warming. Twenty percent of independents strongly agreed, along with just 7 percent of Republicans.

"The call to Congress is very much needed in our community because of the broader tension between science and faith," said Jim Ball, executive vice president for policy and climate change at the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) and author of "Global Warming and the Risen Lord."

"There is a suspicion about science because of the debate in creation and evolution theory," he added. "To have evangelical scientists, people of faith, saying to the evangelical community that you can trust this science is quite important. It's all a matter of trust."

In 2006, EEN helped launch the Evangelical Climate Initiative to promote economic methods to mitigate climate change. Rick Warren, a prominent evangelical pastor and author, was among 86 senior evangelical ministers who urged legislative action.

"We are blessing the facts," Ball said. More than 300 evangelical pastors have signed the initiative.

Heightened debate from the Republican corner, "a lot of conservatives attacking the science," fueled the need for the initiative, he added.

Some say Bible proves climate change false

But the community is divided. Officials with the Cornwall Alliance, an evangelical group that is an outgrowth of the Interfaith Alliance and has spearheaded campaigns with the Heritage Foundation and Competitive Enterprise Institute to counter climate activism efforts, say the new letter and the Evangelical Climate Initiative exaggerate facts.

"While the letter claims that climate change is causing more droughts, floods and other severe weather, the actual hard data show no increase in the frequency or intensity of severe weather events, and in fact we're now at a 30-year low in tropical cyclone activity," Cornwall Alliance founder Calvin Beisner said, adding that the organization is considering a response to the evangelical scientists' letter.

"It will raise lots of interest in the evangelical community, but I doubt that it will sway many," he added of the effort.

Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.), who identifies as evangelical, has called climate change "all voodoo, nonsense, hokum" that is "manufactured science." Her office could not be reached to comment on the letter.

During an April congressional hearing on the controversial Keystone XL pipeline project, Rep. Joe Barton (R-Texas) cited the "great flood" of the Bible to disprove humanity's role in changing climate. Barton's office declined to comment on the scientists' recently submitted letter to Congress.

Larry Louters, a professor of chemistry at Calvin College and leading author of the letter, recalled how discussions with his mother and current work in a Christian college fundamentally formed his motivation to promote both religion and science.

"My mother refused to believe me because [radio personality] Rush Limbaugh said that climate change is a hoax," he said.

"Rush's claim had the same weight as science," he added. "It impairs the American public's ability to judge risk. The same scientific process that diagnoses cancer now warns us about climate risk. But it's a risk that we do not personalize. If we do nothing, what do we pass on to the next generation?"

http://www.eenews.net/stories/1059984347/print

July 19, 2013

UN, Major Investment Firms Call for Increased Focus on Carbon Risk Management and Carbon Accounting in Investment Industry

United Nations Environment Programme

http://www.unepfi.org/fileadmin/climatechange/UNEP_FI_Investor_Briefing_Press_Release_-_19_July_2013.pdf

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July 22, 2013

World Wildlife Fund Encourages Pope Francis to Include Amazon Conservation Message at World Youth Day

WWF's Sacred Earth program director Dekila Chungyalpa, WWF-Brazil CEO Cica Brito and WWF Amazon conservation expert Claudio Maretti part of panel on faith and conservation

World Wildlife Fund Press Release

WASHINGTON, DC, July 22, 2013 – In a July celebration that will include Pope Francis teachings about poverty and peace, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) hopes the Pope will use the opportunity to incorporate a special message about the importance of safeguarding the

environment to the thousands of young Catholics expected to gather in Rio de Janeiro for World Youth Day, July 23rd – 28th.

WWF applauds Pope Francis for already adding his influential voice to the growing number of faith leaders around the world who are recognizing the need to live in harmony with nature.

"Pope Francis' respect for nature and his strong call for sustainable development have been early hallmarks of his pontificate. As his namesake St. Francis of Assisi suggests, he has already given us great hope that he will be an invaluable global messenger for environmental protection around the world," said Dekila Chungyalpa, Director of WWF's Sacred Earth program. "Faith leaders are vital, local champions of the environment. In a world where 80% of the population embraces a faith, they're a compelling messenger and have the power to move mountains in their communities. It's significant that the Pope's first international trip is to Brazil, home of the Amazon, the largest rainforest on earth and a crucial provider of economic and social benefits for its people and the world."

Chungyalpa will be at World Youth Day and part of the panel discussing the connection between faith and conservation. This will be the only event specifically drawing attention to the nexus of religion and the environment. WWF-Brazil CEO Cica Brito and WWF's Amazon expert Claudio Maretti will also be presenting. The discussion will take place on July 24th from 3pm – 5:30pm at Centro de Referência da Juventude, Manguinhos, at Dom Helder Câmara Avenue, nº 1.184 – Manguinhos – Rio de Janeiro. Information about the event is here.

"The Amazon is the largest area of tropical forest, critical to environmental services like water and timber and for regulation of global climate patterns. Countries, companies and citizens must see nature as an asset," said Claudio Maretti, WWF's Living Amazon leader. "We must take concrete actions to maintain the ecological balance of this biome and all other ecosystems."

"I understand it is important for Catholics to care for nature as god's creation. Therefore, we are calling on young Catholics around the world to care for nature by making conscious choices and to express their strong support for Amazon conservation, which all of us depend on," added Maretti.

In partnership with World Youth Day organizers, WWF will also be showcasing several conservation-themed videos that will air prior to the Pope's holy mass. Watch one of the videos here.

WWF is the only major U.S. conservation organization working directly with faith leaders and religious institutions around the world. Sacred Earth serves as a capacity-building platform for faith leaders to help them lead their communities in protecting wildlife, natural resources and ecosystems. In partnership with The Alliance of Religions and Conservation, WWF has launched several initiatives with the Catholic Church, including one in East Africa focusing on wildlife protection.

Dekila Chungyalpa and Claudio Maretti are available for interviews.

For Sacred Earth website: click here

For Sacred Earth video: click here

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http://worldwildlife.org/press-releases/world-wildlife-fund-encourages-pope-francis-to-include-amazon-conservation-message-at-world-youth-day

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July 26, 2013

Religion and environmentalism: A growing phenomenon

United Nations UNEARTH News

What is the relationship between religion and environmentalism? This has been a complicated issue for at least several decades, however, "religious environmentalism" is an emerging field of thought that has been gaining momentum through the programs and initiatives of several worldwide institutions, NGOs, and intergovernmental organizations.

Religious environmentalism is founded on the concept that the current environmental crisis is fundamentally a crisis of values. As Islamic philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr claims, religion not only provides a sound basis for ethics but also possesses a doctrine about the world of nature. Thus, because we all play a part in destroying our natural environment and because faith, spirituality, and religion help shape our worldviews, it is important that we change our worldviews to include values and ethics directed toward living sustainably and repairing the environment.

"Religious environmentalism is a movement that brings forward the moral commitment of the world religions to sustain the flourishing of life for the Earth Community," Mary Evelyn Tucker, Co-Director of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, tells **UNEARTH News**.

"With our present rate of destruction of ecosystems along with the toxification of water, air, and soil we have diminished the prospects for future generations to inherit a healthy environment," says Tucker. "Religious communities are helping to reverse this trend with statements, teachings, rituals, and engaged action.'

Along with Professor John Grim of Yale University, Tucker co-founded the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale, which is the largest international multi-religious project of its kind. The Forum holds conferences, edits and releases publications, and directs academic programs that are

engaged in exploring religious worldviews, texts, and practices in order to better understand the complexity of the contemporary environmental crisis.

Religious environmentalism has taken root throughout the rest of the world as well; in 1986 authorities from every major world religion were brought together by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to declare how the teachings of their respective faiths leads them to care for nature and the environment. Entitled the Assisi Declarations, the five religions – Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, were then joined in 1995 by four other religions, Daoism, Sikhism, Jainism, and Baha'i.

As a result, the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) was launched; an NGO based in the United Kingdom, ARC works with religions around the globe, particularly in developing countries, to develop environmental programs based on their own teachings, beliefs, and practices.

"ARC works with the most sustainable organizations in the world; religions have already outlived empires, dynasties and ideologies, and they all have basic teachings about our role in the environment, even though in recent years some of them have forgotten how important it is," ARC Secretary General Martin Palmer tells **UNEARTH News**.

"We also work with the faiths because in almost all countries they are more trusted than governments or even NGOs. If the sustainable future is in the hands of future generations then the fact that around 50 percent of schools are run or managed or were founded by faiths is significant," says Palmer.

According to Palmer and ARC, an estimated 60-80 percent of schools in Africa are run or funded by faith groups, which is why the organization is currently focusing on educational schemes like the Faith Based Education for Sustainable Development toolkit. The toolkit was launched in Kenya this past month and is already set for adoption in Tanzania and Uganda.

Along with ARC, organizations like the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have developed and implemented educational modules and programs that combine religion beliefs, cultural norms, and sustainable living practices.

One educational activity in UNESCO's program highlights the fact that developing countries have integrated religion and conservation with practical results, using Nepal as an example. The Annapurna Conservation Area Project aims to promote sustainability and conservation through natural resource and tourism management; furthermore, the Project incorporates the local communities' religious worldview in its attempts to successfully promote sustainable living practices.

Time will tell if religion and environmentalism will be able to effectively promote sustainable living through the developing world; however it seems as though success has been achieved in some countries.

"Religious communities are frequently modeling simplicity and encouraging a change of life style for those living in the developed world," Tucker tells **UNEARTH News**.

"By encouraging alternative technologies and renewable energy religions are also assisting sustainable development in many parts of the world. Moreover, they are empowering the poor through educating women, loans for small businesses, and affordable housing."

Ultimately, both Tucker and Palmer agree that religion may be able to provide a powerful moral force that can awaken people to the environmental damage and degradation that is occurring on our planet.

"Every major faith has already been through local and regional ecological collapses over the hundreds or thousands of years it has existed," Palmer tells **UNEARTH News**.

"They have been through civil wars, invasions, droughts, famines, floods…Psychologically the faiths know from example how to rebuild, defend, or adapt to ecological crises," says Palmer.

http://unearthnews.org/religion-and-environmentalism-a-growing-phenomenon/

August 2013

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI) Newsletter

http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=6756ad9b24&e=a758405790

August 2013

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=39&key=5b1187014fcf01ca3a4c0ce5cdf86133&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

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August 2013

Earth Corps Event in NYC Update

Franciscan Earth Corps

The Franciscan Action Network organized a successful fundraiser for the Franciscan Earth Corps in New York City on July 30th. The event was held at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, and was attended by over 40 people, including those from environmental, food justice, and faith-

based groups in NYC, people affiliated with Capuchin Youth & Family Ministries in Garrison, New York, and even from ministry groups in Connecticut. Representatives from the Capuchins, OFM's, Secular Franciscans, Third Order Franciscan Sisters and Episcopal Franciscans were on hand as well.

Attendees heard Br. Keith Warner (co-author of "Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth") speak about the call from St. Francis to rebuild the house of God which involves caring for all of creation. This was followed by a response from Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, author of "Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet." Ibrahim reflected on the parallels between the Franciscan perspective and the call from Islam to protect God's creation.

Attendees also got to enjoy hors d'oeuvres made from locally sourced produce. Several organizations were invited to table and share with attendees the work they are doing to engage people in environmental and food justice work. These included NY Faith & Justice, WE ACT for Environmental Justice (with Faith Leaders for Environmental Justice), NY Interfaith Power & Light, Food & Water Watch, Food Chain Workers Alliance, and Leave It Better. We look forward to strengthening relationships with these partners and see the momentum build for Franciscan care for creation in New York area.

http://franciscanearthcorps.org/earthcorps/article/earth-corps-event-nyc-update

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August 2, 2013

Defiant nuns and monks refuse to give up Kentucky land for gas pipeline

By David Ferguson
The Raw Story

Two Kentucky Catholic religious orders that collectively own more than 3,000 acres of historic farmland are refusing to give up portions of their lands for a proposed natural-gas pipeline that would channel millions of gallons of pressurized, highly flammable natural-gas liquids through the area. According to the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, the nuns of the Sisters of Loretto and the monks of the Abbey of Gethsemani have denied surveyors permission to survey the land ahead of the pipeline project and say that they have no interest in helping it along.

“We’ve been on this property since 1824,” said Sister Maria Visse, service coordinator for the Sisters of Loretto. “We feel entrusted with this (land). It’s a gift. It’s not a commodity.”

The energy company that hopes to build the pipeline — Williams Co. of Tulsa, Oklahoma — has repeatedly sent representatives and made requests for permission to survey the land, all of which have been summarily denied. The proposed pipeline would run from gas-drilling facilities in Pennsylvania to the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, impacting 18 counties in Kentucky.

Visse told the *Courier* that she turned down the Williams Co.’s proposal to use the sisters’ and the monks’ land on the spot and without a second thought.

“This is just short-term money that has very dangerous potential long-term consequences,” Visse said. She worries about the impact of water pollution on the porous limestone bedrock upon which the community resides.

Brother Aaron Schulte of the Abbey of Gethsemani confirmed to the *Courier* that the abbey had been approached by the pipeline company, but declined to give an interview to the paper. The Trappist monks own about 2,500 acres of property, including the grounds of the monastery, a guest house and hundreds of acres of pristine woods.

Sister Claire McGowan, a Dominican nun and director of the New Pioneers for a Sustainable Future in Springfield, KY, said the project “would risk much of what makes Central Kentucky dear to us: the beauty of our landscape, the abundance of good water, the health of our air, the peaceful quietness of our rural areas, and the general sense of security from unexpected disasters.”

Williams Co. spokesperson Tom Droege told the *Courier* that he couldn’t talk about his dealings with specific landowners along the pipeline’s proposed route. He said the company plans to hold a series of open houses in communities that would be affected by the pipeline.

“With each landowner we approach,” he said, “we pledge to be a respectful guest on their land and ensure they are well informed about what activities are taking place.”

Williams Co. is currently struggling to bring one of its Gulf coast ethylene plants back online after a deadly explosion on June 13. The Geismar Olefins plant in Louisiana had been plagued with safety violations prior to the propylene explosion that killed two workers and injured 77 others.

Six months before the incident, inspectors had noted the propylene leak that caused the explosion at Geismar Olefins, but plant managers failed to take any action. The company said that it hopes to have the damage repaired and the plant back online by April of 2014.

http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2013/08/02/defiant-nuns-and-monks-refuse-to-give-up-kentucky-land-for-gas-pipeline/

August 7, 2013

Tribe Blockades 'Megaload' of Tar Sands Equipment

Nez Perce leader: 'We need to be able to meet our ancestors in the spirit world and hold our heads up strong and answer them when they ask if we did all we could do to protect the people and the land.'

By Lauren McCauley
Common Dreams

Calling tar sands development a project of "total destruction," members of the Nez Perce tribe placed their bodies before a 'megaload' of extraction equipment for the second night in a row Tuesday, temporarily halting the convoy as it makes its way along Idaho's Highway 12 to the Alberta tar sands fields.

Roughly 50 protesters from the Nez Perce tribe, Idle No More, Wild Idaho Rising Tide and other environmental groups halted for over an hour the 255-foot long, two-lane-wide shipment—the bulk of which was a 322-ton water purification unit being pulled by a big rig.

The *Spokesman-Review* reports:

After gathering at a river access point a quarter mile from where the megaload truck stopped before dawn Tuesday, protesters began hiking westward along Highway 12 to a ramp where the roadway splits from Highway 95. At around 10:30 p.m., the Omega Morgan truck that had sat idle began to rumble to life, and a fleet of Nez Perce Tribal Police, County Sheriff, and Idaho State Police vehicles began moving toward a crowd of protesters blocking the roadway.

Law enforcement officers gave protesters 15 minutes to speak out unimpeded. At one point, tribal members were informed they were creating a public nuisance by officers. To which one protester responded, 'We're protecting our sovereignty.'

In an action the previous evening, a group over 250 activists linked arms in a human chain across the roadway, successfully holding up the parade of vehicles for three hours. According to Wild Idaho Rising Tide, the blockade was the longest lasting "since the first tar sands extraction modules rolled from Lewiston area ports on February 1, 2011."

The blockade broke after a police car drove straight through the group of people, *Earth First! Newswire* reports. "Police used the usual tactics to break up the blockade, threatening people with mace, pushing activists, separating parents from children, and so on," they add.

Nineteen individuals, including all members of the Nez Perce executive committee, were arrested Monday evening and released on bail Tuesday.

One of those arrested, Tribal Council member and Vice-Chair of the Nez Perce Nation (Nimiipuu Nation), Brooklyn Baptiste, told indigenous independent media site *Last Real Indians* that the action was taken because of tribal opposition to the economic and long-term environmental impact of the shipments—namely the development of tar sands oil which he described as "total destruction."

"As leaders, elected or not, we need to be able to meet our ancestors in the spirit world and hold our heads up strong and answer them when they ask if we did all we could do to protect the people and the land. This is about our inherent sovereignty. We are sovereign because of this land, this water, the animals. What is sovereignty without them? We're all waking up."

According to *Reuters*, the load is one of two planned shipments by Oregon hauling company Omega Morgan.

A video of Monday's blockade shows protesters chanting and banging drums in a face-off with police and the 'megaload.'

https://www.commondreams.org/headline/2013/08/07-3

August 8, 2013

The Delaware and the Rights of Rivers

By Liz Marshall, Five Smooth Stones Project
Genesis Farm

This river is old and very big, emerging from two distinct sources in central New York State and journeying for 419 miles to the Atlantic Ocean. As the tributaries merge and the river expands and grows, it winds its way to separate the landforms of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. The river is still one of the most healthy on the continent and in some sections, such as that which flows through the Kittatinny Ridge and Great Limestone Valley, shaping Genesis Farm's bioregion and home, it is designated “wild and scenic.” For those of us whose lives are intertwined with the fate of the Delaware River and its vast watershed, we are deeply disturbed. And with good cause.

Recent efforts to protect the river in our Ridge and Valley region have focused on two specific issues: a proposed expansion of the Susquehanna to Roseland power transmission line, and the construction of natural gas pipelines through the region.

Both projects, we believe, are harmful and unnecessary. But how do we articulate our objections? The future of the river — or of any human endeavor that degrades the natural world — is often debated and decided in solely human terms, balancing the rights and needs of certain groups of people against others. Those in favor of the transmission line and pipeline projects cite the need for jobs, for energy, for economic expansion. Those of us who are opposed often point out that the projects will pollute a critical source of drinking water, or that construction will disrupt the use of privately and publicly held lands, or diminish the valuable tourism industry.

But many working to defend the natural world often feel a need to give voice to a more comprehensive but less familiar context. Is it possible to view the river as more than a provider for human wants and needs? Is the river more than a source of drinking water, of recreation, of prime waterfront real estate? Does the river in and of itself have a reason for being and a right to exist that extends beyond our human needs? And if so, how do we begin to define, acknowledge and defend that right?

The River's Own History

In New Jersey, the river makes four distinctive switchbacks on the western border. The uppermost zigzag, which travels southwest from High Point State Park, is the major artery of the Ridge and Valley region of New Jersey. Many millions of people rely on the Delaware for fresh drinking water, for farming, for industry. We go there to fish, to canoe, to swim. It is bordered by state and national lands, and is the destination for people hungry to spend time in nature. It is a weekend getaway, an inspiration, and a respite from the noise and hectic pace of modern life.

To begin to understand if the river has rights, it helps to explore the river's own history, a story that begins long before public water sources, long before state borders, and long before any human presence. The Delaware River first established something similar to its current course through the Appalachian Range about 150 million years ago, while dinosaurs roamed nearby. (In 1858, the world's first nearly complete skeleton of a dinosaur, the megalosaur, was found in the vicinity of the Delaware River, near Haddonfield, NJ.) At some point in its long journey through time, river currents in our middle-river region began to cut a pass through the Kittitinny Ridge. The erosion that began with running water was, many millions of years later, intensified by a greater force. About twenty thousand years ago, during the last Ice Age, that mountain pass filled with a 2000-foot-thick glacier that advanced from the north. The glacier scraped its way through the mountain and widened the gap, creating the dramatically steep sides on either side of the river. Today that scenic river pass is called the Delaware Water Gap. It is one of the most distinctive geological features in New Jersey, and certainly one of the most breathtaking sights along Route 80, the cross-continent highway that now runs through it.

When the glacier melted, about 18,000 years ago, it left behind plentiful fresh water as well as the silt and gravel, called glacial till, that characterize our region's fertile soils. The first humans to come across the river arrived on foot about 12,000 years ago. At that time, the river flowed through a region that was tundra, not forest. In the millennia that followed, the climate and region shifted. The first trees to appear near the river were coniferous pines. About ten thousand or so years ago, deciduous trees like oak, maple, birch and willow began to form forests.

The ancestors of the Paleolithic people who populated those forests came to call themselves the Lenape. The river they named *Lenapewihittuk*, River of the Lenape. The ten thousand or so years that they inhabited the river valley was a time of biological flourishing. As the forests grew and spread, so too did the diversity of life. Thousands of birds swam, fed, and nested nearby. Fish and mammals, amphibians and shellfish made a home in its currents. Bear, mountain lion, bobcat, wolf, otter, beaver, mink, skunk, and deer all fed near its banks. Lenape culture developed in concert with this rich community of life, their rituals and beliefs tied to the rhythms and cycles of the world around them. Among neighboring tribes the Lenape were known for their peaceful ways and lack of interest in territory. Their lives were neither easy nor idyllic, but they caused little disruption on the land. Their population – estimated to be about twelve thousand in the 1600's – was relatively stable. Even after many thousands of years of human habitation, the

waters of the river the Lenape named for themselves, the Lenapewihittuk, remained pristine.

Little more than four hundred years ago, in 1610, an English ship captain entered the huge bay into which the Lenapewihittuk emptied. He did not fully explore it, but he did name it for Lord De La Warr. The Lord was the newly appointed leader of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in the Americas. That same year, De La Warr, a veteran of bloody battles against the Irish, had arrived from England. In the years that followed, Lord De La Warr convinced the beleaguered Jamestown settlers to stay in the New World. He also lead brutal raids against the Powhatan Indians near the Chesapeake Bay, penned a memoir in England, and, in 1618, drowned in the Atlantic on a return trip to the Americas. But Lord De La Warr never visited his namesake, which was shortened to Delaware Bay. The name stuck, and even spread. Land around the bay, as well as the river that fed the bay, also came to be known as Delaware.

What is in a Name?

A river must surely be indifferent to the names that humans call it. A name is just a name, after all, a mere representation of the actual thing. It can't change the river's color, its unpredictable currents, its restless zigzag path, or the forests that shade it. Nevertheless, for the river and everything around it, the transition in name from Lenapewihittuk to Delaware signaled a major shift in the human consciousness that was entering the region. And that newer human consciousness, in the years ahead, could and did change the river's color and unpredictable currents, its path, and the surrounding terrain and ecology. Change came fast and furious, and from the river's perspective, the changes were devastating. By the late 1800s, the river would be nearly unrecognizable to the handful of Lenape inhabitants who were still alive to see it.

Probably the first species to disappear was the beaver, which was prized for its pelts. The Lenape themselves were not far behind. By the end of the 1700s, most Lenapes had been killed, wiped out by disease, or chased westward. (A small number of Lenapes, the ancestors of today's Ramapough Lenape Nation, Nanticoke Lenape, and Powatan Renape tribes, stayed in New Jersey.) Within another 100 years, the forests surrounding the upper Delaware were also gone, a casualty of the timber industry. The logs were floated downstream in immense rafts until there were literally no more lumber-worthy trees to be felled. Where there were once trees there were now fields, and the river filled with silt. Many of the fish and other animals dependent on clear water died out.

In less than 200 years, European settlers and their European ideas had transformed the river's fate. This new human industriousness -- our mines, farms, towns, cities, factories, reservoirs, and roads – would from now on affect the evolution of the river. The story of the Delaware River's precipitous decline, in water quality, in animal and plant diversity, and in the surrounding forests and soil and air, is lengthy and complex. Nevertheless, the story follows a familiar trajectory to

anyone who has studied the recent history of almost any bioregion on the North American continent.

A variety of dynamics drove the drastic shifts during those two centuries. But, undeniably, as human consciousness shifted from indigenous to western in the Upper Delaware region, the river suffered. There are many differences between the native and non-native cultures, but one in particular draws attention. Lenape traditions viewed the natural world as infused with divine spirit. Plants, trees, fish and mammals were manifestations of the Manitowuk, the Great Spirit. This creator had brought forth the world and then inhabited it in many forms. Their river, the Lenapewihittuk, had spirit too. Steeped in this worldview, the Lenape honored the river and treated it with great and abiding respect.

European tradition also conveyed belief in a creator who made the world. But from their perspective, only humans were infused with divine spirit, and only humans were created in the creator's image. The natural world, while being "good," was devoid of spirit. It was to be honored, but not for containing divine spirit. Thus it functioned as a means for human sustenance, economic or social advancement, and pleasure. For many, nature was only a way station on the path to heaven. The plants, the animals, and the rocks mostly were valued as an infinite bank of resources. That these resources could ever run out or become extinct due to human actions was unthinkable. The river and its surroundings were free for the taking. These intertwined concepts and beliefs held together as a basic cosmology that became the foundation of most western institutions.

Today, we are able to communicate a new story of creation to our children. We are among the first to discover and comprehend new insights about the process of how things have come to be. It is a cosmology that exists outside the realm of traditional beliefs. That this cosmology is based in scientific observation, not religion, does not diminish its spiritual power. It is the story of an incredible unfolding of life that has gone on for billions of years. It is the story of a tremendous drive within our planet, stretching it toward creativity, toward life, toward diversity, toward beauty and compassion. It is the story of atoms and molecules that all come from the same source, and that make up and unite the living with the non-living. What the Lenape intuited we are now able to prove empirically. The planet and all its creatures, the entire community of life, is an interconnected and interdependent whole. But it is a fragile whole with finite capacities.

Our growing sensitivity to the Delaware River's role in our own health and survival is undermined, nevertheless, by contemporary concepts of "progress." New technologies, developments, and chemicals are being introduced at a frenetic pace. There is limited testing or thought about their long-term impact on the health of people and the region. And while these new endeavors present enticing opportunities for corporate and individual profit, many introduce additional threats to the river and bioregion. Action, if any, occurs after the damage has begun. The myth that our planet can support unlimited economic growth remains firmly entrenched; the

idea that human progress comes at the expense of the larger community of life is still taken for granted. As Thomas Berry writes, “We are so deeply committed to the exploitative mode of relating to the natural world that those in control of the great corporations can hardly think about modifying the exploitation in any significant manner.”

Today: Two Major Threats

Over the past several years, energy companies have been working to expand both electric power lines and natural gas pipelines in the region. Their plans, a likely reaction to the reality of “peak oil,” were conceived and developed behind closed doors and without public scrutiny. As their plans become public, company representatives stress the importance of creating new jobs and stimulating the economy, of preserving access to energy, and of the limited impact on the immediate bioregion. Whether they are true or not, these are the arguments made for almost every energy infrastructure project in North America, if not worldwide. They certainly appease our public officials, who have voiced little concern or opposition. But these projects also will further entrench our old energy infrastructure, which continues to warm the planet and deplete the river.

The Susquehanna to Roseland (S-R) transmission line would expand a network of electricity sources fed by nuclear and coal-burning power plants. The current line runs 130 miles, from Berwick, Pennsylvania to Roseland, NJ, under the Delaware River and across federally protected lands. The expansion plan involves widening the existing right of way to replace the current eighty-foot high poles with ones that are nearly two hundred feet tall. The goal is to replace the wires to allow more voltage through. This project has now been approved by New Jersey’s Board of Public Utilities and has been made a priority by the Obama administration.

The National Park Service oversees three areas that the transmission line is planning to cross: 1) the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, 2) the federally protected “wild and scenic” portion of the Delaware River, and 3) the Appalachian Trail that runs from Maine to Georgia. In its detailed environmental impact statement, the Park Service stated that the transmission expansion project would have “enduring and serious” impacts to the parkland around the Delaware River. These very impacts, as well as concern about the residential neighborhoods that the line will pass through, generated vigorous public opposition at hearings held in 2012. Nonetheless, the Park Service approved the project in late 2012.

This transmission line expansion is now one lawsuit away from becoming reality. Earthjustice filed a lawsuit on behalf of local environmental groups who are challenging the National Park Service’s approval of the line through federally protected lands. For now, construction through the park has been delayed until the courts decide whether or not the Park Service’s decision was legal. If the transmission line is approved, construction could begin as early as this September.

The Expansion of Natural Gas Pipelines

In addition to the transmission line project, there are also at least twelve new or expanded natural gas pipelines planned for crossing the Delaware River basin. Like the line expansion, the construction of the various pipeline projects is the subject of controversy and public outcry. The Tennessee Gas Pipeline project, which currently runs across northern New Jersey, is one of these many pipeline expansion projects. The project will involve drilling and laying pipe under the Delaware River and crossing at least another eighty bodies of water. Opponents, who include in their ranks the Ramapough Lenape Nation, have taken photos, organized demonstrations, and put their bodies in the path of loggers. The construction, however, continues.

Gas companies seek to expand the natural gas pipeline network because of fracked natural gas coming out of Pennsylvania and other parts of the Marcellus Shale region. There is now so much gas that the old pipelines are too small to handle the volume. Gas consumers in New Jersey are enjoying relatively low costs for heating homes and water, but these benefits have blinded many to the high costs to the land and the river. Major habitat loss, erosion, and potential gas leaks are expected. Moreover, the intentionally piecemeal approach the companies have taken toward the planning, permitting and building of each of these dozen pipeline projects works against any commonsense analysis of their collective ecological impact.

Incredibly, New Jersey's current policy actually creates a financial incentive for private corporations to build pipelines across our publicly protected parks and preserved lands. It is a little known fact that pipeline companies pay far lower fees to compensate public entities for land acquisition than they do to compensate private landowners. Therefore many pipeline routes are tearing through public lands that were purchased and acquired for the purpose of protecting fragile ecosystems. Scientists report that rare and endangered species – like the bobcat, the brown bat, the bog turtle – will suffer disproportionately from the pipeline projects, as those species are highly susceptible to human disruption.

That we are destroying some of the only places left with any intact ecosystem is clearly not of concern to the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company, which has a startling record for regulatory violations. Most recently, in April, they were fined $175,000 by the state Department of Environmental Protection for failing to replant their ravaged pipeline pathways through Waywayanda State Park in New Jersey.

The Expanded Commitment to Fracking

Unfortunately, the ecological damage caused by fracking goes far beyond the installation of the new and expanded pipelines needed to carry it to market. The list of the serious damage being wreaked by the fracking process itself is lengthy and well documented. Although natural gas burns more cleanly than coal and oil, fracking and gas delivery processes involve the release of

methane, a potent greenhouse gas linked to climate change, into the atmosphere. Fracking is still largely exempt from the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act, so the proprietary mix of water and hazardous chemicals injected far underground — used to release gas from the rock — are shielded from impartial testing and public scrutiny. Toxic radioactive waste water from fracking is also a major concern. While the vast majority remains underground, some makes its way back up to the surface. The wastewater sits in stagnant ponds where it can leak and run off, poisoning aquifers and wildlife. The waste also gets delivered to water treatment systems, which are not equipped to handle this new waste and discharge it into ponds, rivers and lakes.

The enormous increase in domestic fracking and its tremendous machinery and use of resources has produced threats of a different scale. Geologists have now confirmed that the horizontal drilling commonly used in fracking is linked to earthquakes in the United States. A recent study estimates that during the last four years, the number of earthquakes in the middle of the U.S. — states where fracking activity has increased substantially — was eleven times higher than the average rate during the previous thirty years.

Fracking is also contributing to a massive disruption of the planet's water cycle. As scientist and water expert Maude Barlow has pointed out, we learned in grade school that the hydrologic cycle was a closed one, but that was an oversimplification. It was a lesson taught without considering the human capacity for shooting water far underground, or for polluting it so badly it becomes unusable. With fracking, both of these activities are commonplace. The sheer quantity of water used up by fracking is nothing short of alarming. One fracking well pad injects at least 5 millions of gallons of water mixed with sand and toxic chemicals far underground, below any aquifers. Those five million gallons of poisoned water – enough to fill a cube that is 51 feet on each side – have exited the water cycle forever. There are 500,000 gas wells in the United States and tens of thousands of new fracking wells built each year. As fresh water becomes rare, droughts more frequent, and the climate more unpredictable, we realize our stark dependence on a finite and precious resource: clean, drinkable water. It is suicidal to squander it.

And so we circle back to the Delaware River, that river that has flowed for so many millions of years through this land we are fortunate to call home. To say that these latest projects — the transmission line, the gas pipelines, the fracking — are a dire threat to the Delaware River greatly understates the problem. But the river is a lens through which we can view our future, the future of the plants and animals around us, the future of the wetlands and lakes, the future of the planet. What is bad for the river will be bad for humans and the community of life. We now realize that a cultural, political and legal system that focuses solely on our human needs and desires will, ironically, fail to protect a matrix of life that supports us, our children, and our children's children. If there were ever a time to realize that our worldview is inadequate, to realize that our human-centered ways of creating cultures of separation and hierarchy is counter to life, it is now. How can humans assume they have divinely-granted rights over the whole world?

The Rights of the River

That leads us again to consider the question: does the river in and of itself have a reason for being, a right to exist and a purpose beyond whatever immediate tasks humans demand of it? Surely it must have earlier, during those many millions of years ago, before humans even walked the Earth. And surely it must today, because the river supports not just people, but plants and forests, fish and birds and animals of all sizes. It flows into the salt marshes, which filter the bay where horseshoe crabs lay eggs that feed migratory birds flying halfway around the planet. Such interdependent global relationships are not just awe inspiring, but essential and commonplace. The web connecting the living to the nonliving spreads out in every direction. The river replenishes aquifers, evaporates into clouds, falls as rain, and collects in ponds and lakes. It plays a critical role in the great evolving drama of life. Certainly the health and fate of the river shouldn't always be defined by and subordinate to the private property interests of humans who happen to settle or conduct business near its banks.

Though this perspective on the river's innate importance, what we could call the river's *right to be*, might have been second nature to the Lenape and many other indigenous peoples, it is still outside the scope and body of most contemporary law. Yet the idea that the natural world has inherent rights, that rights are not the exclusive domain of the human, is one that is slowly emerging. Last year, a New Zealand river was granted legal rights for the first time. Under an agreement reached between the government and local Maori people, who have a longstanding lawsuit against it, the Whanganui River will be recognized in the courts as an integrated, living whole. Each party to the suit will appoint a guardian to represent the river and its long-term interests.

And in 2011, on the other side of the world, two lawyers became the first to sue under Ecuador's "Rights of Nature" provision in its new constitution. The lawyers sued on behalf of the Vilcabamba River after it was seriously damaged during government road construction. The Provincial Court of Loja, which heard the case, decided in the river's favor, finding that the road had polluted the water, altered the river's flow, and flooded homes and farms.

The "Rights of Nature" movement emphasizes that human rights, and human laws, should be subject to the fundamental laws of the natural world. The movement's rationale is not that humans are less important than previously thought; it's that we now fully and consciously understand that humans are a part of a larger planetary system upon which we all depend. The laws of the natural world are out there whether or not humans choose to acknowledge or honor them. We ignore them at our own peril. Not surprisingly, this movement has gained the greatest traction with indigenous peoples who still carry a deep understanding about the interconnection of all life. But these ideas about what is now called "Earth jurisprudence" have spread to the realm of conventional western culture and thought as well.

Thomas Berry's short 2001 reflection, *The Origin, Differentiation and Role of Rights,* was one of the first attempts to articulate the rights of non-humans within a western legal framework. In it, Berry asserted that rights derive from the ultimate source of all, the Universe. "Rights originate where existence originates," states the opening line. Berry saw that human rights were essentially a subset of a constellation of rights available to every member of the Earth community. "Every component of the Earth community has three rights," Berry writes. "The right to be, the right to habitat, and the right to fulfill its role in the ever-renewing process of the Earth community."

Berry's expansive interpretation opens up a dizzying array of new rights that our western brains have barely begun to contemplate, let alone to define or enforce in the public sphere. Skeptical questions quickly come to mind. After all, how would our institutions actually begin to apply such rights in real life settings? How to honor a tree's right to be, a beaver's right to habitat, or a river's right to fulfill its role in the Earth community? How to make decisions when there are conflicting interests to weigh? Wouldn't it require too much knowledge about too many things? Would acknowledging the rights of nature cripple the rights of humans everywhere?

The answers to these questions are anything but black and white. But perhaps our skeptical array of questions, in particular the last one above, betray a western tendency to view human interests as being at odds with the natural world's. This is a dynamic we inherited from a worldview that sees nature as separate and apart, and that views the Earth as an infinite resource for exploiting. This worldview, we now know, is not only false but also self-defeating. As Cormac Cullinan has written in his seminal book, *Wild Law,* "if laws are to be effective they need to recognise the inherent nature of the subject matter with which they are concerned." Laws that ignore the reality of how our planet works will ultimately fail us. Humans depend on the intricate workings of the natural world for survival, but if our system of government operates at the expense of the natural world, the consequences will continue to be disastrous.

As we consider the rights of the Delaware River, it is heartening to know there are so many organizations advocating on its behalf. In particular, groups like the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, NJ Sierra Club, The Highlands Coalition, and Food and Water Watch have shown tremendous leadership in being a voice for the river. But the stakes are such that we cannot just count on these committed few to do all the work for us. This is the time of a great contraction of life that is being propelled by human behaviors. Not since the close of the Mesozoic era, the end of the age of dinosaurs, has the Delaware River been witness to a greater mass extinction. Our window of opportunity for counteracting detrimental human activities — in particular, those like fracking — is steadily shrinking. It is human nature to avoid confronting hard choices that can be personally and socially challenging, but consider what's at stake. If the river is lost, so much is lost with it. In this race against time, we are all called upon to do our part, to be the river's voice, and to create new possibilities for it to survive and flourish.

The river is old, and it is big. And it has rights.

http://hosted.verticalresponse.com/857531/dbbc8211fc/1634009901/d32c77a1c6/

August 12, 2013

Interview: Megan Hollingsworth of Extinction Witness

By Chris Oestereich
Blog

It took several months to connect with Megan Hollingsworth of Extinction Witness for this interview, multiple calls to get through it, and then several months to finish writing it up. A long and winding road indeed. In short, I've taken entirely too long to complete this post and wanted to publicly thank Megan for her grace and patience in waiting for it to land. Fortunately, it seems the delays have been fortuitous as the organization is making great strides now, so it seems a good time to help get the word out.

The DP Interview

In talking with Megan, I learned of her great desire to help people become aware of, and come to terms with, the impact we are having on our planet's biodiversity. The Extinction Witness site endeavors to "help broaden the horizon of possibility for humanity by gathering, encouraging and promoting the creative response to genocide and species extermination of the Americas." (A pretty great ikigai, if you ask me.) Running on the premise that the present mass extinction of species is driven by how we relate with ourselves and one another, Extinction Witness creates and curates regeneration projects to heal unrecognized and unresolved violations of individuals and whole cultures. The project serves in the realms of Spirit and human emotion, also known as energy. As Megan sees it, spiritual regeneration is a prerequisite for biological regeneration. As part of Extinction Witness's goal to restore cultural and biological diversity to Earth, the project collaborates with on-the-ground regeneration projects to encourage and support practical action.

Megan, please tell us a little about yourself. What ideas or events helped lead you to create Extinction Witness?

Well, I had been unemployed for eight months searching for jobs in a flooded market. I decided to take work experience off my resume and look at my true interests. That assessment led me back to my graduate study and the production of *The Whale Memorial Dance*, a multi-media performance piece that atones harms to whales and dolphins. Extinction Witness arose as I looked into building a website to promote *The Whale Memorial Dance* and found several species memorial projects in the works. Since undergrad, I have explored through observation and personal experience the human emotional and spiritual response to genocide and the present mass extinction, death at large. I came to a place of acceptance during my graduate study as I

actively engaged in my own healing process. When I first started Extinction Witness, a dear friend asked how I maintain a gaze on such magnificent loss. I told her that I take breaks to dance. I do. I dance a lot every day. I also know that acceptance is what has liberated me to respond naturally to untold harms with the deepest sadness and sacred rage, which are equal to joy as expressions of love. The witness in Extinction Witness comes from my upbringing in Quaker faith and practice. Basically, Extinction Witness was birthed by my asking *who am I*? and *what am I here for?*, a process of imagining that continues to fulfill, excite and amaze me.

Can you share some specifics on the project… what are you currently working on?

The website is a work in progress. We are currently raising funds for the build and will bring on The Change Creation team to design a stunning site. We are crafting and gathering site content now. Our first regeneration project, Virgin, is in the works as well. Like Extinction Witness on the whole, Virgin, a tribute to big trees and whole women, is very much inspired by my personal healing and passion for life. Virgin includes a short photo documentary film and a proposal to create a designated sacred site in the North Grove of Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

Along with visiting the site, are there other things you would like to see people do to connect with your community?

I would love to see a burgeoning of memorials. There are myriad past and present losses to address and we are all sensitive to them. We will gladly share documentation of memorial gatherings and projects on the website with links to information on how to engage with groups dedicated to associated on-the-ground restoration projects. I also encourage participation in community grief ritual, which is what ultimately liberated me from chronic depression. Personal experiences of trauma and loss left unhealed complicate if not totally direct how we perceive the world. We all see through our own unique lens of experience and those of us who have been violated in any way, which is the overwhelming majority like 99.999% of humanity (that's my estimate, you are welcome to prove me wrong), view life as if through a cloud. For some the cloud is almost black and life is imagined to be a very dark experience. The grief ritual inspired by Francis Weller's genius that lifted me from despair was not directed at any particular loss, but an invitation to grieve with community as witness. Though I was at the time attending to genocide and mass extinction, my mother's pain prompted my turn at the altar where I was able to offer a primal wail that felt like the unanswered cry of a newborn child. I was held in such a way that I managed to touch the absolute depth and rise again in celebration. I believe most have an unanswered cry within and holding it depletes us and thus the world of joy. Genocide and species extinction are but expressions of our learned mistrust of the world. I am not sure from what indigenous community this comes, but I recall reading in my studies a perception that a person causing harm to another "acts as if he knows no family". This is precisely the experience we have inherited by way of how we are conceived and raised. We are ultimately asked to wonder what family is and to restore right relationship to the human child. For me, family is the whole world community of all beings. As I will gather with others in farewell to my mother and father when they pass, I will gather with anyone in gratitude for bees, wolves, bison, big trees, and whole ways of living. We are one family. Extinction Witness offers this gathering through the website and on the ground. Ultimately, I want us all to connect with ourselves so that the

clouds of perception can be lifted and we can once again trust and revel in life as an extraordinarily creative experience. To get there, we have old wounds to heal.

I recently shared links on The Long Now group's efforts to "de-extinct" species which no longer exist (which seemed to me a strange, preferential treatment). Given your efforts, I thought it would be great to share your thoughts on this. What did you make of it?

I have only today watched a couple of the Ted X talks on de-extinction. When you first introduced me to this effort it seems a month or more ago now, my response was similar to yours. That is that this project misses the point. My own lens has been cleared since that time and I watched today with intrigue. What we need now are such miracles as the regeneration of whole species and peoples. If we stick with strict analysis of present statistics and project those out, we paint a desolate future. That stark landscape is born from a lack of human imagination, which is the seed-bed of creation now. I am a spiritual healer and teacher, not a geneticist. If anything, my role is to help ensure the peaceful co-existence necessary to complete this vision should geneticists succeed. Based on what I saw today, I trust the integrity of the people on this project and believe that, as with me and all of us, life is imagining its way through their genius. We are nature as much as the tree is nature. From this vantage point, life is complete and miraculous, and we are magic co-creators. Anything is possible so long as we believe.

Finally, what's in store for the future? Where is Extinction Witness headed?

Extinction Witness's future is wide open. At present, I am focused on raising funds necessary to support the vision while gathering initial content and working on this first project dedicated to big trees and whole women. I have in mind memorials that will follow and am savoring every step of the creative flow.

Help Extinction Witness Expand and Prosper

Megan is leading a fund raiser to help continue to add content to the site and expand its reach. Please check out the short video below (http://player.vimeo.com/video/71931598) and please chip in if you can. They're doing great work and could do even more with a little support.

About Megan

Megan Elizabeth Hollingsworth, MS is a mother, artist and compassion activist. She is founder and director at Extinction Witness, a project of Empowerment WORKS, Inc. that creates and curates memorials for unrecognized losses of the Americas. Megan holds a BS in environmental health and MS in environmental studies with an emphasis on the human emotional and spiritual response to genocide and the present mass extinction of species.

www.meganhollingsworth.com

http://chrisoestereich.com/Blog/2013/08/the-dp-interview-with-megan-hollingsworth-of-extinction-witness/#sthash.YISroSZS.dpuf

August 14, 2013

An Appeal To Those Concerned But Not Yet Alarmed About Climate Change

By GeorgeH

LDS Earth Stewardship

According to a recent study done at Yale University only 13% of Americans are alarmed about anthropogenic, or human-caused, global warming (AGW), while on the other end of the spectrum 10% are adamantly dismissive and another 15% are at least doubtful about it. Interestingly, the majority of Americans are either concerned (26%) or cautiously concerned (29%) about the theory. If the political culture of my home state is any indication, the deniers in Utah and in mainstream Mormon political culture have the loudest voices and the biggest stages in which to air their views, and I believe this is squeezing out the majority in this state and in our community of faith who, perhaps with more moral clarity and better information, would choose to act to avert the worst consequences of climate change.

Now I must confess: I clearly belong in the most worried category. Some might call me an "alarmist" which, of course, is not a compliment. But I think the word "alarmist" is supposed to describe someone who overreacts to or distorts information for the sake of raising fears. You know the old story about Chicken Little and the sky falling. But you also know the humorous but profound bumper sticker that says, "Just because you are paranoid doesn't mean they aren't out to get you." In other words, alarmism is only alarmism when it is based on false information or premises. Otherwise, it is what we would call moral urgency.

I fully recognize, of course, that deniers relish their minority position; it is, in their minds, a badge of honor. A stubborn minority position can be virtuous, of course, but this is only true if the mainstream is wrong. Otherwise, it is simply moral turpitude. Indeed, if a minority opinion is wrong and yet it is unyielding; if it has access to power but refuses to examine evidence honestly, especially if said evidence requires shifting relations of power in society; if citizens and leaders who today have unprecedented access to information still refuse to listen to responsible sources or to move society in the direction it needs to go in, then this is a moral failure.

I suppose like most people, I believe I am highly rational, even when I am not. But in my most rational moments, I recognize that political ideology gets in the way of my capacity to interpret data. So we must accept the fact that political ideology colors our world a certain way or it predisposes us to believe or disbelieve certain theories, but this is not an excuse to bypass the responsibility to assess information as honestly as we can. I am not using good moral judgment, in other words, if my opinions on matters automatically fall back on my political leanings, or rely on hearsay, or trust pundits over my own assessment of a situation. So years ago I set about trying to separate fact from fiction and after years of reading both sides of the climate change debate, I find so little evidence for deniers to stand on, I can't help feeling embarrassed for them. I used to think that some time in the distant future, they will finally see their error and feel some shame about it. But the future is now, the evidence is too overwhelming, and if they can't see their error at this point, it is obvious to me that they never will. So I am not really interested in

engaging deniers or trying to change their minds. Short of a moratorium on anti-climate change rants especially by high profile people in power, I at least hope that the majority of people who have concerns will finally stop listening to their denials.

I admit that were I a political conservative, climate change would be a tougher pill to swallow because 1) Al Gore was the chief spokesman for some time and 2) it seems to suit a liberal view of government more easily than a conservative one. In fact, not surprisingly, most studies show a divide along partisan lines. Moreover, there is enough indication to believe that religious faith, of many kinds in America today, tends to mean less concern about climate change. So two more reasons pop up for skepticism: 3) if the earth were getting warmer, with disastrous consequences, why don't the scriptures or religious leaders warn of this great evil? or 4) since scriptures do warn of great calamities in the last days, well then maybe climate change is real and we all know there is no point in trying to stop what has been prophesied.

Now climate change is really starting to sound like no big deal, especially if you are a conservative and you are religious. Climate change is either false because 1) we all know how much the liberals want to find reasons to increase the size of government and 2) we all know how little we can trust atheist and secular scientists, or it is real but no big deal because the fate of the earth is in God's hands, not ours. *But the climate has nothing to do with political party, religion, or any other belief system. The climate is either changing dangerously or it isn't and this change is either caused by our carbon emissions or it isn't*. So it would seem that any reasonable person would not toss off an opinion on the matter without making an honest effort to understand these issues empirically. And an honest effort does not consist of merely following your general suspicions and surfing superficially on the internet to find websites, think tanks, and other sources of skepticism regarding climate change that will provide you anecdotes to confirm you in your doubts. Or listening to only one source of news. Or listening to talk radio. This is because there is steady drumbeat of doubt peddled by a host of organizations who make a living on misinformation about climate change. (You might want to read more about this peddling in Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway's important book *Merchants of Doubt*.)

Now, it is fair to ask: aren't those who keep up the steady drumbeat of alarm also benefiting and making a living perpetuating this theory that the world is melting? Don't people make themselves rich off of the theory of AGW? These questions are also not without merit. And one can spend five minutes on the internet and find websites to confirm one's liberal bias toward 1) bigger government, 2) atheistic science 3) secular anti-religious rhetoric that suggests the urgent need to act on our own instead of trusting in divine purpose.

But I have overstated the equivalence here. The fact is, while there are all kinds of websites out there, many of the major scientific societies in the world provide credible and accessible information that is not tainted by politics. It doesn't take long to read. It isn't hard to understand. It is a shame that so many Americans read so little about science or narrow their sources of information to so few. The spin coming from deniers is the same everywhere you go and that's because denial isn't coming from very many sources. Indeed, there are no credible scientific organizations anywhere in the world that are arguing that climate change is not happening or that it is not human caused. In fact, there are no scientific bodies that purport evidence of any kind on behalf of denialism. None. Zip. Let's be clear about this: doubts, spin jobs, and anecdotes about

unreliability *are not scientific evidence*. And honest questions that still need to be answered about the science do not constitute evidence that climate change is not real. We have every major scientific organization in the nation and in the world upholding the theory that human-caused carbon emissions are shifting the climate in potentially disastrous ways. It is not, in other words, just the International Panel on Climate Change, which consists of hundreds of the world's leading experts, but the American Medical Association, the National Academies of Science, the Botanical Society of America, American Geophysical Union, the Pentagon (yes, the Pentagon!), etc., etc. And a whopping 97% of all climatologists accept this theory. 97%. Don't be fooled by the old argument that "hundreds" of scientists disbelieve AGW. There are thousands upon thousands of people with Phds in the sciences across the world and yes there are some skeptics— some of whom have turned out to not exist, mind you— but they are not, on the whole, climate scientists with the proper credentials and they are nowhere near a significant percentage.

And why such an overwhelming consensus? Well, for one, the evidence is coming in from all over the world and from all over the sciences. We have extraordinary corroboration across a plethora of scientific disciplines including Oceanography, Biology, Climatology, Geology, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, Archaeology, Entomology, etc., etc. We can't explain flora and fauna migrations, rapid declines in biodiversity, acidification of the ocean, warming surface temperatures in the ocean, declining ice mass, changes in the atmosphere, all with just a few teams of scientists scheming to corroborate their stories. Besides, scientists make a living and science advances precisely on the basis of *disproving alternative theories*. Scientists have examined each and every alternative theory to try to explain the climatic changes we are seeing, including sun spots, water vapor, and natural cycles, and they have come up with precisely no evidence to suggest a better explanation than AGW. Deniers want us to believe that anecdotes and doubts spread by individuals in an occasional Op-Ed or by think tanks or websites are enough to cause us to question the fundamentals of climate science, even though those fundamentals have been around now for well over a century. We must recognize the staggering amount of faith they are asking from us to give credence to such doubts. The sheer amount of conspiratorial collaboration across disciplines and across the world that would be necessary to achieve the kind of consensus we have now, all of it supposedly bypassing the need for any real, hard evidence, simply stretches credulity. Theories about conspiring governments and scientists generating the theory of AGW are, well, science fiction.

I am not naïve. I don't believe in the moral purity of scientists. I don't believe government can do no wrong. I don't believe think tanks are full of liars paid directly by the Koch brothers. But surely claims that government can do no right, that scientists are corrupt to the bone, and that think tanks are categorically more reliable than the rest of scientific research combined are just as silly. Do scientists sometimes go along with a narrative because they are too afraid to break ranks? Of course. But does consensus—just in and of itself—suggest evidence of such fear overriding logic, data gathering, and sound scientific experimentation? If it did, why are we not challenging other theories such as the idea of continental drift, the age or shape of the earth, or the idea that smoking leads to cancer?

Well, we do in fact continue to see doubters on these questions. They just don't go away, but they lose credibility eventually. What is so surprising is that denialism foments doubt about conspiring scientists but none about conspiring corporations. Denialism wants us to see the

corrupting influence of money in science but not in government, in business, or in international relations. It wants us to distrust climate change because it is government-funded research but it doesn't question successful government research done in the name of fighting cancer, AIDS, and a whole host of other medical fields or the government-sponsored research that has gone into our technological advances, that put a man on the moon, that enabled us to develop a fossil fueled society in the first place. Nor will deniers explain why government is so motivated to promote a theory that undermines the very structure of our energy economy.

The truth is, we *did* see a challenge to the theory that smoking leads to cancer, and, not surprisingly, it used the same strategies climate skeptics use today and, it turns out, it involved some of the same people (again read *Merchants of Doubt*). No one could disprove the theory that smoking causes cancer but they could run interference on public opinion by raising doubts about the reliability of the sources of the scientific data. And they could raise doubts about how likely a serious campaign against smoking could make a difference. There is no credible evidence that disproves the theory of human-caused climate change. There is plenty of uncertainty remaining in the science, of course, and there is occasional reason to doubt the integrity of certain scientists. But you can't defeat a broadly corroborated theory with anecdotes nor do you disprove a theory by raising doubts about, say, Al Gore's integrity, or about liberal desires to want climate change to be true. Climate change deniers use the methods of the brilliant court lawyer who stands up against a mountain of evidence that his client is guilty. Remember OJ Simpson? You don't have to prove anything. You only have to sow doubt and make people afraid that they might be wrong. And you need people to gather around poles of identity. "Climate change is for nature-loving liberal secularists who don't have their priorities straight. Don't be one of those!"

So here's some thoughts for those of you who remain on the fence. If you prefer small government, fine. There are small government and free market solutions out there and many thinkers believe that the fear that redressing climate change is too expensive is simply wrong-headed. The fact that Al Gore is making hand over fist investing in clean energy isn't evidence that AGW is false; it is evidence that clean energy is the future for the global market. Just ask the Chinese. Or the Danish. Or the Germans. If you are waiting for religion to speak up, it has. You can scarcely name a major religious leader in the world who hasn't expressed concern about climate change. This list includes Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew, and the Dalai Lama. Muslim, Jewish, Evangelical, and other Christian leaders have expressed their concerns, organized themselves, and are fighting against the effects of climate change. Of course, some religious spokespeople have expressed their doubts about AGW, but mostly only in America. And there are those such as LDS leaders who have yet to say anything about it, but you certainly cannot find evidence in LDS belief that we should not be taking good care of the earth, that we should distrust science, or that we should assume all is well in Zion, that as long as we do our home teaching, let the world burn. I have already elaborated on this point many times. (If it is of interest, check out links here and here and here.) I don't recall the LDS leadership decrying genocide in Darfur. Does that mean that what happened there *wasn't a moral outrage*? (It should be noted too that the tensions broke out there in part as a result of a rapidly changing climate and extreme drought.) We Mormons would all do well to remember what characterizes a slothful and unwise servant: waiting around for someone else to tell us what to care about.

Isn't the world in God's hands? Well, yes, but didn't he place it in our charge? Weren't we asked to "take good care of it," to be stewards answerable to our Creator for how we treated the elements? He doesn't stop us from polluting our own bodies to the point of self-destruction. Why would our relationship with the earth be any different? Why have we allowed ourselves to accept the morally bankrupt idea that since the world is going to die anyway, we don't need to bother taking care of it? I have heard deniers claim that they still believe in good stewardship, but this rings hollow, for, as any doctor knows, you can't take good care of a patient without proper knowledge of what she needs. Only a reckless steward ignores or cherry picks empirical evidence. What kind of moral perversion is this we have fallen into to look at the earth's remarkable and miraculous capacity to regulate the climate and to provide the conditions of life for all living things—the very conditions that have enabled God's plan for all of us on this planet— and imagine that we can shrug our shoulders, fail to understand what makes it work in the first place, and then watch with impunity as we bring this capacity to ruin?

If the theory just doesn't sit well with you, then try this: what fights climate change is also what fights poverty. The poor are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. They have the fewest resources to be able to respond effectively to a warming climate. This is because they are more directly dependent on the ecosystems where they live, they live disproportionately closer to sea level, and they do not have the technological recourse we do to adapt quickly. And what is primarily causing global warming is overconsumption. Material greed is the single greatest threat to the earth since it leads us to use up land and water disproportionately and to emit more carbon per capita, and we Americans are the worst offenders. Surely we can agree that any philosophy that advocates consumption at will and that sponsors indifference to the fate of the poor is immoral. Moreover, getting us off of fossil fuels gets us off of our addiction to petrodictators—the Hugo Chavezes and the Sadam Husseins of the world, whom we have created across the globe from our outsize demand for fossil fuels. And don't buy the shallow argument that drilling for oil in the US will be enough to achieve this goal either. That's the rhetoric of partisan politics.

What I am suggesting is really quite simple: what will help the climate is already clearly outlined in gospel principles. If we live modestly and consume only what is necessary and we share generously with the poor; if we eat meat sparingly, eat locally in season, if we cease from our labors and excessive recreation on Sundays, we are doing right by the climate. If we raise voices of concern for policies, practices, and political leaders that will move us toward solar, geothermal, wind, and other alternative energies, we are in a position to use resources God gave us in abundance. If we use our remarkable gifts of innovation, scientific understanding, and moral drive to make a cleaner and more sustainable world for our grandchildren, if our hearts are truly turned to them, then we are living right. If we do all we can just to improve air quality, especially on behalf of children and the elderly, by using public transportation, walking, and advocating for policies and supporting institutions and politicians that get us away from fossil fuels, then we are also fighting climate change. If we are good stewards of our time and resources and read widely, carefully, and thoughtfully about the earth, we are in a position to make good moral judgments. If we live with compassion on the earth and for all living things, especially the most vulnerable, if we shun those who would pervert our relationship to the Creation in the interest of self-aggrandizement and material power, are we not living a Christian

life? You don't have to be a Democrat and you don't have to like Al Gore. You just need to live your religion with more intensity and broader purpose.

So while we wait until the picture is any more clear (are we waiting for the last 3% of climatologists to change their mind?!) or until the economy gets betters or until other issues we care more about get taken care of, we do nothing to move the needle. The only reason that climate activists feel that they must get more desperate every day in their efforts to get us off of fossil fuels is because of this sleeping giant of some 55% of Americans who feel a vague and undefined concern but who remain inactive.

I want us at LDSES to reach these people. I want them to hear the stories of the millions of people in the developing world whose lives and livelihoods weigh in the balance with a warming climate. They are the ones we end up helping in our humanitarian efforts. They are the ones whose families and communities are eroded because of increased difficulty in gaining access to the resources they need or increased difficulty in resisting the impact of a changing climate. If you have family values, you should care about climate refugees. You and I, we can adjust our AC, we can change our clothes, but plants and animals and ecosystems around us cannot adjust in time to survive the rapid rate of change we are seeing and neither can the world's poor who are already poorer for our inaction.

http://ldsearthstewardship.org/2013/08/an-appeal-to-those-concerned-but-not-yet-alarmed-about-climate-change/

August 15, 2013

Video: Meet the Singing, Anti-Fracking Nuns

In the rolling green hills of Kentucky, the Sisters of Loretto are leading a grassroots movement against the proposed Bluegrass Pipeline.

By James West
Mother Jones

Down the road from the Maker's Mark bourbon distillery in the central Kentucky town of Loretto, a feisty cadre of nuns has been tending crops and praying since the early 1800s. An order founded on social justice, the Sisters of Loretto are quickly becoming the face of a new grassroots campaign against what they see as a threat to holy land: the Bluegrass Pipeline. The 1,100-mile pipeline will carry natural gas liquids from the Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia fracking fields, and will pass through Kentucky—eventually connecting with an existing pipeline that runs all the way to the Gulf Coast.

The pipeline is in its early stages of development, but the nuns have already refused to allow company representatives to survey their 800-acre campus, and they are taking their message to local community meetings…sometimes in the form of song.

Watch the video at this link:

http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2013/08/nuns-bluegrass-pipeline-loretto

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August 16, 2013

Religion, nature and urbanization among China's ethnic minorities

By James Miller
Sustainable China Blog

In June this year Ian Johnson published a major report in the New York Times on China's plans to urbanize 250 million citizens over the next decade or so. This drive continues the decades-long story of China's conversion from an 80 per cent rural society into an 80 per cent urban society, a migration that probably constitutes one of the most significant stories in human history, when considered from the perspective of the numbers of people involved and its relative speed.

A major issue that Johnson raises in his analysis is the question of how this will change China's traditional character, and also the traditional rural focus of China's communist party.

This will decisively change the character of China, where the Communist Party insisted for decades that most peasants, even those working in cities, remain tied to their tiny plots of land to ensure political and economic stability.

This insistence is reflected in China's *hukou* system whereby rural migrants to China's cities remain officially residents of their home towns, unable to access many of the subsidized benefits such as health care and education that cities offer to their official residents. For me, the question raised by this policy is why? Why is it desirable for so many people to be moved from rural areas to new cities? In Johnson's analysis, one key reason is economic:

Now, the party has shifted priorities, mainly to find a new source of growth for a slowing economy that depends increasingly on a consuming class of city dwellers.

But other factors are also key. One of the most important of these is that the push for urbanization is occurring in China's relatively underdeveloped west. This western focus involves environmental and ethnic factors that have not played a substantial role in the urbanization of China's eastern provinces.

The ethnic factor here is that China's western provinces are dominated by its minority nationalities, including those that constitute challenges for China's central government, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang. In fact the strategic and environmental significance of China's west means that the so-called minorities really constitute a majority. This is a key point that Dan Smyer Yu writes in the introduction to our new book, Religion and Ecological Sustainability in China:

From the geographical perspective, the "minorities" of China occupy over 65 per cent of China's total territory. In this regard, the "minorities" could be seen as the "majority" of the nation. In addition, if we view from the perspective of China's current modernization program, it is not difficult to recognize the "minorities" as China's strategic "majority" because of the fact that most domestic natural resources come from the "minority region."

One contentious issue in the push towards urbanization has been the question of settling China's nomadic peoples. In a recent blog post, Urbanizing China's Ethnic Minorities, Andrew Stokols writes

While China's efforts to forcibly relocate farmers to new cities does not target ethnic minority areas specifically, the policy has unique consequences because such populations are even less prepared for the move to urban life than their Han counterparts. In border regions of China: in Xinjiang, Qinghai, Yunnan, and Gansu provinces for example, efforts to urbanize nomadic peoples are proving difficult and controversial.

New research from Qi Jinyu, which we are publishing in our book, examines one reason for the drive to urbanize nomadic herders that should not be underestimated: environmental security. The Qinghai-Tibet plateau serves as the source region for China's three major river systems, the Yangzi, the Yellow River and the Lancang / Mekong. China's eastern provinces depend on these rivers for water and energy, and in the case of the Mekong, this also applies to Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. (India similarly relies on water from the Himalayas, as noted in this Guardian article on the China and India "Water Grab.") As a result, China has embarked upon a policy of "ecological migration." This policy contains two key elements:

1. designate key areas as environmental protection zones;
2. relocate nomadic families away from these areas and settle them in towns.

In the case documented by Qi Jinyu in our book, urbanization is being carried out for the sake of environmental protection. He writes:

[Researchers, the media and government officials] argued that the Tibetans' increasing population and consequent over-grazing caused the degeneration, desertification, and the shrinkage of lakes of the grasslands.

According to Qi's research, however, it is far from clear that the minority peoples actually had anything to do with the deteriorating quality of the water in this key areas. Instead, it seems more likely that the Tibetan nomads were scapegoats. Nonetheless, we can say that in this case, the urbanization of China's western "majority" was not simply an economic issue, but also involved the issue of water security and domestic energy sustainability. In this case, it would seem that the cost in terms of worsened ethnic relations was deemed relatively small in the face of the massive environmental significance of the region to the livelihood of the billion people who live downstream.

http://www.sustainablechina.info/2013/08/16/religion-nature-and-urbanization-among-chinas-ethnic-minorities/

August 16, 2013

The Story Doesn’t Have to Be Soulless

By Mary Evelyn Tucker
New York Times
August 16, 2013

As has been clear for some time, evolution and an aesthetic and spiritual sensibility about the beauty of nature need not be separated. Whether we start from a scientific or spiritual angle, if we arrive at a large-scale evolutionary perspective of deep time, it can only enhance our sense of wonder and awe at life’s complexity and value.

The evolutionary concept is only about 150 years old, and we are still struggling to understand how it changes our sense of ourselves, both as a species and as individuals. We are just beginning to see ourselves as part of the vast unfolding processes of galaxies, stars and planets that have birthed our blue-green Earth teeming with life. This discovery of our lineage has the potential to change our sense of our role and purpose. So it is understandable that there are intense arguments over the nature of evolution and its implications for human identity.

It's not an either-or choice. We understand evolutionary processes through science, and we appreciate them through art and spirituality.

We need not, however, enter into simplistic debates that lead to endless conflict. Rather, we can bring science and the humanities together to explore a new synergy of scientific fact and human values. Recognizing that we are now understanding these evolutionary processes through science and appreciating them through art, poetry, literature, music and spirituality gives us an opportunity to discover our own role in this unfolding story.

In 1978, the cultural historian Thomas Berry suggested that we needed such a “New Story” that would integrate science and humanities. He felt that our environmental, social and political challenges required such a story to inspire human attitudes and behavior for the flourishing of the Earth community. The key for Thomas was story – namely, a narrative telling of the dynamic unfolding of the universe and the Earth, with an emphasis on how we fit into this larger history.

Inspired by Thomas, three collaborators – Brian Swimme, John Grim and I – have tried to create such a story in our “Journey of the Universe” project, which includes a book, film and series of conversations. It is our hope that this will enable us to engage more fully in the transformations needed to create a future that is worthy of our children and theirs.

Mary Evelyn Tucker is a senior lecturer and senior research scholar at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies and the Yale Divinity School. She is a co-creator of "Journey of the Universe," a film, book and series of conversations.

http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/08/15/should-creationism-be-controversial/evolution-doesnt-have-to-be-soulless

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August 23, 2013

Future of Wind Power in Pakistan

By Adnan H. Satti, Research Associate
MUSLIM Institute

Pakistan is a country blessed with the natural resources in abundance, but ineffective use of the available resources denied Pakistan of progress it deserved in social, economic and industrial sectors.

Energy is the basic requirement for industrial growth. Due to the developments made in various sectors of the country, the overall energy requirement has increased to a large extent but the power generation capacity wasn't improved adequately to meet the requirement. This has resulted in widening of demand – supply gap in energy sector. Power is mainly generated through thermal power plants, which constitute almost 68% of total power generation capacity. Due to this fact, the energy sector has become dependent over imported fossil fuels. This has added to the energy insecurity of the country as fossil fuel reserves are depleting and there have been an international trend of price hike of these energy resources. The situation has led to explore the possibility of power generation through alternate energy resources. Wind power, an alternative to fossil fuels, is plentiful, renewable, clean and produces no greenhouse gas emissions during operation. The advantage of Wind Energy is relatively low capital cost involved, short gestation period required to commission wind power systems and superior environmental benefits with reduced emission of pollutants. Operational costs of wind power are quite low as compared to the other resources.

A remarkable growth in the wind power has been observed throughout the world in recent years due technological advancement in field of wind power which resulted in the increase in the efficiency and output power of wind turbines. World wind generation capacity more than quadrupled between 2000 and 2006, doubling about every three years. Worldwide there are now over two hundred thousand wind turbines operating, with a total capacity of 282,482 MW. The European Union alone passed some 100,000 MW nameplate capacity, while the United States surpassed 50,000 MW in August 2012 and China passed 50,000 MW the same month.

Pakistan has been gifted with an immense wind resource especially in the coastal areas of Sindh and Baluchistan. The Gharo-Keti Bandar Wind Corridor spreading 60 km along the coastline of Sindh province and more than 170 km deep towards the land alone has a potential to generate more than 60,000 MW of electricity. The wind power generation potential of coastal region of Baluchistan is yet to be evaluated.

In order to harness the wind potential in Pakistan and encourage the investment in wind power projects, government of Pakistan has offered various incentives which includes attractive tariff rates, availability of land on cheaper rates, wind risk, guaranteed power purchase, zero rated import duties on the equipment and exemption of income tax & sales tax..

Two wind farms of 50MW each have been commissioned recently and four wind power plants of 200MW cumulative capacity are expected to dispatch power to national gird in 2014. The ongoing progress in the field of wind power is behind the planned target. To achieve the desired results and sustainable future progress in wind energy sector following suggestions are put forth.

The wind monitoring stations or wind masts should be set-up in the coastal areas of Baluchistan (along coastal Highway from Karachi to Gawadar) in order to collect wind data that can be utilized for development of wind profile of the area. Feasibility of wind power generation should be prepared and shared with the interested parties.

There is need of improvement in the coordination among the institutes involved for efficient and timely completion of the projects.

Lack of infrastructure (roads, utilities, security etc.) in the areas of wind power is also a hindrance in the development of the sector. The area selected for wind farms should be connected through road networks which are necessary for transportation of equipment and machinery to the plant site. Effective security should be provided to staff working as wind farms are located in remote areas.

Government should also encourage the manufacturing of the wind power equipment in Pakistan. In this regard facilities and incentives should be provided to the investors. Two components of wind turbine which can be manufactured locally are wind turbine tower and the turbine blades. By local manufacturing there will be saving of time and freight costs as both of these component require special logistics arrangements. It will also generate the employment opportunities for the local population.

It is vital that the general public should be properly educated for the benefits of wind energy through awareness campaigns. Media can also be used as tool to reach masses. People should be informed that wind power projects shall create employment in the area and contribute to the

prosperity of the population. The local manpower shall be trained to operate and maintain the power plant.

As part of corporate social responsibility a fund should be established by the Wind IPPs for the betterment of the local community. This may include the improvement of education and health infrastructure in the locality.

Last but not the least a feasibility study should be conducted for the installation of wind turbines on smaller scale. Currently the minimum capacity of wind farm is 50MW. This capacity requires higher capital investment and involves international lenders which results in high tariff. If small scale wind farms are allowed and facilitated, then local investors will also contribute in development of this sector. Community based small wind farms should also be facilitated and supported.

The cost of per unit energy generated by wind is Rs. 14 which is higher than the cost of energy generated by gas and hydel power but it is lower than that of fossil fuel. After 20 years the cost of unit (generated by wind) reduces to half as the return on investment is recovered in that period. The cost can be further reduced by initiating local manufacturing and technical skill development as suggested above.

It is concluded that wind energy presents a considerable opportunity for us to obtain significant part of the future energy needs from this sustainable source. If the opportunity is to be maximized, then we must ensure that the developments are taken forward with care and sensitivity so that both public and political support is maintained. It would facilitate the development of this technology in local industry which will create more employment opportunities and economical activities in remote areas. Wind farms will help reducing environmental consequences due to reduction in dependency over fossil fuels for power generation.

http://muslim-institute.org/newsletter-OP-wind-power.html

September 2013

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI) Newsletter
http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=963dea319a&e=d85b57a294

September 2013

Water Ethics Newsletter

http://us1.campaign-archive1.com/?u=31982f6e4937945bfaddf6712&id=cf649d4c7b&e=562a4ebe33

September 2013

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=40&key=2992e41ac9fec9cd1fbd76e9ab1feaa0&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

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September 2013

GDR Student Matt Riley Pursues Religion and Ecology Beyond Drew

By Shelley Dennis, GDR Student Intern
Drew Graduate Division of Religion

Doctoral candidate Matt Riley is testimony that one needn't wait until after graduation to make a tangible contribution to scholarship in one's field. Riley is currently working as a Research Associate at the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale, the largest international and multi-religious project of its kind, and has been intimately involved with some of the groundbreaking and award-winning scholarly work produced by this innovative forum.

Recently, Forum Co-Founder and Co-Director Mary Evelyn Tucker has teamed up with evolutionary philosopher Brian Thomas Swimme to produce an Emmy Award winning documentary film, book, and Educational DVD series called *Journey of the Universe*. This series draws together insights from the sciences, the humanities, and the world religions to create a one-of-a-kind narrative of the human place in the cosmos. As part of the *Journey of the Universe* project, Riley created Curricular Materials which contain science guides, bibliographies, discussion questions, and other teaching resources. These curricular materials have been used by educators in university settings, religious organizations, and other fora of ecological education. Riley reflects, "It has been a fascinating journey to be a part of and it is an aspect of my work at the Forum which will continue long into the future."

Riley credits his experience with Dr. Laurel Kearns and her leadership at the Green Seminary Initiative (http://www.greenseminaries.org/index.php) as "central to informing my work at the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale." Of equal importance was his study of the intersection of Christianity and ecology in his courses with Dr. Kearns and Dr. Catherine Keller. He also

notes that his experience as a Teaching Assistant for a Drew undergraduate course on Environmental History class with Dr. Luis Campos, along with other colloquia and events hosted by Drew's Theological School, were formative of his academic approach to these issues as well.

Riley's experience at the Forum on Religion and Ecology has deepened and broadened his academic development, while also drawing profoundly on the formative experiences provided by the academic approach of the Drew GDR community. "Through my work here I am in constant contact with an international network of scholars, religious leaders, activists, and students engaged in the study of religion and the environment," Riley notes. Further, his academic work has received greater exposure via conference presentations, and he has secured a teaching job at the Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics at Yale University. Riley's passion for this interdisciplinary study is clear: "Although it is difficult to predict future trends in the academic study of religion, my work at the Forum has shown me that religion and ecology is more than just a field of study, it is also a wellspring for an ongoing creative collaboration which transcends disciplinary, religious, and professional boundaries."

Riley closed our conversation with an invitation: "Our field is an exciting one and it is constantly growing and we welcome newcomers to be in touch, to contact us if they have any questions, and to join our mailing list. I would encourage those students to visit our website and make use of our publications, our annotated bibliographies, and to attend our events."

http://www.drew.edu/gdr/2013/06/24/gdr-student-matt-riley-pursues-religion-and-ecology-beyond-drew/

September 7, 2013

A savior of tree species

Life's mission inspired by angel

By Francis X. Donnelly
The Detroit News

Copemish -- David Milarch believes he died and came back to life. And the reason was God had a mission for him.

The mission was simple if grandiose: Clone the biggest trees and cover the world with them.

The north Michigan nurseryman had little money, education or experience with cloning.

Few people had ever tried to reproduce such old trees, which scientists said was improbable.

Yet, in fits and starts, he has gradually cloned 140 species of trees across the United States, including ones that were 40 stories high and existed before Jesus was born.

Several thousand trees are growing at his research facility 25 miles southwest of Traverse City. He has planted 10,000 for free in northern Michigan and California.

His goal is to eventually plant enough trees to fight climate change. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming.

After nearly two decades of spreading the gospel, he gets calls from all over the world asking him to visit.

“Isn’t it about time we did something?” he asked. “Why is it so hard for people to understand that?”

Milarch, 64, has accomplished all this with charm, perseverance and a singular vision.

He is Johnny Appleseed in a trucker cap, a ruddy bear of a man trying to save the world.

Nothing can deter him from his quest, said his son, Jared.

“It’s an idea he cannot rest from,” the younger Milarch said. “It’s a testament to how focused he is on one issue. You can’t lose if you don’t quit.”

Milarch isn’t your typical environmentalist.

Unless, by “typical,” you mean a chain-smoking, profanity-spewing, hard-living farmer who once was an alcoholic and street brawler.

He says he gets messages from angels who guide his work.

The talkative Milarch tells you all this in a nonstop narrative about his life and work. He loves to tell stories that end with dramatic pronouncements.

“It’s all hands on deck,” he proclaimed. “The solutions are here. Mother Nature has the answers.”

One of the stories he tells is about the beginning of his crusade.

In 1991, he gave up drinking cold turkey but the sudden withdrawal caused kidney and liver failure.

Lying in bed, he felt his consciousness rise, leave the room and pass through brilliant white light. But an angel told him it wasn’t his time to die, that he still had work to do.

Several months later, still sober, he was awakened by bright lights in his bedroom. A female voice said she had an assignment for him.

The next morning he found a 10-page manifesto describing how to reforest the world. It was in his handwriting but he didn't remember writing it.

His wife, Kerry, told him there was no way he had written it.

"There are no spelling mistakes," she said, according to "The Man Who Planted Trees," a 2012 book about his work.

At the time, Milarch wasn't religious or a tree-hugger. He was just a third-generation tree nursery operator struggling to feed his family.

Spreading the growth

The gist of his plan is to clone champion trees, which are the tallest of their species, and spread them around the country.

He believes superior genes helped the trees grow so large and last so long. Through cross-pollination, the clones could spread their DNA to other trees.

Scientists said they don't know whether genetics make some trees heartier than others. A bigger factor could be location, care or just luck.

But tree experts said they like Milarch's idea of restocking the world's forests.

Besides fighting climate change, trees help the environment by emitting oxygen, reducing runoff and absorbing toxic waste in the soil, they said.

Bill Libby, professor emeritus of forestry and genetics at the University of California, Berkeley, said Milarch is generating interest in trees and could develop breakthroughs in cloning.

"If you gather 100 such trees, it's pretty likely that you have some trees that are better able to do that (become heartier because of superior genes)."

Financial difficulties

Milarch has been nothing if not resilient during his quixotic campaign.

Starting out in 1994, he borrowed a pickup, aluminum ladder and pruner from his dad. A bankruptcy had left him with no money.

In 2009, a black mold infected his tree warehouse, killing 16,000 cuttings in one month.

But his biggest challenge has been money. For 19 years, he has lurched from one source of funding to another. A grant here. A huge donation there.

In between are the hard times. In 2011, his nonprofit group, Archangel Ancient Tree Archive, and its 17-person staff closed up shop.

A donor allowed it to reopen last year with three workers but another crisis beckons in December when funding is due to run out.

“We’ve gone through financial hardships that would break most families,” Milarch said. “We’ve eaten a lot of potatoes.”

'A walk of faith'

Despite the obstacles, he has painstakingly expanded his work from the state to the country to the world.

His constant proselytizing has drawn support from some scientists and well-heeled supporters, whose donations allow him to keep the enterprise afloat.

He turned an abandoned potato warehouse into a bustling facility where people clone, grow and ship trees.

He remains ever hopeful that somewhere, somehow, someone will step forward to allow Archangel to keep the lights on.

It’s the way of the group, he said.

“Every day of my life is a walk of faith,” he said. “I don’t know how this all is going to end up. But nobody will be able to say we didn’t give everything we could.”

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http://fore.research.yale.edu/news/item/a-savior-of-tree-species-lifes-mission-inspired-by-angel/

September 9, 2013

UNEP Signs Agreement to Improve Monitoring of Hundreds of International Environmental Accords

United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi - The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has signed a new agreement with one of the world's most respected global auditing bodies to track progress towards the implementation of international environmental agreements covering climate change, hazardous waste, biodiversity, and other issues critical to the future of the planet.

UNEP, under whose auspices most of the agreements were negotiated, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI - Working Group on Environmental Auditing, WGEA) to ensure that some 280 Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) dedicated to supporting the global environment are properly implemented.

The environmental agreements are intended to deliver numerous benefits in addressing food, energy and water security, ensure progress towards the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and support the post-2015 development agenda.

The new MoU was signed at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi by UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner, and Auditor General of Estonia and Chair of the INTOSAI Working Group on Environmental Auditing Alar Karis.

"Improving the monitoring and evaluation of actions taken by governments, or groups of governments, to honour environmental commitments will play a key role in global efforts to meet the range of internationally-agreed targets that can deliver inclusive sustainable development for all," said Mr. Steiner.

"This MoU paves the way for closer cooperation between UNEP and auditing institutions worldwide to evaluate whether government actions to tackle environmental challenges have produced the intended results, how gaps can be bridged, and whether environmental policies are being implemented in full compliance with international standards," added Mr. Steiner.

Despite the major success of some MEAs, such as the Montreal Protocol which has enabled reductions of over 98 per cent of all global consumption of controlled ozone-depleting substances, progress towards meeting other international targets has been slower.

UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO-5) report, released last year, assessed 90 of the most critical internationally-agreed environmental goals and objectives, and found that significant progress had only been made in four.

Audits from SAIs can provide reliable information for elected officials about their government's performance in meeting environmental targets. In turn, this can assist elected officials in reviewing successes, and identifying priority areas for action.

Effective environmental audits have been linked to improved water quality in rivers, strengthened protection of flora and fauna, and reduced desertification and pollution. Benefits to environmental governance include the development of new legislation and regulations, and stronger compliance with those that already exist.

Improved environmental auditing can also assist in achieving the aims of new multilateral treaties, such as the Minimata Convention on Mercury which aims to reduce global emissions of the toxic metal. Negotiations - convened by UNEP - were finalized earlier this year and the treaty is set to be signed by member states at a conference in Japan in October.

INTOSAI - WGEA figures show that since UNEP first began working with 112 of its national audit offices six years ago, the number of environmental audits has grown significantly. The number of MEA-related audits carried out between 2009 and 2011 grew by roughly one third.

The new MoU with INTOSAI will support UNEP's mandate to promote the development and facilitation of international environmental law, governance and policy.

Through its Division of Environmental Law & Conventions (DELC), UNEP promotes inter-linkages among environmental conventions and agreements, supports MEA Secretariats and UN member states in implementing their treaty obligations, and encourages government participation in regional and global environmental fora.

Notes to Editors

UNEP Publication: *Auditing the Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs): A Primer for Auditors*

http://www.unep.org/delc/Portals/119/audingmeas.pdf

UNEP Division of Environmental Law & Conventions

http://www.unep.org/delc/

For more information, please contact:

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http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2726&ArticleID=9607&l=en

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September 10, 2013

UNEP Welcomes Renewed Commitment by World Leaders to Phase Out Climate-Damaging HFCs

The United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi – The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has welcomed an agreement by world leaders at the G20 summit in Moscow to renew efforts to tackle climate change by reducing emissions of potent greenhouse gases known as hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

Governments from some 25 nations and the European Union agreed that phasing down the use of HFCs – carried out in parallel to reductions of carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions under the United

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – will make a vital contribution to tackling the effects of climate change.

HFCs are widely used in refrigerators, air conditioners, and industrial applications as replacements for ozone-depleting substances being phased out under the UN's universally-ratified Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

HFC emissions represent less than 1 per cent of current total greenhouse gases, but their warming impact is considerably stronger than CO_2.

If left unchecked, they could account for up to nearly 20 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions by 2050.

According to UNEP, fast action on HFCs and other non-CO_2 pollutants, could cut the rate of global warming by up to 0.5 degrees Celsius, reduce crop losses by over 30 million tonnes a year, and save millions of lives through fewer respiratory illnesses.

"The leaders of the G20 group of nations have provided another positive signal towards the goal of realizing a universal climate agreement by 2015 under the UN climate convention and the ultimate aim of sharply bringing down greenhouse gas emissions in line with the scientific imperative," said Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director.

"A sense of urgency and a willingness to act down multiple tracks is of the essence. While many countries can point to positive action in respect to emissions and a transition to a low carbon, resource-efficient and inclusive green economy, the stark reality is that levels of pollution in the atmosphere continue to rise with all the risks to lives, livelihoods and the global economy this entails," added Mr Steiner.

In the G20 Leaders Declaration, governments agreed that the success of the Montreal Protocol – which has overseen a 98 per cent of all global consumption of controlled ozone-depleting substances, and contributed to tens of millions of cases of avoided skin cancer and cataracts – should be harnessed to phase down the use of HFCs.

"Climate change will continue to have a significant impact on the world economy, and cost will be higher to the extent we delay additional actions," reads the G20 statement.

"We reiterate our commitment to fight climate change and welcome the outcome of the 18th conference of the Parties to the UN climate change conferences. We also support complementary initiatives, through multilateral approaches that include using the expertise and the institutions of the Montreal Protocol to phase down the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons

(HFCs), based on the examination of economically viable and technically feasible alternatives."

The statement was signed by the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union, as well as Ethiopia, Spain, Senegal, Brunei, Kazakhstan, and Singapore.

China and USA Renew Bilateral Efforts

In a separate agreement at the G20 summit, President Obama of the USA and President Xi of China agreed to establish a contact group on HFCs under the Montreal Protocol to consider issues related to cost-effectiveness, financial and technology support, safety, and environmental benefits.

The decision follows an announcement by both countries in June 2013 on closer co-operation to phase down the production and consumption of HFCs, while continuing to include HFCs within the scope of UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol provisions for accounting and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate and Clean Air Coalition

UNEP in partnership with over 60 countries and organizations is working to phase down the use of HFCs and other substances known as short-lived climate pollutants, including black carbon or 'soot' and methane, under the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC).

The voluntary coalition – founded in 2012 - is promoting rapid reductions in short-lived climate pollutants to tackle air pollution, improve human health and agriculture, and provide near-term climate benefits.

Under a business-as-usual scenario, according to UNEP, by 2050 HFCs could be responsible for emissions equivalent to 3.5 to 8.8 Gigatonnes (Gt) of CO_2. This is equivalent to the total current annual carbon emissions from transport, estimated at around 6-7 Gt.

The coalition states that actions on short term climate pollutants need to be complemented by deep and rapid cuts in CO_2 emissions if the global average temperature increase over the 21st Century is to be held below 2°C.

Among its many activities, the CCAC is working with 10 major cities including Rio de Janeiro, Lagos, Stockholm, Accra, and New York to accelerate methane reductions from landfills and black carbon or 'soot' from burning wastes.

Notes to Editors

G20 Leaders Declaration: http://en.g20russia.ru/

Climate and Clean Air Coalition: http://www.unep.org/ccac/

UNEP's 2011 report *Near-Term Climate Protection and Clean Air Benefits* outlines 16 measures to be implemented immediately in order to ensure significant emissions reduction of SLCPs.

The report is available at:
http://www.unep.org/pdf/Near_Term_Climate_Protection_&_Air_Benefits.pdf

UNEP Ozone Secretariat: http://ozone.unep.org/new_site/en/index.php

For more information, please contact:

UNEP Newsdesk on Tel. +254 20 762 3088 / +254 731 666 214 / unepnewsdesk@unep.org

http://www.unep.org/environmentalgovernance/News/PressRelease/tabid/427/language/en-US/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2726&ArticleID=9608&Lang=en

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September 11, 2013

Food waste harms climate, water, land and biodiversity - new FAO report

United Nations Environment Programme

Direct Economic Costs of $750 billion Annually

Better Policies Required, and "Success Stories" Need to be Scaled Up and Replicated

Rome – The waste of a staggering 1.3 billion tonnes of food per year is not only causing major economic losses but also wreaking significant harm on the natural resources that humanity relies upon to feed itself, says a new FAO report released today.

Food Wastage Footprint: Impacts on Natural Resources is the first study to analyze the impacts of global food wastage from an environmental perspective, looking specifically at its consequences for the climate, water and land use, and biodiversity.

Among its key findings:

Each year, food that is produced but not eaten guzzles up a volume of water three times larger than the annual flow of Russia's Volga River and is responsible for adding 3.3 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases to the planet's atmosphere.

In addition to its environmental impacts, the direct economic consequences to producers of food wastage (excluding fish and seafood) run to the tune of $750 billion annually, FAO's report estimates.

“We all – farmers and fishers; food processers and supermarkets; local and national governments; individual consumers -- must make changes at every link of the human food chain to prevent food wastage from happening in the first place, and re-use or recycle it when we can’t,” said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva.

“In addition the environmental imperative, there is a moral one: We simply cannot allow one-third of all the food we produce to go to waste, when 870 million people go hungry every day, ” he added.

As a companion to its new study, FAO has also published “tool-kit” that contains recommendations on how food loss and waste can be reduced at every stage of the food chain.

The tool-kit profiles a number of projects around the world that show how national and local governments, farmers, businesses, and individual consumers can take steps to tackle the problem.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director, said:"UNEP and FAO have identified food waste and loss--food wastage--as a major opportunity for economies everywhere to assist in a transition towards a low carbon, resource efficient and inclusive Green Economy. Today's excellent report by the FAO underlines the multiple benefits that can be realized-- in many cases through simple and thoughtful measures by for example households, retailers, restaurants, schools and businesses--that can contribute to environmental sustainability, economic improvements, food security and the realization of the UN Secretary General's Zero Hunger Challenge. We would urge everyone to adopt the motto of our joint campaign: Think Eat Save--Reduce Your Foodprint!".

UNEP and FAO are founding partners of the Think Eat Save--Reduce Your Foodprint campaign that was launched earlier in the year and whose aim is to assist in coordinating world-wide efforts to manage down wastage.

Where wastage happens

Fifty-four percent of the world’s food wastage occurs “upstream” during production, post-harvest handling and storage, according to FAO’s study. Forty-six percent of it happens “downstream,” at the processing, distribution and consumption stages.

As a general trend, developing countries suffer more food losses during agricultural production, while food waste at the retail and consumer level tends to be higher in middle- and high-income regions -- where it accounts for 31-39 percent of total wastage -- than in low-income regions (4-16 percent).

The later a food product is lost along the chain, the greater the environmental consequences, FAO’s report notes, since the environmental costs incurred during processing, transport, storage and cooking must be added to the initial production costs.

Hot spots

Several world food wastage "hot-spots" stand out in the study:

Wastage of cereals in Asia is a significant problem, with major impacts on carbon emissions and water and land use. Rice's profile is particularly noticeable, given its high methane emissions combined with a large level of wastage.

While meat wastage volumes in all world regions is comparatively low, **the meat sector** generates a substantial impact on the environment in terms of land occupation and carbon footprint, **especially in high-income countries and Latin America**, which in combination account for 80 percent of all meat wastage. Excluding Latin America, high-income regions are responsible for about 67 percent of all meat wastage

Fruit wastage contributes significantly to water waste in Asia, Latin America, and Europe, mainly as a result of extremely high wastage levels.

Similarly, **large volumes of vegetable wastage in industrialized Asia, Europe, and South and South East Asia translates into a large carbon footprint** for that sector.

Causes of food wastage – and options for addressing them

A combination of consumer behavior and lack of communication in the supply chain underlies the higher levels of food waste in affluent societies, according to FAO. Consumers fail to plan their shopping, overpurchase, or over-react to "best-before-dates," while quality and aesthetic standards lead retailers to reject large amounts of perfectly edible food.

In developing countries, significant post-harvest losses in the early part of the supply chain are a key problem, occurring as a result of financial and structural limitations in harvesting techniques and storage and transport infrastructure, combined with climatic conditions favorable to food spoilage.

To tackle the problem, FAO's toolkit details three general levels where action is needed:

- High priority should be given to **reducing food wastage in the first place**. Beyond improving losses of crops on farms due to poor practices, doing more to better balance production with demand would mean not using natural resources to produce unneeded food in the first place.
- **In the event of a food surplus, re-use within the human food chain-- finding secondary markets or donating extra food to feed vulnerable members of society-- represents the best option.** If the food is not fit for human consumption, the next best option is to divert it for livestock feed, conserving resources that would otherwise be used to produce commercial feedstuff.
- **Where re-use is not possible, recycling and recovery should be pursued**: by-product recycling, anaerobic digestion, compositing, and incineration with energy recovery allow energy and nutrients to be recovered from food waste, representing a significant advantage over dumping it in landfills. (Uneaten food that ends up rotting in landfills is a large producer of methane, a particularly harmful GHG.

Funding for the Food Wastage Footprint report and toolkit was provided by the government of Germany.

NOTES TO EDITORS

What is food wastage?

Food loss is the unintended reduction in food available for human consumption that results from inefficiencies in supply chains: poor infrastructure and logistics, lack of technology, insufficient skills, knowledge and management capacity. It mainly occurs at production- postharvest and processing stages, for example when food goes unharvested or is damaged during processing, storage and transport and disposed of.

Food waste refers to intentional discards of edible items, mainly by retailers and consumers, and is due to the behavior of businesses and individuals.

The term *food wastage* refers to the two in combination.

Food wastage: Key facts and figures

- The global volume of food wastage s estimated at 1.6 billion tonnes of "primary product equivalents." Total food wastage for the edible part of this amounts to 1.3 billion tonnes.
- Food wastage's carbon footprint is estimated at 3.3 billion tonnes of CO_2 equivalent of GHG released into the atmosphere per year.
- The total volume of water used each year to produce food that is lost or wasted (250km3) is equivalent than three times the annual flow of Russia's Volga River, or three times the volume of Lake Geneva.
- Similarly, 1.4 billion hectares of land – 28% percent of the world's agricultural area – is used annually to produce food that is lost or wasted.
- Agriculture is responsible for a majority of threats to at-risk plant and animal species tracked by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.
- Only a low percentage of all food wastage is composted: much of it ends up in landfills, and represents a large part of municipal solid waste. Methane emissions from landfills represents one of the largest sources of GHG emissions from the waste sector.
- Home composting can potentially divert up to 150 kg of food waste per household per year from local collection authorities.
- Developing countries suffer more food losses during *agricultural production*, while in higher in middle- and high-income regions, food waste at the *retail and consumer level* tends to be higher.
- The direct economic consequences of food wastage (excluding fish and seafood) run to the tune of $750 billion annually.

What governments, farmers, food businesses – and you – can do about food waste

Reduce and prevent

One major front for action in the effort to reduce food wastage is **developing better food harvest, storage, processing, transport and retailing processes**, according to FAO's guide, *Toolkit: Reducing the Food Wastage Footprint*, released alongside its new report on the environmental consequences of food waste.

Harvest losses have several causes, including bad timing of and poor conditions during the harvest as well is inadequate techniques and equipment. Similarly, lack of good infrastructure for transportation, storage, cooling and marketing cause food to spoil, especially in hot climates.

Both the private and public sectors need to increase investments to address such shortcomings; doing so will also have additional benefits for food security and mitigating climate change, land degradation and biodiversity erosion..

In addition to these core investments, **new technologies can help too**. Improved rice-storage bags in the Philippines have helped cut losses of that staple grain by 15 percent. In West Africa, use of solar dryers to extend the shelf life of fruit and tubers is showing promise in reducing post-harvest losses.

Often, food losses can be significantly reduced simply through training farmers in best practices—this too merits investing in, according to FAO's toolkit.

Joining farmers together in cooperatives or professional associations can greatly help reduce food losses by increasing their understanding of the market, enabling more efficient planning, enabling economies of scale and improving their ability to market what they produce.

On the retail and consumer side, **raising awareness of the problem** – and how to prevent it—is just as important, according to FAO.

And **businesses and households alike need to implement better monitoring to improve data on the scale of wastage and where it occurs.**

Business – both those operating within the food chain as well as others with a large "food footprint" (large cafeterias, for instance) – can conduct food waste audits to determine how and why they waste food and identify opportunities to improve their performance.

Households can conduct relatively simple food waste audits as well.

Better communication among all participants in food supply chains will be crucial. In particular, there is vast room for improvement improving communication between suppliers and retailers to match demand and supply. Discrepancies between demand and supply are a major cause of food wastage. They can involve farmers not finding a market for products and leaving them to rot in the field; mothers cooking for five family members while only three actually make it to dinner; supermarkets downsizing product orders at the last minute, leaving producers with unsalable products; or restaurants overestimating demand and overstocking food supplies that go bad.

Reduced, or better, food packaging has a role to play as well –excessive or unsustainably sourced packing forms part of the environmental cost of food.

Especially in developed countries, **more environmentally-minded food retailing is needed**, says FAO – for example, moving away from the practice of displaying very large quantities of food (perceived as contributing to increased sales) or discarding food when it starts to approach the end of its shelf life.

Rejection of food products on the basis of aesthetic or safety concerns is often another a major cause of food losses and waste. In some cases, farmers discard between 20-40 percent of their fresh produce because it doesn't meet retailer's cosmetic specifications.

Regulations and standards on aesthetic requirements for fruit and vegetables could stand to be revised. Some supermarkets have already begun relaxing their standards on fruit appearance, selling "mis-shaped" items for a reduced price and helping raise consumers' awareness that odd-shaped does not mean bad.

Better consumption habits are also badly needed. In developed countries, a significant part of total food wastage occurs at the consumer level; in some places this is a trend that continues to rise.

In addition to conducting household food waste audits, **consumers can take many steps** to reverse these trends, such as: making weekly menu plans, buying so-called "ugly fruits and vegetables," ensuring that refrigerators are working properly, using wilting produce in soups, and making better use of leftovers. Smaller servings, rotating older food items towards the front of shelves and refrigerators, freezing surplus items, and composting waste can also help.

One factor that often contributes to food waste by consumers is confusion over sell-by and best-before dates, notes the FAO toolkit**. In some cases "over-zealous" legislation has been adopted and should be revisited and revised**; lawmakers and other authorities should also issue clearer and more flexible guidelines for businesses and consumers alike.

Governments must do more to implement legislation aimed at lowering food wastage, says FAO. According to the toolkit, "Legislators will have to adopt a range of measures which may vary from broad policy frameworks to statements of intent, from soft law measures like recommendations and guidelines to more decisive legislation, such as directives, regulations and statutory acts."

Re-use

Markets for products that wouldn't normally stay in the food chain must be developed, argues *Reducing the Food Wastage Footprint* Gleaning, for example, is the practice of gathering groups that would, for one reason or the other, be left in the fields to rot and be plowed under. In some places, entrepreneurs have spotted opportunities in acquiring such produce at reduced rates and marketing it, developing new food value chains.

Similarly, markets can be developed for products rejected by retailers but still good for consumption – farmers' markets are already playing a role here.

Redistributing safe surplus food to those in need represents "the best option" for dealing with food waste, argues FAO's study.

At present, the amount of food redistributed to charities that feed people remains a tiny fraction of the edible surplus food available, due to the fact that such food redistribution faces a number of barriers.

"Retailers are largely influenced by the idea that it is cheaper and easier to send wastage to the landfill, although higher landfill taxes are now working as a deterrent," explains FAO's toolkit. But, it adds, the factor that has most deterred businesses from donating food surpluses is the risk of being held legally liable in case of intoxication, illness or other injury. Increasingly, governments are looking at ways to smooth the process and afford protections to food donors should products given away in good faith cause illness.

Recycle

In order **for cities and local governments to efficiently and effectively recycle food waste, actions taken at the household level to separate it out are essential** -- recycling schemes only work when waste is properly sorted at the source. Judiciously used, regulations can spur businesses and households to reduce food waste and better manage it when it comes time for recycling.

Rather than merely disposing of such waste in landfills, the use of **anaerobic digestion** to break it down into digestate -- which can be used as fertilizer -- and biogas, which can be used as an energy source or injected into the gas grid -- is environmentally preferable to both composting and landfill disposal.

Where digestion is not possible, composting represents the best fall-back option. At the individual level, home composting can potentially divert up to 150 kg of food waste per household per year from local collection authorities.

Finally, **incineration of food waste with the energy released being recovered presents the option of last resort** for preventing food waste from ending up in landfills. Methane emissions from landfills represent the largest source of GHG emissions from the entire waste sector, contributing around 700 metric tonnes of CO_2 equivalent per year.

To download the Inforgraphics on Food Waste, please Visit
http://www.unep.org/newscentre/videos/shortfilms/MASTER99.mp4

Related Reports, Facts and Figures

UNEP discussion paper on the role of global food consumption patterns in sustainable food systems:
http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/news_events/upcoming/RioCSF/partner_deliverables/Role_of_Global_Food_Consumption_Patterns.pdf

The work of UNEP's Resource Efficiency Programme on Agri-Food:
http://www.unep.org/resourceefficiency/Home/Business/SectoralActivities/AgricultureFood/tabid/78943/Default.aspx

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http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentId=2726&ArticleId=9611

September 11, 2013

Christianity and climate change: the relationship between God and green

A new survey suggests that evangelical Christians in the US are more likely to be climate sceptics. Adam Corner investigates

By Adam Corner
The Guardian

In debates about climate change scepticism, much has been made of the influence of people's political beliefs. Especially in the US, but in other Anglophone countries too, climate change has become one of those flagship issues – like gun control, gay marriage and reproductive rights – that are reliable indicators of left and right.

However, in many western democracies, millions of people don't have strong political affiliations. In fact, many do not vote at all. And in the US in particular, there are other forces at play other that affect people's belief systems.

Some 30% of the population of North America describe themselves as evangelical Christians, with a much larger number following or practising other forms of Christianity. This means that the relationship between humans and the natural environment, from a theological perspective, is likely to be a significant influence on how people think about climate change and sustainability.

In a paper currently in press at the journal Global Environmental Change, Nick Smith and Antony Leiserowitz conducted a survey of over 2,000 North Americans, including approximately 600 evangelical Christians. Their aim was to better understand how evangelicals think about climate change, by comparing their views to those of non-evangelical participants in the survey.

Compared to non-evangelicals, American evangelicals were less likely to believe that climate change was happening, less likely to believe that human activity was the cause, and less likely to express worry and concern. And although a majority of evangelicals supported various policy measures to tackle climate change, they were less likely to do so than non-evangelicals.

Within the sample of evangelicals, though, there was variation in people's views – and this variation was partly accounted for by their values and political ideologies. To the extent that people in the study were both evangelical and individualistic, they tended to doubt the reality of climate change. But evangelicals who were more egalitarian in their outlook were less sceptical – and more concerned – about climate change.

Partly because of the significant overlap between Christian beliefs and politically conservative ideology, therefore, right-leaning evangelicals were more sceptical than the general population about humans' impact on the climate. Climate change, as the authors of the survey note, has become as divisive within this group as it has among the broader American public.

The survey is important because it provides the first direct comparison between the beliefs of evangelical Christians and the rest of the US population on the contemporary environmental issue of climate change. But debates about what the teachings of the Bible imply for society's relationship with the natural world go back a long way.

Did God grant humans dominion and therefore domination over nature? Is nature there simply to be utilised by us? Or does dominion mean a duty of care – a responsibility for stewardship and a mandate to live within our means?

The question of how God and green relate to each other is not confined to the US. Operation Noah is a British Christian organisation that describes itself as "faith inspired, science informed and hope motivated". It campaigns for the complete decarbonisation of the British economy by 2030, in response to the "growing threat of catastrophic climate change endangering God's creation". The theology thinktank sees no contradiction between radical lifestyle change and the

teachings of Jesus – and provides resources and support for Christian groups who want to make climate change part of their identity.

And although the Church of England has been in the news recently for defending fracking (arguing that it will reduce fuel bills, and therefore help people with lower incomes), there is also broad-based agreement among British Christian institutions that climate change is a serious threat. International charities such as Christian Aid have been at the forefront of the push for a binding global agreement to limit carbon emissions. So it is certainly not the case that Christian beliefs and scepticism about climate change necessarily go hand in hand.

Even in the US, there have been examples of evangelical groups calling on their supporters to confront climate change, arguing that a commitment to Christianity implies a duty and responsibility to protect the planet. And climate scientists such as Katharine Hayhoe are evangelical about both climate change and their Christian faith. The relationship between God and green is not straightforward: there is no monolithic Christian view on the climate.

Human influence on the climate is a question of science. But the challenge of how to respond to climate change is squarely in the realm of morality – where religious and other belief systems reign supreme. And given the limited impacts of most campaigns to communicate climate change, might our dry, detached discussions of scientific uncertainties have something to learn from the passion and commitment of the pulpit?

http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/blog/christianity-climate-change-sceptics-god-green

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September 11, 2013

British Columbia: Coastal Guardian Watchmen Ready To Uphold First Nations Ban On Trophy Hunting

Indigenous Peoples Issues and Resources

With trophy hunters descending on BC's Central Coast for the opening of grizzly season, Guardian Watchmen patrol vessels from First Nations communities are once again heading out to monitor compliance with tribal law.

One year ago, the Coastal First Nations alliance announced a ban on killing bears for sport in the unceded territories of nine signatory nations. That ban remains in effect and extends protection to grizzlies, black bears, Kermode bears, and the genetically unique Haida black bear.

The Coastal Guardian Watchmen Network, a project of the Coastal First Nations, provides support to community Resource Stewardship Offices to monitor and protect their lands and waters. The stewardship offices are responsible for managing fisheries, marine use and land use planning, tracking referrals and other resource stewardship activities.

Responsibility to uphold the ban on trophy hunting falls in large part to Guardian Watchmen working on behalf of their Nations. Combining the duties of park rangers, search-and-rescue technicians, and field biologists, Guardian Watchmen are dedicated to protecting the health of coastal ecosystems and the communities that depend on them. With provincial and federal regulatory agencies facing dramatic cutbacks, Coastal Guardian Watchmen help fill the vacuum in monitoring for compliance on the coast.

This fall uniformed Guardian Watchmen will patrol known hotspots and document suspected trophy hunting activities. CGW personnel already record descriptions of hunting vessels, guides and hunters — details that can be tracked across the coast in real time, through a shared database.

In the course of their duties, Guardian Watchmen may approach suspected hunting vessels to provide education about the ban, and to encourage bear hunters to pursue other activities. If hunters persist, CGW personnel may warn bears out of target estuaries.

Coastal First Nations is an alliance working together to create a sustainable economy on British Columbia's North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii.

http://indigenouspeoplesissues.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18157:british-columbia-coastal-guardian-watchmen-ready-to-uphold-first-nations-ban-on-trophy-hunting&catid=22:north-america-indigenous-peoples&Itemid=55

September 13, 2013

Chancellor Assesses Campus Environment During 2013 Convocation

By Colleen Locke
UMass Boston News

Chancellor Highlights Programs, Faculty, Staff, Enhancing UMass Boston Campus

As UMass Boston Chancellor J. Keith Motley took stock of the university's physical, academic, and cultural environment on Thursday, one of the winners of the university's first Joint and Common Future Award identified UMass Boston as an institution from which others can learn.

Motley opened the annual Fall Convocation by sharing some thoughts on the state of the university before a packed ballroom in the Campus Center.

"The University of Massachusetts Boston, already the most diverse four-year higher education institution in New England, is setting a national standard for creating an environment of diversity in key academic programs. People come to us to see how to do diversity in those programs," Motley said.

The chancellor highlighted the 358 students currently enrolled in the University Honors Program--including a record 95 freshmen. Soon they will be part of a new Honors College, recently approved by the Board of Trustees.

Motley also spoke of the School for the Environment, housed within the College of Science and Mathematics. The new school makes UMass Boston the only university in Massachusetts that provides undergraduate and graduate degrees in environmental science integrating the sciences and social sciences.

The School for Global Inclusion and Social Development also stands out as the first graduate school in the world to focus on the important issues of wellness and economic development from an international perspective.

The chancellor also discussed the evolution of UMass Boston's physical environment, including a plan to add residential housing by 2015 and an aboveground parking garage. An increased commitment to financial aid is ensuring that UMass Boston will continue to fulfill its mission of access to higher education, Motley said.

"We can be proud of the intellectual condition of the campus, one which is vibrant and exciting," added Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Winston Langley in his remarks. "Our task for the coming year is to enrich the environment for learning in the area of the overlapping and connected office of citizenship and a more inclusive condition of people."

Following his convocation address, Motley presented the inaugural Joint and Common Future Award to Yale University professors Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim. Motley said the co-directors of Yale's Forum on Religion and Ecology have demonstrated years of commitment to "raising our consciousness of the interdependence of all things and a deeper dialogue between science and religion."

Tucker's expertise is in East Asia; Grim's expertise is in indigenous studies. In his comments, Grim talked about how the knowledge of native peoples and the knowledge of scientists are equally valuable. Tucker talked about the need for commitment, integration, and partnerships in academia.

"There's a freedom and creativity here. It's not about your C/V, it's about common good. And that's what academia should be about. In the School for Environment, science, policy, management, and liberal arts will come together in new conversations. We have said along we need humanities, we need liberal arts, to say there is intrinsic value in the natural world," Tucker said. "I hope we can establish a partnership with this new school, because we have a lot to learn. This is what America is all about—this bubbling up of energy, and Yale needs to learn from it."

About UMass Boston

With a growing reputation for innovative research addressing complex issues, the University of Massachusetts Boston, metropolitan Boston's only public university, offers its diverse student population both an intimate learning environment and the rich experience of a great American city. UMass Boston's ten colleges and graduate schools serve 16,000 students while engaging

local, national, and international constituents through academic programs, research centers, and public service activities. To learn more about UMass Boston, visit www.umb.edu.

Notes:

The video of the chancellor's remarks is available on our YouTube channel. Here is the link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkOoc-lqpN8&feature=c4-overview&list=UUyXH8k7w7atZUXIYVOj8bVw

The text of the chancellor's remarks is available at: http://www.umb.edu/the_university/chancellor/communications/assessment_our_environment_2013_convocation_address

Here is the video link for the remarks by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZYgu2yDpKs&feature=c4-overview&list=UUyXH8k7w7atZUXIYVOj8bVw

http://www.umb.edu/news/detail/chancellor_assesses_campus_environment_during_2013_convocation

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September 18, 2013

From Tackling Deforestation in the Amazon and Resource Inefficiencies in Europe, to Championing Community Conservation in Mexico, Atmospheric Research in Asia and Revolutionizing Technology for a 'Green Economy' Worldwide

Eco Trailblazers Awarded Top UN Prize for Pioneering and Inspirational Environmental Action

Brian McClendon, co-founder and VP of Google Earth and GIS Pioneer J. Dangermond among 2013 'Champions of the Earth'

United Nations Environment Programme

New York - Pioneers and trailblazers whose work has had a significant and positive impact on the environment were given the United Nation's highest environmental accolade, the *Champions of the Earth Award*, at a ceremony hosted by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) at the Museum of Natural History in New York, Wednesday.

Recognized for providing powerful tools to monitor and scope the state of the environment, co-founder and Vice President of Google Earth, Brian McClendon and Geographic Information System (GIS) pioneer, Jack Dangermond, are among this year's laureates.

Other winners of UNEP's 2013 Champions of the Earth Award include: Janez Potocnik, EU Environment Commissioner; Carlo Petrini, the founder of the Slow Food Movement; Izabella

Teixeira, Minister of Environment, Brazil; Veerabhadran Ramanathan, Professor at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UCSD, and Martha Isabel Ruiz Corzo from the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve in Mexico.

UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner, said, "Leadership and vision will be the hallmarks of a transition to an inclusive Green Economy in developed and developing countries alike. That transition is under way and has been given fresh impetus by the outcomes of last year's Rio+20 Summit."

"This year's Champions of the Earth are among those who are putting in place the actions, policies and pathways to scale-up and accelerate such transformations. As such they are lightning rods towards a sustainable 21st Century," he added.

Presenting the Award was UNEP Goodwill Ambassador, Giselle Bündchen.

The Award includes the following categories: Policy Leadership, Entrepreneurial Vision, Science and Innovation and Inspiration and Action.

The full list of the 2013 Champions of the Earth winners is as follows:

POLICY LEADERSHIP

Ms. Izabella Teixeira, Minister of Environment, Brazil is recognized for her key role in reversing deforestation in the Amazon and her role on high-level UN panels on sustainable development., According to government figures, Brazil has cut deforestation by 84 per cent over eight years, from an annual loss of over 27,000 sq km in 2004 to around 4,500 sq km in 2012. Apart from the prevention and control of deforestation, the land use planning policies implemented by Ms. Teixeira resulted in 250,000 sq km of conservation areas ? the equivalent of 75 per cent of global forest protected areas.

Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for the Environment is recognized for his work advocating a shift from the current global model of intensive resource consumption, including setting 2020 targets for the European Union to halve food waste and practically eliminate the need for landfills. His role in tackling resource inefficiencies across the food chain has contributed substantially to the ongoing UN campaign on food waste, *Think.Eat.Save: Reduce Your Foodprint.*

ENTREPRENEURIAL VISION

Brian McClendon, co-founder and VP of Google Earth is recognized for providing a powerful tool to monitor the state of the environment, allowing researchers to detect deforestation, classify land cover and estimate forest biomass and carbon and thus demonstrate the scale of problems and illustrate solutions. Google Earth, for example, was used to help rescue workers save more than 4,000 people after Hurricane Katrina and, in Australia, a scientist used the tool to discover a previously unknown coral reef in a region that had been identified for oil and gas development.

Jack Dangermond, Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) is recognized for his commitment to ensuring that international, research, education, and nonprofit organizations working in the fields of conservation and development have access to the best geospatial analytical and visualization technology. In 1989, the ESRI Conservation Program was started to change the way non-profit organizations carry out conservation missions. This program provides GIS software, data, and training, and helps to coordinate multi-organizational efforts

SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Veerabhadran Ramanathan, Professor at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UCSD was recognized for his pioneering work on black carbon, which included leading a team that first discovered widespread Atmospheric Brown Clouds (ABCs) and research into how cutting black carbon can significantly mitigate climate change. Dr. Ramanathan showed that ABCs led to large-scale dimming, decreased monsoon rainfall and rice harvest in India and played a dominant role in the melting of the Himalayan glaciers. A member of the Science Advisory Panel on the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, he is now running Project Surya, which aims at reducing soot emissions from bio-fuel cooking in rural India.

INSPIRATION AND ACTION

Carlo Petrini, Founder of the Slow Food movement is recognized for his visionary work to improve the efficiency and sustainability of the world's agriculture and food supply "one bite at a time". Slow Food has over 100,00 members and supporters in over 150 countries, defending local food traditions, protecting local biodiversity and promoting small-scale quality products. Petrini is also a coordinator of National and International level research projects in the bioethical field. In 2012, Petrini was invited to speak at the Sustainable Development Dialogue on Food and Nutrition Security at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

Martha Isabel Ruiz Corzo, Director of Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda is recognized for her work in the Sierra Gorda region of Central Mexico, which demonstrates how a broad range of advocacy, public education and income-generation approaches, can produce support healthy ecosystems and alleviate poverty. She was responsible for achieving Biosphere Reserve status for Sierra Gorda under an innovative public-private system. Through her work and advocacy, 33 per cent of the State of Querétaro is now protected as a Biosphere Reserve. Hundreds of families in Sierra Gorda now receive a total of over US$2 million from the sale of carbon credits.

Notes to Editors

Individual press releases announcing the credentials of each of the winners are available at http://www.unep.org

About Champions of the Earth

Champions of the Earth, which was launched in 2005, is the UN's flagship environmental award. To date, it has recognized 59 individuals and organizations for their leadership, vision, inspiration and action on the environment. The list of previous Champions laureates include

Mongolian President Tsakhia Elbegdorj, Mexican President Felipe Calderon, Chinese actress and environmental advocate Zhou Xun, the Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO) and global music legend Angélique Kidjo.

Visit http://www.unep.org/champions/ for more details.

About Guangdong Wealth, Sponsor of the Champions of the Earth Awards

Guangdong Wealth Environmental Protection is a leading supplier of water purifying products and water treatment integrated solutions in China. The company practices a business model that puts social welfare before economic interests, using the concept "let the sky be bluer and the water clearer". The company invests in environmental scholarships for young university students, organizes clean-up operations, and donates tonnes of purifying tablets to tackle pollution in rivers in Guangdong and Beijing.

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http://www.unep.org/champions

http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2726&ArticleID=9622&l=en

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September 20, 2013

Bright Now: towards fossil free Churches in the UK

By Nicolò Wojewoda
Go Fossil Free

Today was an exciting one – the launch of campaign 'Bright Now: towards fossil free Churches' calling for Churches in the UK to disinvest from fossil fuels. So, we invited Bright Now campaigner Mark Letcher, vice-chair of Operation Noah, one of our key UK divestment partners, to tell us more.

In the time it takes you to read this blog post, just one company, ExxonMobil, will, according to the Economist, have spent £116,000 on developing new reserves of oil and gas around the world.

Spending on such a massive scale illustrates just how serious the fossil fuel sector is about expanding global reserves of oil, gas and coal. And it comes in the full knowledge that the greenhouse gas pollution currently locked up in the *existing* reserves of fossil fuels already far exceeds the amount which can be released into the atmosphere without leading to catastrophic alterations to the climate system.

Fatih Birol, the Chief Economist of the International Energy Agency, has said 'When I look at this data, the trend is perfectly in line with a temperature increase of 6 degrees Celsius, which would have devastating consequences for the planet.'

Each of the Christian denominations in this country has publicly committed to tackling climate change and preventing catastrophic changes to the climate system on which all life depends. Yet these same institutions hold many millions of pounds worth of investments in oil, gas, and coal companies which are in effect working to tear up international agreements made in 2009 in Copenhagen to limit changes in average global temperature to 2 degrees Celsius.

We believe that it is simply wrong for Churches to say one thing in their policies and to do the opposite by virtue of their investments. And as we set out in the Ash Wednesday Declaration, we believe that there is a theological imperative for Christians to speak out on this issue, and most importantly to act.

It's why we are calling on the leaders in all the Christian denominations to demonstrate leadership and vision by doing three things.

Firstly, to withdraw their investments in fossil fuel companies with immediate effect and in so doing demonstrate to those companies that a business model based on catastrophic changes to the climate system is simply unacceptable.

Secondly, to speak out on this issue, taking the lead in the national debate on the ethics of fossil fuel investment.

And thirdly, to put in place the investment policies and criteria needed for national churches to start investing in and proactively supporting clean alternatives to fossil fuels.

At present we are set on a path to the future which necessitates the wilful destruction of God's creation, planet earth, and the catastrophic, irreversible destruction of the climate system.

The need for an alternative and viable path to the future has never been more acute. It is why we are calling on all Churches to act and implement their own publicly stated policies on climate change through their investments.

And to act today; not next year, or even next month, but Bright Now.

…And in case you are wondering about the the calculation at the beginning of this post: the Economist says Exxon are spending $37 billion per year for next three years. This equals $1173

per second which is £772 per second at today's conversion rate. Assume 2 mins 30 seconds to read article = £115,800 (rounded up to £116,000).

http://gofossilfree.org/bright-now-towards-fossil-free-churches-in-the-uk/

September 20, 2013

Q&A: Faith Groups as Partners in Development

By Thalif Deen
Inter Press Service News Agency

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The United Nations is considered one of the world's most secular institutions, with 193 member states representing peoples of different faiths and cultures and professing religious and agnostic beliefs.

Still, faith-based organisations (FBOs) continue to play a vital role in a wide range of issues on the U.N.'s political, social and economic agenda, including human rights, population, food, health, education, children, peacekeeping, disarmament and refugees.

The U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA) is perhaps the only U.N. agency that has invested – heavily and systematically since 2002 – in setting up a Global Interfaith Network of over 500 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) reaching out to disenfranchised communities worldwide.

These NGOs include World Vision, Islamic Relief, Caritas, the World Council of Churches, the Young Women's Christian Association and CAFOD, the official Catholic aid agency for England and Wales.

In an interview with IPS, Dr. Azza Karam, senior advisor on culture at UNFPA, said the reality is that FBOs are among the oldest social and economic service providers.

They are not newcomers into development services – since this has been among the most traditional modus operandi of any religious institution, she said.

"In other words, when it comes to social services – especially but not only in areas of humanitarian relief, health and education – it is the U.N. and the international development and relief agencies, as we know them today, who are the relative 'newcomers'," said Karam, a former senior policy advisor at the U.N. Development Programme's (UNDP) Regional Bureau of Arab States and who holds a PhD in Environmental Sciences from the University of Amsterdam.

Excerpts from the interview follow.

Q: How effective are FBOs, specifically in Muslim and Catholic countries where women's reproductive rights are under siege?

A: It depends on how we define “effective”. They are providers of basic health care – which includes sexual and reproductive health services – in most of the world, including Catholic and Muslim countries. So if the effectiveness is a matter of providing those basic services, they can be the only such service providers in some poor communities.

If, on the other hand, we gauge effectiveness as a matter of advocating for more controversial family planning services – e.g. modern contraception – to be juxtaposed against other forms of “natural contraception” – then these FBOs will vary literally from community to community, let alone nation to nation, depending on a number of diverse factors.

These factors include the social and cultural contexts, the types, relationships and diversity between religious leaders and communities, the legal frameworks available and their implementation rate or lack of, among others.

Q: How enduring are the services provided by FBOs?

A: If we look at their provision of health services in contexts of conflict or humanitarian disaster, many FBOs have been providing basic needs and serve as the first port of call for these needs before, during and long after the “emergency” strikes.

Many of the international actors come in during these complex humanitarian emergencies and provide critical life-saving measures. And eventually, many will leave. The FBOs rarely ever ‘leave’, for they are often in the communities, of the communities and formed by the very communities they serve.

Q: What could be the contribution of FBOs, if any, to the U.N,’s post-2015 development agenda and the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) currently under discussion?

A: Many FBOs have been involved – and continue to be very active – in the various fora the U.N. has provided for civil society organisations around the post-2015 agenda and the SDGs. In fact, UNFPA, as the coordinator of the U.N. Inter-Agency Task Force for Engaging FBOs in Development, was requested by the U.N. Development Group (UNDG) to convene a number of U.N. partner FBOs in early 2012.

The purpose was to discuss their roles, perspectives and potential and actual contributions to the debates and issues and initiatives around post-2015 processes. Over 30 international FBOs attended the consultation and many of them continue to be engaged in a myriad of platforms and initiatives.

Q: What are these platforms and initiatives?

A: Many FBOs are part of the various outreach and advocacy efforts within their huge constituencies to inform about the U.N.’s processes, and to gather the voices of their faith institutions and communities, to communicate the varied insights, needs, and priorities from and to the wider U.N. community of policy makers.

Several FBOs are also actively lobbying their own national governments on the developmental priorities they deem critical, and the developmental goals their experience of service help them identify.

Many have produced research, information and analytical as well as position papers, hosted various debates and fora and even undertaken campaigns led by their various youth and women's networks to make the case for the issues they are advocating for.

Q: How significant are these initiatives?

A: Significant advocacy by FBOs is taking place both with national governments and in U.N., intergovernmental and with civil society circles, to secure realistic goals and hold policy makers accountable on a number of issues, particularly around climate change, poverty, inequality, and good governance.

Some of their voices are unrelenting in requesting 'zero tolerance' of 'low-level ambitions' and demanding that U.N. members states tackle politically difficult issues – including in and around climate change considerations, financing of the post-2015 development agenda, corruption and fraud, tracking of global goals, and proposing means of rendering governmental and intergovernmental institutions transparent and accountable.

http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/09/qa-faith-groups-as-partners-in-development/

September 23, 2013

African Faith Leaders Statement on Priorities for a Post-2015
Development Agenda

Read the statement (PDFS):

http://www.cidse.org/index.php?option=com_k2&Itemid=194&id=344_f491e9881b691e7bf5752764e8893403&lang=en&task=download&view=item

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September 25, 2013

Temples to Toilets: First Global Interfaith Initiative to Promote Safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Launched at UNICEF House

Global Interfaith WASH Alliance
Press Release

The first global interfaith initiative to promote safe water, sanitation and hygiene was launched today. The partnership will bring together faith-based organizations committed to tackling pressing social problems that impede the health and rights of children around the world.

The Global Interfaith WASH Alliance, or GIWA, envisions a water-secure world in which safe and sustainable drinking water and improved sanitation will be accessible to all by the year 2020. An estimated 5 billion people across the world are members of religious communities, underscoring the criticalrole religious leaders can play in addressing seemingly intractable problems - such as access to safe water and sanitation.

Lack of adequate sanitation is a global crisis directly impacting health, education, productivity and economic status. Every day diarrhoea - the second largest killer of children under five in the developing world - claims over 1600 young lives.

"Our world has lost millions of beautiful children due to poor water, hygiene and sanitation," said Pujya Swamiji, GIWA co-founder and President & Spiritual Head of Parmarth Niketan Ashram. "Today, leaders of the world's faiths are saying, enough."

"Clean water and sanitation should not be a distant dream for children and communities," said Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director. "They should be a reality. And this alliance can help bring their dreams much closer." Religious communities are already an indispensable partner for UNICEF in advancing children's rights and enhancing their well-being. In terms of promoting water and sanitation efforts, partners of GIWA can point to significant achievements, among them:

- Ganga Action Parivar (GAP), bringing together the faiths of India to protect and restore the Ganga River, which is polluted by some 2 billion litres of sewage and 1 billion litres of toxic chemicals daily. GAP provides and promotes sanitation, potable water, tree plantations, public awareness programmes and more.
- The "Islam and Water" education programme supported by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation which is creating water awareness among Muslim communities in several countries.
- Imam Ilyasi, Chief Imam of India and President of the All India Imam Organization announced the development of a WASH training involving over 500,000 imams in India.
- The Ecumenical Water Network of the World Council of Churches, which is working with 349 churches and Christian organizations worldwide to facilitate an exchange of information on the world's water crisis.

Expanding access to sanitation and eliminating open defecation can save lives and reduce cases of diarrhoea in children under five by over a third. Yet two years shy of the Millennium Development Goals deadline, only 64 percent of the global population has improved sanitation, far short of the 75 per cent MDG target. And while the international community has reached its

MDG water target, more than 768 million people still lack access to improved drinking water sources.

Safe drinking water and improved sanitation not only reduce diarrhoea and stunting, but they are often the catalyst that can propel a family out of poverty. They are basic human rights as well as foundations upon which healthy and productive societies may thrive. Without them, children cannot survive and communities cannot grow and prosper. Investing in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, therefore is an investment in the health and livelihoods of future generations.

"We are called to sanctify time and dedicate the next 7 years, every hour, every second to the provision of clean water and improved sanitation," said Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, GIWA co-founder and President and Founder of the Institute for Human Values. "Living water will be in reach of the whole community of life and thus hope will propel us to action."

The seed for the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance was planted earlier this year at "Wings for Water," a multi-stakeholder dialogue held in The Hague in advance of the World Water Day celebrations. Included among GIWA's founding partners are: Institute for Human Values (The Netherlands), Ganga (Ganges) Action Parivar, (India), Elijah Interfaith Institute (Israel), the All India Organization of Imams of Mosques, the Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers, the Ecumenical One World Initiative (Germany), and Inner Sense (The Netherlands).

In order to achieve its goal to fulfill the MDGs and achieve a water secure world by 2020, GIWA will bring together faith-based organizations, aid agencies and religious communities working on WASH; mainstream good practices of faith-based WASH initiatives; engage the world's religions in advocacy work to ensure that governments take seriously their responsibilities to guarantee the human right to water and sanitation; and spearhead concrete actions to enhance public health by promoting Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS). GIWA's aim is to empower religious and spiritual communities to take action on WASH and bring a spirit of collaboration and compassion into existing networks and planned international events on WASH.

For further information, please contact:
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Michael Slaby, GIWA Manager at the Jacob Soetendorp Institute for Human Values: mslaby [at] soetendorp.org Cell: +49 171 5256908

http://giwaconference2013.org/index.php?page=home

September 27, 2013

IPCC confirms that human activity will further warm the Earth, with dramatic effects on weather, sea-levels and the Arctic

United Nations Environment Programme

Stockholm - A major international assessment of climate change adopted here by 110 governments provides conclusive new scientific evidence that human activities are causing unprecedented changes in the Earth's climate.

Produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was established by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme in 1988, the report confirms that it is extremely likely (95-100% probability) that most of the warming since 1950 has been due to human influence.

The IPCC's previous assessment, released in 2007, described the evidence for human-caused global warming as "unequivocal," with at least a 9 out of 10 chance of being correct.

The new report further states that greenhouse gas emissions at or above current rates would induce changes in the oceans, ice caps, glaciers, the biosphere, and other components of the climate system. Some of these changes would very likely be unprecedented over decades to thousands of years. Limiting climate change would require substantial and sustained reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) and other greenhouse gases.

"Multiple lines of evidence confirm that the extra heat being trapped by greenhouse gases is warming the Earth's surface to record levels, heating the oceans, raising sea levels, melting ice caps and glaciers, and changing weather patterns and extremes," said WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud.

"The IPCC report demonstrates that we must greatly reduce global emissions in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change. It also contains important new scientific knowledge that can be used to produce actionable climate information and services for assisting society to adapt to the impacts of climate change," he said.

"Climate change is a long term challenge but one that requires urgent action, not tomorrow but today and right now, given the pace and the scale by which greenhouse gases are accumulating in the atmosphere and the rising risks of a more than 2 degree C temperature rise," said UN Under Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. "For those who want to focus on the scientific question marks, that is their right do so. But today we need to focus on the fundamentals and on the actions. Otherwise the risks we run will get higher with every year."

"A universal new UN climate agreement by 2015 is critical, backed by supportive voluntary initiatives such as those managing down short-lived climate pollutants like black carbon. As work under the inclusive Green Economy shows, the benefits of a transition to a low carbon future are multiple from improved public health, food security and job generation to combating climate change now and for future generations,' he added.

The role of the IPCC is to supply policy-relevant information about climate change to the world's governments. Its Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) will be considered by negotiators

responsible for concluding a new agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015.

Some of the report's key findings include:

- The global mean average surface temperature rose by 0.89°C from 1901 to 2012. Each of the last three decades has been warmer than all preceding decades since 1850. In the Northern Hemisphere, 1983-2012 was *likely* the warmest 30-year period of the last 1400 years. The first decade of the 21st century has been the warmest of all (WMO's *The Global Climate 2001-2010* estimates the global average surface temperature for that decade at 14.47°C). Global average temperatures will likely rise by another 0.3°C to 0.7°C in the period 2016-2035. Averaged over the period 2081-2100, the global surface temperature is likely to exceed pre-industrial levels by 1.5°C or even (depending on future greenhouse gas emissions) 2°C.
- Changes in many extreme weather and climate events have been observed since about 1950. It is very likely that the number of cold days and nights has decreased and the number of warm days and nights has increased on the global scale. In in large parts of Europe, Asia and Australia, it is likely that the frequency of heat waves has increased.
- It is virtually certain that the upper ocean (down to 700m) has warmed from 1971 to 2010. The deep ocean below 3000m has also likely warmed since the 1990s, when sufficient observations became available. Ocean warming accounts for most of the change in the amount of incoming solar energy stored by the Earth, accounting for about 93% of it between 1971 and 2010. The global ocean will continue to warm during the 21st century. Heat will penetrate from t he surface to the deep ocean and affect ocean circulation.
- The rate of sea level rise since the mid-19th century has been larger than the mean rate during the previous two millennia. The global mean sea level rose by around 19 cm from 1901 to 2010 due to increased ocean warming and melting glaciers and ice sheets. The rate of rise accelerated between 1993 and 2010, and it is very likely to increase further during the 21st century and beyond. The report notes that, during the last interglacial, when the climate was 2°C warmer than pre-industrial levels, maximum global sea levels were 5 to 10 meters higher than they are today.
- Seawater has become more acidic (its pH has decreased by 0.1) since the beginning of the industrial era due to humanity's carbon dioxide emissions; it will continue to acidify during the 21st century.
- It is *very likely* that the Arctic sea ice cover will continue to shrink and thin and that Northern Hemisphere spring snow cover will decrease during the 21st century as global mean surface temperature rises Some scenarios foresee a nearly ice-free Arctic Ocean in September before mid-century.
- There is very high confidence that glaciers have continued to shrink and lose mass world-wide, with very few exceptions. By 2100, glacial volume could, under one scenario, decline further by as much as 35-85%. Meanwhile, the extent of Northern Hemisphere snow cover has decreased since the mid-20th century, especially in spring, and this decline, too, will continue.

- It is likely that human influences have affected the global water cycle and its patterns since 1960. For example, in recent decades precipitation has increased in the mid-latitude land areas of the Northern Hemisphere.

Three years in the making, the "Physical Science Basis" volume of the Fifth Assessment Report was produced by over 250 scientists. Additional volumes on impacts, mitigation and a synthesis will be released over the coming year. The IPCC does not conduct new research. Instead, its mandate is to make policy-relevant assessments of the existing worldwide literature on the scientific, technical and socio-economic aspects of climate change. Its reports have played a major role in inspiring governments to adopt and implement the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Note to journalists: For more information, please see www.ipcc.ch, www.wmo.int or www.unep.org, or contact: Clare Nullis at WMO on +41-79-709-1397 or cnullis@wmo.int, or Nick Nuttall at UNEP at +254-2-623084 or nick.nuttall@unep.org

http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=2726&ArticleID=9633&l=en

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October 2013

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=41&key=fcfb13f4a3394262512d3bfb7559edd1&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

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October 2013

Sacred Sites Research Newsletter (SSIREN) October 2013

To view this newsletter, visit:
http://fore.research.yale.edu/files/SSIREN_October_2013.pdf

October 2013

Religion and Science Converge: Developing Environmental Ethics

By Margaret Antonio
The Torch -- Boston College's Catholic Newspaper

“The glory of the human is becoming the desolation of the earth.” These words spoken by Fr. Thomas Berry, a Passionist priest and scholar of religion and ecology, resonate today amongst the global issues of climate change and environmental desolation. John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker, both lecturers at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmentalism and the School of Divinity, have spent years conducting research and dialogues seeking to reconcile these seemingly contrasting realities of human ambition and the preservation of the earth. On October 16, they presented a lecture at the Heights Room on The Alliance of Religion and Ecology, sponsored by the School of Theology and Ministry’s Church in the 21st Century Center.

According to Mary Evelyn Tucker, the dialogue begins with asking, “What are the values from these cultures and traditions that will contribute to an environmental ethic that is indigenous to those parts of the world?” Finding common ground in religious values and cultural traditions is essential in constructing an ethic for this emerging issue of environmental degradation.

Religious leaders, including Popes Francis and Benedict XVI, have spoken of the importance of our responsibility for the earth. Furthermore, there is a need to reevaluate the scriptural meaning of stewardship and man’s “dominion,” as depicted in Genesis. According to John Grim, the development of an environmental ethic, however, is not anti-anthropocentric as though equating man with a tree or the soil, but rather highlights the responsibility man has in caring for the natural environment.

The scientific reality, the speakers stressed, is that humans, animals, and plants are highly dependent on the earth as an energy source for survival. The threat to the environment today is not an ice age or asteroids, as in previous periods, but the threat of man’s actions. “We have a biodiversity loss of immense proportions,” says Tucker. “Scientists say we are in the midst of a sixth extinction period, where species are going extinct due to anthropogenic causes.”

Creating an alliance between religion and ecology is not only for the sake of plants, animals, and the physical earth, as many assume. “People commonly separate nature and Catholic social teaching,” says Mary Evelyn Tucker. However, social justice for human beings and social justice for the environment are intrinsically linked. The speakers emphasized that there are millions of climate refugees around the planet as a result of climate change. In the past years alone in the United States, there were numerous droughts and hurricanes, including Katrina and Sandy. “This,” says Tucker “is due to our actions.”

As scholars and activists, John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker have been working emphatically on engaging scientists and religious leaders and intellectuals in dialogue through forums, conferences, and publications. In the last decades, these two fields have been polarized by disagreement and are seemingly drifting further apart. However, there is great hope in the prospect of an emerging alliance between religion and science for the sake of the preservation of the earth and the sacredness of life.

“What is BC doing for religion and ecology?” asked Mary Evelyn Tucker. The speakers presented a challenge to the Boston College community and academia to grow in awareness of their daily impact on the environment, to look for ways in which they can be a grassroots movement for the environment, and especially to push for more classes on the convergence of

ecology and all fields of study. Currently, BC only offers two courses on ecology and religion out of the approximately 80 courses offered in the theology department.

"It's not easy, but it needs to be done," says Mary Evelyn Tucker. "We need to be partnering in the study of ethics, law, politics, economics, and religion." Already, through reanalyzing the convergence of the values of religious traditions and the concerns of scientific research, religions are returning to areas of thought that were at one time exclusively given over to the scientific community, says John Grim. "In many ways, religions are beginning to return to this question and they are in dialogue now with the scientists, rather than one trumping the other."

For more information on John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker and their work with Religion and Ecology, visit their website at www.emergingearthcommunity.org

The full video of the lecture will be available on the Church in the 21st Century website http://www.bc.edu/schools/stm/c21online/ in mid-November.

http://www.thetorchbc.com/2013/10/22/religion-and-science-converge-developing-environmental-ethics/

October 1, 2013

Leslie Sponsel on Spiritual Ecology, Connection, and Environmental Change

Anthropology and Environment Society
Engagement Blog

ENGAGEMENT editors recently connected with Leslie Sponsel, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Hawai'i, to talk about his recent book, Spiritual Ecology: A Quiet Revolution (2012, Praeger), and its broader contributions to environmental movements and policy decisions around the world. This interview is the latest in an ENGAGEMENT series that explores how environmental-anthropological book projects have profound and important impacts on the world around us.

EE: What is the theme of your new book?

LS: *Spiritual Ecology* is an historical and cross-cultural survey of a quiet revolution, its intellectual and practical activities from the ancient past to the present. Those who have enjoyed the privilege of conducting ethnographic research with indigenous peoples are likely to recognize the importance of religion and spirituality in their lives and societies. In my book, I look to indigenous groups from different parts of the world for lessons on how spirituality can inform ecological practices. Also, one chapter is a penetrating critical analysis of the so-called "myth of the ecologically noble savage."

Since the late 1980s, interest in spirituality and ecology as well as their interface has been growing exponentially. As an umbrella term, spiritual ecology may be defined as a vast, complex, diverse, and dynamic arena of intellectual and practical activities at the interface of religions and spiritualities on the one hand, and environments, ecologies, and environmentalisms on the other. Other labels refer only to some aspect of spiritual ecology, such as ecomysticism, ecotheology, or religious environmentalism, although somewhat broader are the labels religion and ecology and also religion and nature.

Following the principle of cultural relativism, the book is inclusive and non-judgmental regarding religions and spiritualities. Spiritual ecology does not advocate any particular religion; instead those who are religious or spiritual are encouragd to examine their own beliefs and values to see how they relate to nature. Interestingly, even some atheists are spiritual ecologists of sorts.

EE: How does your book address broader questions in environmental anthropology?

LS: Environmental and ecological anthropology engages with elemental questions like: What is nature? What is human? What is the place of humans in nature? What should be the place of humans in nature? Spiritual ecology deals with all four of these questions (Sponsel 2011). Ideally, spiritual ecology seeks to integrate materialist and mentalist approaches within cultural anthropology, rather than automatically opposing one to the other as antithetical and incompatible. In addition, like Philippe Descola's recent book, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, spiritual ecology challenges many dualities such as human/animal. It is important to recognize that several other pioneers in ecological anthropology, such as Roy A. Rapport, Richard K. Nelson, Darrell A. Posey, and Eugene N. Anderson, have been concerned with various aspects of spiritual ecology, even though they may not use the term (Sponsel 2010, 2011).

Since the late 1980s, a growing number of individuals and organizations, scientific as well as religious, are convinced that more-than-secular approaches are required to reduce, if not resolve, many environmental problems. They think that the solution is to pursue the potential environmental relevance of religion and spirituality. For example, my book devotes a chapter to Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai and her Green Belt Movement, which focused on planting trees, initially in local communities, but then throughout Kenya, and eventually beyond to other African countries and even worldwide. The subtitle of one of her own books is revealing: *Replenishing the Earth: Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World*. Like many environmentalists and conservationists, her ultimate motivation stems from spiritual or mystical experiences in nature (for more on such points see Johnston 2013 and Taylor 2010).

EE: How did you engage with different communities when you were doing the research for your book? How has your research sparked lasting collaborations or engagements in your field site?

LS: The book is based more on library than field research, although the first five chapters draw on my intermittent fieldwork on the behavioral ecology of predation with Yanomami, Ye'kuana, and Curripaco in the Venezuelan Amazon from 1974-1981, and since the mid-1980s on spiritual ecology and sacred places in Thailand. For example, Chapter 2 is a holistic analysis of sacred

trees based on research in Thailand. The book is also grounded in what I learned from class preparation and students themselves over the three decades that I devoted to the Ecological Anthropology Program at the University of Hawai'i. That program included an optional concentration in spiritual ecology from 2003-2010. A third major source that the book draws on is my experience attending three of the groundbreaking series of conferences on religion and ecology at Harvard University (see Tucker and Grim 2013). Other sources are the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture, and my experience as one of the Associate Editors and a contributing author for *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*.

In collaboration with my wife Dr. Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel, who is Thai, I continue to conduct field research each summer on sacred places in Thailand and their role in biodiversity conservation. During the past two years I also gave lectures on aspects of spiritual ecology at three major universities in Thailand, Chulalongkorn University and Thammasat University in Bangkok, and the Center for Environment and Resource Management of Mae Fa Luang University in Chiang Rai in the far north. Guest lectures provide one venue to spread information and ideas about spiritual ecology, and in Thailand, one way to reciprocate for the most kind and generous hospitality and assistance of people.

EE: What is the key message you hope people take away from reading your book?

LS: The key message of the book is twofold. First, secular approaches to environmental concerns are absolutely necessary and have made great strides, but they have not been sufficient. Second, the multitude of diverse approaches under the rubric of spiritual ecology may well be the last chance for the survival of our species. We are likely to see whether or not the intellectual and practical components of spiritual ecology will help turn the environmental situation around for the better within a few decades, especially in the face of the increasing pressures of global climate change (assuming that this does not reach a catastrophic tipping point).

The core behind everything in the book is two tables. The first table, reprinted from another publication (Sponsel 2001), details the trajectory of cultural evolution from prehistory to the present emphasizing the progressive intensification and acceleration in the magnitude of the human ecological footprint. The second table contrasts in great detail the ecocidal industrial growth society and the life-sustaining and enhancing society, the latter sorely needed to restore some modicum of ecosanity. That table is extracted from material in Ralph Metzner's book *Green Psychology: Transforming Our Relationship to the Earth*. The second table is in my chapter on Joanna Macy's decades of vital work in facilitating this transformation, something she calls "the Great Turning," which involves, among other things, a fundamental shift in consciousness (Macy and Johnston 2012). In my book, that shift is referred to as the quiet revolution of spiritual ecology; namely, a radical re-thinking, re-feeling, and re-visioning of the human place in nature to avert, or maybe just to adapt to, critical environmental challenges such as global climate change. Ultimately, as with other anthropologists, the book takes advantage of our discipline's ability to view humanity diachronically from the local community level to the human species globally.

EE: What are the broader contributions of your book to public discussions about environmental conservation projects?

LS: I wrote the book for a general audience, but also with scientists and academics in mind. The book provides the big picture. An apt analogy is a jigsaw puzzle with the entire picture in view, rather than focusing on only one or a few pieces of the puzzle. The big picture of spiritual ecology places in a broader context and perspective the initiatives of numerous environmental and conservation organizations that are turning to religion as a significant resource for their work, such as the recent probing of the role of sacred places in biodiversity conservation by NGOs like the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (e.g., Versuuchen, et al., 2010). (Also see the Alliance for Religions and Conservation which collaborates with the World Wide Fund for Nature, and Dudley, et al., 2006).

EE: What are the broader contributions of your book to public and policy discussions about social and environmental justice?

LS: Ecologists realize that everything is interconnected and interdependent. The environment is fundamental to justice and vice versa. This is illustrated in chapters on Joanna Macy and Wangari Maathai, and those that critically analyze the provocative film Avatar and the horrifying case of Tibet, both of which reflect issues of social and environmental justice. For instance, the completely unjustified Chinese military invasion and colonial occupation of Tibet, an independent and relatively peaceful nation for many centuries, continues to cause not only systematic genocide and ethnocide, but also ecocide. The latter results from the desecration of the environment for the rapacious economic exploitation of natural resources with deforestation, wildlife decimation, mining, and toxic waste dumps.

Many contemporary environmental problems from the local to the global ultimately result from the worldview and values of industrialism, materialism, consumerism, and capitalism, especially when they are fed by rapacious greed that impoverishes people and ecosystems. In particular, they pivot on the dangerous fallacy that unlimited growth is possible on a limited base. That base is not only natural resources, but also the capacity of planet Earth's systems to process pollution and other anthropogenic stresses. Spiritual ecology tries to help awaken people to such issues and help them to find their own pathway toward a more sustainable, green, just, and peaceful future. Thomas Berry (2006:17) stated the crux of the matter most succinctly: "… the universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects."

EE: How is your book being used beyond the academy? Has it prompted invitations to engage with new groups of people about your ideas?

LS: The book was only published in July 2012, thus it is too early to assess with confidence how it is being received beyond the academy. However, a few examples can be cited. Some of the endorsements printed in the book, like those of Bill McKibben of 350.org and Jeffrey A. McNeeley of the IUCN strongly affirm the book's key message and approach. A Native Hawaiian anthropologist, Lynette Cruz, interviewed me about spiritual ecology on her program "Issues That Matter" for the local Native television station, and Joanna Harcourt-Smith conducted a phone interview for her radio program "FuturePrimitive" from Santa Fe, New

Mexico. Perhaps more significant is the complementary website for the book which provides even more resources and a venue to regularly update the book. Also, it shares information about spiritual ecology far more widely. During the first year it received over 10,000 vists.

Spiritual ecology is revolutionary, a serious challenge to fundamentalists not only in religion, but also in business, government, media, science, and academia. It is a devastating critique of the industrial growth society as a seriously unsustainable, maladaptive, dysfunctional, and destructive system. Moreover, it proffers radical alternatives, as in the chapter on Joanna Macy. Some kind of Great Turning appears inevitable within coming decades, whether voluntarily by choice or by the force of "nature's revenge." I am far from alone in that diagnosis and prognosis of the unprecedented ecological pathology of the industrial growth society, as the book documents (e.g. Taylor 2010). Such messages are unlikely to attract attention by the establishment other than to purposefully ignore them.

Spiritual ecology is a quiet revolution in the sense that it is nonviolent, decentralized without any single leader or organization, and not yet well-recognized and appreciated. It is a revolution in the sense that it calls for profound transformations in individual lifestyles as well as societies. Ultimately this is by far the most important choice we face today, between ecosanity or ecocide. The latter is seriously degrading, if not destroying, our own species and the biogeochemical systems of planet Earth, and this by a portion of a species that is only a wink in the vastness of geological time. While the environmental situation is increasingly dismal and depressing, overall spiritual ecology is positive and hopeful. For example, Western science and religion, which have often been in conflict since the Enlightenment, are increasingly finding common ground for collaboration in addressing the challenges of environmental problems (e.g., Tucker and Grim 2013). Likewise, various religions that often have been in conflict are also increasingly finding common ground for interfaith collaboration in facing environmental problems. By now it should be obvious that this quiet revolution of spiritual ecology is of considerable relevance to ecological and environmental anthropologists, and vice versa.

Dr. Leslie E. Sponsel is Professor Emeritus at the University of Hawai'i where he was hired in 1981 to develop and direct the Ecological Anthropology Program. In August 2010 he retired to devote full time to research and writing concentrating on spiritual ecology, although he still teaches one course each semester. He is also developing the Research Institute for Spiritual Ecology (RISE) at http://spiritualecology.info.

Within ecological anthropology his previous books include Indigenous Peoples and the Future of the Amazon, and Tropical Deforestation: The Human Dimension.

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October 4, 2013

World's sacred forests may fall prey to developers, scientists warn

By Isaiah Esipisu
Thomson Reuters Foundation

NAIROBI (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Sacred forests, which have mainly been protected by indigenous communities following traditional beliefs, are among the few remaining forest ecosystems that have been spared by loggers, but they are increasingly under threat, scientists warn.

"Evidence has shown that many people, including loggers, have for years respected, or have been afraid of going against some religious beliefs - and that has long been a conservation measure for several sacred forests around the world," said Prasit Wangpakapattanawong, assistant professor at the forest restoration research unit of Thailand's Chiang Mai University.

Most sacred forests are found in Asian countries, especially India, where they have for centuries been preserved and protected by adherents of Buddhism, a religion indigenous to the Indian subcontinent, Wangpakapattanawong said at the World Agroforestry Centre's 2013 science week in Nairobi last month.

But the ever-growing appetite for land among global investors is a real risk for these previously safe havens, which are rich in biodiversity, the scientist told Thomson Reuters Foundation.

One example cited by Wangpakapattanawong is a 500-hectare section of India's Aravali sacred forest that has been earmarked for development by the Haryana state government. It has developed a master plan that permits development activities in the Aravali forest in Gurgaon district through to 2031, a move that has been strongly protested by indigenous communities.

In Kenya, the Mrima sacred hill forest on the coastal strip of Kwale County is also under threat from miners who want to exploit valuable rare earths like niobium, which is used in steel production, electronics and medical devices. But the area's Kaya elders - revered traditional religious leaders - oppose the plan and have vowed to curse anybody who encroaches on their land.

The Mrima sacred forest was gazetted as a protected area in 1961 because it is home to rare trees, birds and small wildlife.

CARBON STORAGE

A recent study by China's Northeastern Forestry University said sacred forests are ecologically important because they provide habitats for rare endemic and endangered species of flora and fauna, and have a high conservation value despite their typically small areas.

The study estimated the carbon stored by trees in the Sem Mukhem sacred forest in Garhwal Himalaya in India's Uttarakhand state, finding that the trees' carbon density was nearly 775 megagrammes (metric tonnes) per hectare, which converts to 345.5 tonnes per acre of land in the forest.

According to the researchers, forests sequester 20 to 100 times more carbon per unit area than croplands, making them an important tool for reducing carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, in the atmosphere.

Wangpakapattanawong estimates that India has hundreds of sacred groves, although no study has been carried out to ascertain the number of such forests in India and other parts of the world.

"Countries should put in place relevant policies to discourage developers from encroaching on sacred forests for the benefit of the entire world," said Meine Van Noordwijk, the principal scientist and chief science advisor at the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF).

GREEN CUSTOMS

In Kenya, beliefs among the Maasai community forbid anyone from cutting down a tree, for firewood or any other purpose. It is also a "cultural" offence to interfere with taproots or to remove the entire bark of a tree for herbal extraction, for example.

According to Maasai beliefs, only tree branches can be used for firewood, and fibrous roots for herbs. If the bark of a tree has medicinal value, only small amounts can be removed by creating a "V" shape in the bark. The wound is then sealed using wet soil.

Thanks to such practices, Kenya's Loita Forest in Narok County has been conserved as a closed-canopy indigenous forest. It covers an area of 33,000 hectares and is rich in rare endemic species.

Similar beliefs and practices are observed by the Mijikenda community on Kenya's coast, which has enabled the preservation of more than 2,000 hectares of the Kaya forest.

It is now home to more than half of all known tree species and shrubs that survive along the coast. But some of these are dying out due to changing climatic conditions, according to the Coastal Forest Conservation Unit, run by the National Museums of Kenya.

Nigel Crawhall of the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee told Thomson Reuters Foundation that different African communities have incredible indigenous knowledge that they use in conserving forests and biodiversity, and this should be recognised at national and international levels.

Wangpakapattanawong observed that most sacred forests across the world are located on hills and mountains, making them important water towers for the people living around them – another reason why they are motivated to keep them in good condition.

"Many communities have deep indigenous knowledge that, if integrated with science, will help the world improve forest cover," he said.

Isaiah Esipisu is a freelance journalist specialising in agriculture and environment reporting.

http://www.trust.org/item/20131004085253-l4gqn/

October 6, 2013

Quakers in Britain to disinvest from fossil fuels

By Nicolò Wojewoda
Go Fossil Free

Following up to last month's launch of our partner Operation Noah's divestment campaign, for fossil free churches, here's another great news from the UK, and the press release by ON that welcomes it.

Operation Noah is delighted by the announcement from Quakers in Britain that they are calling for divestment from fossil fuels.

They state it is incompatible with their commitment to become a low-carbon community. This was agreed by Quaker representatives on Saturday (5th October) and is subject to a final decision from their Trustees, who meet on 18th October.

Update (9th October): On 8th October, Quakers in Britain took steps to disinvest from companies engaged in extracting fossil fuels. The decision was taken by their Investment Committee, under responsibilities devolved by the Trustees.

The announcement comes just weeks after Operation Noah launched Bright Now, the campaign for church disinvestment from fossil fuel companies. The campaign calls on the Churches and Christian community in the UK to:

- take a leading role in the debate on the ethics of investment in fossil fuels
- disinvest from companies involved in the extraction, transportation and use of fossil fuels
- support the development of clean alternatives to fossil fuels through their investment policies.

Operation Noah Chair Isabel Carter comments: 'This news is a huge encouragement to us, coming so soon after our launch of the Bright Now campaign. We wish to congratulate the Quakers on taking leadership on this vital issue. We urge other churches in the UK to think seriously about following this example.'

Operation Noah have created a report for the Bright Now campaign outlining the scientific, financial, moral, theological and practical case for churches to change their investment policy on fossil fuels. It is available to download from www.brightnow.org.uk/resources.

For further information, please contact Isabel Carter on 07800 536303.

Notes to editors

Operation Noah launched the Bright Now campaign on 20th September 2013.

Read more on the Quaker announcement.

http://gofossilfree.org/quakers-in-britain-to-disinvest-from-fossil-fuels/

October 9, 2013

In a Polluted Stream, a Pathway to Peace

By Jeff Wheelwright
New York Times

MORRO BAY, Calif. — PEACE talks are under way again in Jerusalem. If the past is any guide, the two sides are stymied over difficult issues like settlements and borders. The negotiators badly need a new approach, and one is right beneath their feet, in the Kidron Valley, the deep ravine that runs from the Old City through the West Bank toward the Dead Sea.

As it snakes its way through the Judean wilderness, the Kidron comes to Mar Saba, a spectacular monastery slung upon a cliff. Orthodox Christian prayers have been chanted there every day for some 1,400 years. The monastery and its domes and chapels are protected on one side by stone walls and on the other by the deep gorge of the Kidron, or Wadi Nar, as the Arabs call it. If you descend the innumerable steps to the fast-flowing Kidron Stream, a vile smell rises to meet you. The flow is raw sewage from Jerusalem, coursing at a rate of 8 to 10 million gallons a day.

Jerusalem treats two-thirds of its wastewater at a plant in the western part of the city. The remainder, which emanates mainly from Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem but also from Jewish housing, has been held hostage to the political impasse since 1967. Underground and out of sight near the Old City, the sewage breaks into the open at the separation barrier, where the West Bank begins; picks up additional loads from Bethlehem and the impoverished town of Ubeidiya; passes beneath the monastery; and eventually, though some is diverted by settlers for irrigation, it reaches the Dead Sea.

In the malodorous water lies a political opportunity. The Kidron Valley traverses an area holy to three world religions. Cleaning up the basin ought to be a lead item in the current talks, a cause instead of a consequence of peace. After all, the pollution is owned by both sides and breaches any possible future boundary between them. Compared with issues like the Palestinians' right of return, the Jewish settlements and the final status of Jerusalem — not to mention the borders themselves — solving the Kidron's problem is straightforward.

More important, if the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government can work together on an uncontroversial civil project, one that improves the quality of life for all residents, they will start to develop a mutual trust.

Over the last six years, an Israeli lawyer named Richard Laster — a professor at Hebrew University — has laid the foundation for a solution. Heading a team of Israeli and Palestinian officials and academics, Mr. Laster produced the Kidron Master Plan. The group proposes diverting the wastewater from the valley and constructing a sewage treatment plant in Ubeidiya. The plant would be paid for largely by international development agencies but jointly owned and operated by Israelis and Palestinians. The managers would sell the treated wastewater for local agricultural use, and Ubeidiya would get a modern landfill for its trash. While the environment healed, a new park and tourist trail would link Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ubeidiya and the Mar Saba monastery. The Kidron would be, in Mr. Laster's words, "a platform for peace."

Water rights — and water quality — are crucial matters in this area of the world. If Palestinians and Israelis are going to live side by side, they will have to share the scarce rivers and aquifers that crisscross their national demarcations. Friends of the Earth Middle East, a transboundary environmental group, has promoted the importance of water-sharing. Representatives of the group are now on tour in the United States talking up "cross-border environmental peacemaking."

Secretary of State John Kerry, when coaxing the two sides back to the peace table in May, held out the prospect of a $4 billion development package for the West Bank in the wake of an agreement. But that is putting the cart before the donkey, as it were. Foreign donors and investors ought to support infrastructure projects in the West Bank now, especially those involving Palestinian and Israeli stakeholders.

The place to start is the Kidron, a place of portentous crossing-over, a place that figures in the Judgment Day narratives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

However, it would be naïve to play down the present-day obstacles. Whenever they have been asked to approve a sewage treatment plant in the past, each side has held out for a site where it can exert full control. In addition, the Palestinian leaders in Ramallah are wary of any moves to "normalize" relations with Israel, demanding a whole loaf when half a loaf might do. It's up to the United States and the international parties in the diplomatic process to push for an environmental resolution in the Kidron.

Of course, the negotiators have much more to discuss than sewage. But when you talk to Mr. Laster about the peace talks and the borders to be drawn, he soon becomes impatient. "Borders are irrelevant," he says. "If the water table is polluted, it doesn't matter where they draw the line. Even if there's no agreement, you still have to fix it."

Jeff Wheelwright is the author, most recently, of "The Wandering Gene and the Indian Princess."

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/10/opinion/in-a-polluted-stream-a-pathway-to-peace.html?emc=eta1&_r=1&

October 10, 2013

New global treaty cuts mercury emissions and releases, sets up controls on products, mines and industrial plants

Japan among the first to sign Minamata Convention on Mercury

United Nations Environment Programme

KUMAMOTO, Japan -- Japan, a country which has come to epitomize mercury poisoning in modern times, today became one of the first countries to sign a historic new international convention to reduce emissions and releases of the toxic metal into air, land and water and to phase out many products that contain mercury.

The Minamata Convention on Mercury – a global, legally binding treaty which opened for signature today – was agreed to by Governments in January and formally adopted as international law today.

The new treaty is the first new global convention on environment and health for close to a decade. Coming at a time when some multilateral negotiations have faced challenges, its successful negotiation, after a four-year process, provides a new momentum to intergovernmental cooperation on the environment.

Its agreement is also significant in that many countries, despite the lingering effects of the global financial crisis, remained prepared to commit resources to combating the harmful effects of mercury.

Countries began the recognition for this new treaty at a special ceremonial opening of the Diplomatic Conference in Minamata, the city where many local people were poisoned in the mid-20th Century after eating mercury-contaminated seafood from Minamata Bay. As a consequence, the neurological syndrome caused by severe mercury poisoning has come to be known as Minamata Disease.

But the Minamata that delegates visited yesterday during a special field trip from the main conference venue in nearby Kumamoto City, is a vastly different place to that affected by mercury in the mid-1950s. Since then the city has remodelled itself as an eco-city, receiving international recognition for its wide range of recycling and environmental programmes.

The Minamata Convention provides for controls and reductions across a range of products, processes and industries where mercury is used, released or emitted. The treaty also addresses the direct mining of mercury, export and import of the metal, and safe storage of waste mercury.

Pinpointing populations at risk, boosting medical care and better training of health-care professionals in identifying and treating mercury-related effects will all result from adherence to the obligations of the new treaty.

“The Minamata Convention will protect people and improve standards of living for millions around the world, especially the most vulnerable,’’ United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said in an address read to the conference. “Let us strive to achieve universal adherence to this valuable new instrument, and advance together toward a safer, more sustainable and healthier planet for all.”

“Mercury has some severe effects, both on human health and on the environment. UNEP has been proud to facilitate and support the treaty negotiation over the past four years because almost everyone in the world – be they small-scale gold miners, expectant mothers or waste-handlers in

developing countries – will benefit from its provisions," said Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Global action on mercury was agreed to in a landmark decision at the United Nations Environment Programme's Governing Council meeting in 2009.

Governments unanimously decided to launch negotiations on an international mercury treaty to deal with worldwide emissions and discharges of the pollutant, which threatens the health of millions, from foetuses and babies to small-scale gold miners and their families.

Mercury's impacts on the human nervous system have been known for more than a century: the Mad Hatter of Alice in Wonderland fame was so called because hat-makers used the liquid metal to strengthen brims, breathing in the poisonous fumes.

Other potential impacts include impaired thyroid and liver function, irritability, tremors, disturbances to vision, memory loss and cardiovascular problems.

"With the signing of the Minamata Convention on Mercury we will be going a long way in protecting the world forever from the devastating health consequences from mercury," says WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan. "Mercury is one of the top ten chemicals of major public health concern and is a substance which disperses into and remains in ecosystems for generations, causing severe ill health and intellectual impairment to exposed populations."

Governments successfully completed their negotiations at the fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury, held in Geneva from 13 to 18 January 2013. They agreed to the text of the "Minamata Convention on Mercury", which has now been presented for adoption and opened for signature at the Conference of Plenipotentiaries Diplomatic Conference, taking place at Hotel Nikko in Kumamoto and in Minamata, Japan, from 9 to 11 October 2013.

The Diplomatic Conference was preceded by an intergovernmental preparatory meeting on 7 and 8 October 2013 in Kumamoto.

Some key facts about the Diplomatic Conference:

* Over 1,000 participants
* Convention adopted by 139 Governments
* Convention signed by 87 Governments

Treaty provisions

Under the provisions of the Minamata Convention, Governments have agreed on a range of mercury-containing products whose production, import and export will be banned by 2020. These items have non-mercury alternatives that will be further phased in as these are phased out. They include:

* Batteries, except for ‘button cell’ batteries used in implantable medical devices
* Switches and relays
* Some compact fluorescent lamps
* Mercury in cold cathode fluorescent lamps and external electrode fluorescent lamps
* Soaps and cosmetics (mercury is used in skin-whitening products)
* Some mercury-containing medical items such as thermometers and blood pressure devices.

Mercury from small-scale gold-mining and from coal-fired power stations represent the biggest source of mercury pollution worldwide. Miners inhale mercury during smelting, and mercury run-off into rivers and streams contaminates fish, the food chain and people downstream.

Under the Minamata Convention, Governments have agreed that countries will draw up strategies to reduce the amount of mercury used by small-scale miners and that national plans will be drawn up within three years of the treaty entering into force to reduce – and if possible eliminate – mercury.

The Convention will also control mercury emission and releases from large-scale industrial plants such as coal-fired power stations, industrial boilers, waste incinerators and cement clinkers facilities.

Editors’ notes

The full text of the treaty can be found at http://www.unep.org/hazardoussubstances/Portals/9/Mercury/Documents/dipcon/CONF_3_Minamata%20Convention%20on%20Mercury_final%2026%2008_e.pdf

For more information about the Diplomatic Conference, please see http://www.unep.org/hazardoussubstances/MinamataConvention/DiplomaticConference/tabid/105832/Default.aspx

For a list of the countries that have signed the Convention so far, please see (from 10 October) www.mercuryconvention.org.

For more information about the effects of mercury, please see http://www.unep.org/publications/contents/pub_details_search.asp?ID=6281

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http://www.unep.org/NewsCentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2752&ArticleID=9647&l=en

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October 15, 2013

8 Tribes That Are Way Ahead of the Climate-Adaptation Curve

By Terri Hansen
Indian Country Today Media Network

Much has been made of the need to develop climate-change-adaptation plans, especially in light of increasingly alarming findings about how swiftly the environment that sustains life as we know it is deteriorating, and how the changes compound one another to quicken the pace overall. Studies, and numerous climate models, and the re-analysis of said studies and climate models, all point to humankind as the main driver of these changes. In all these dire pronouncements and warnings there is one bright spot: It may not be too late to turn the tide and pull Mother Earth back from the brink.

None of this is new to the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island. Besides already understanding much about environmental issues via millennia of historical perspective, Natives are at the forefront of these changes and have been forced to adapt. Combining their preexisting knowledge with their still-keen ability to read environmental signs, these tribes are way ahead of the curve, with climate-change plans either in the making or already in effect.

1. Swinomish Tribe: From Proclamation to Action

On the southeastern peninsula of Fidalgo Island in Washington State, the Swinomish were the first tribal nation to pass a Climate Change proclamation, which they did in 2007. Since then they have implemented a concrete action plan.

The catalyst came in 2006, when a strong storm surge pushed tides several feet above normal, flooding and damaging reservation property. Heightening awareness of climate change in general, it became the tribe's impetus for determining appropriate responses. The tribe began a two-year project in 2008, issued an impact report in 2009 and an action plan in 2010, said project

coordinator and senior planner Ed Knight. The plan identified a number of proposed "next step" implementation projects, several of them now under way: coastal protection measures, code changes, community health assessment and wildfire protection, among others.

The tribe won funding through the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and the Administration for Native Americans to support the $400,000 Swinomish Climate Change Initiative, of which the tribe funded 20 percent. When work began in 2008, most estimates for sea level rise by the end of the century were in the range of one to one-and-a-half feet, with temperature changes ranging from three to five degrees Fahrenheit, said Knight. But those estimates did not take into account major melting in the Arctic, Antarctica and Greenland, he said.

"Now, the latest reports reflect accelerated rates" of sea level rise and temperature increases, Knight said. Those are three to four feet or more, and six to nine degrees Fahrenheit, respectively, by 2100. "We are currently passing 400 ppm of CO2, on track for [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] worst-case scenarios."

Since the Swinomish started work on climate issues, many tribes across the country have become active on these issues as they also realize the potential impacts to their communities and resources. The Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals (ITEP) has been funded over the last few years to conduct climate adaptation training, Knight said, "and probably more than 100 tribes have now received training on this."

2. Jamestown S'Klallam: Rising Sea Levels and Ocean Acidification

Jamestown S'Klallam tribal citizens live in an ecosystem that has sustained them for thousands of years, on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State. Over the past two centuries they have successfully navigated societal changes, all while maintaining a connection to the resource-rich ecosystem of the region. Though they have also adapted to past climate variations, the magnitude and rapid rate of current and projected climate change prompted them to step it up. That became apparent when tribal members noticed ocean acidification in the failure of oyster and shellfish larvae.

"Everyone who was part of the advisory group all had their personal testimony as to the changes they'd seen," said Hansi Hals, the tribe's environmental planning program manager, describing a meeting of a sideline group. "Everybody had something to say."

Tribal members brought their concerns to the attention of the Natural Resources committee and tribal council three years ago, Hals said. This past summer they released their climate vulnerability assessment and adaptation plan, which identified key tribal resources, outlined the expected impacts from climate change and created adaptation strategies for each resource. It included sea-level-rise maps are for three time frames, near (low), mid-century (medium) and end of century (high).

3. Mescalero Apache: Bolstering Tribal Resilience

Tribal lands of the Mescalero Apache in southwestern New Mexico flank the Sacramento Mountains and border Lincoln National Forest, where increased frequency and intensity of wildfires is due to drought-compromised woodlands. Mike Montoya, director of the Mescalero Apache Tribe's Fisheries Department, executive director of the Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission and project leader for the Sovereign Nations Service Corps, a Mescalero-based AmeriCorps program, has observed climate-driven changes to the landscape in his years in natural resource management.

The tribe has undertaken innovative environmental initiatives to help bolster tribal resilience to climate change impacts, Montoya said. One example is a pond constructed for alternative water supply to the fish hatchery in the event of a catastrophic flood event. It holds 500,000 gallons of water from a river 3,600 feet away.

"It's all gravity fed," Montoya said. "Now, with the aid of solar powered water pumps, we are able to supply water to our community garden."

4. Karuk Tribe: Defending the Klamath River

With lands within and around the Klamath River and Six Rivers National Forests in northern California, the Klamath Tribe is implementing parts of its Eco-Cultural Resources Management Draft Plan released in 2010. The plan synthesizes the best available science, locally relevant observations and Traditional Ecological Knowledge to help the Karuk create an integrated approach to addressing natural resource management and confront the potential impacts of climate change.

5. Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes: Strategic Planning

These tribes, who live in what is today known as Montana, issued a climate change proclamation in November 2012 and adopted a Climate Change Strategic Plan in 2013. The Tribal Science Council identified climate change and traditional ecological knowledge as the top two priorities for tribes across the nation in June 2011, according to Michael Durglo, the tribe's division of environmental protection manager and climate change planning coordinator, as well as the National Tribal Science Council's Region 8 representative.

So did the Inter-Tribal Timber Council, which his brother, Jim Durglo, is involved with. In fall 2012 the confederated tribes received financial support through groups affiliated with the Kresge foundation and from the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative to develop plans, Michael Durglo said. A year later, in September 2013, the tribes' Climate Change Strategic Plan was completed and approved by the Tribal Council. Next the tribes will establish a Climate Change Oversight Committee.

"This committee will monitor progress, coordinate funding requests, continue research of [Traditional Ecological Knowledge], incorporate the strategic planning results into other guiding documents such as the Flathead Reservation Comprehensive Resource Management Plan and others, and update the plan on a regular basis based on updated science," said Michael Durglo.

6. Nez Perce: Preservation Via Carbon Sequestration

More than a decade ago the Nez Perce Tribe, of the Columbia River Plateau in northern Idaho, recognized carbon sequestration on forested lands as a means of preserving natural resources and generating jobs and income, while reducing the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere. In the mid to late 1990s the Nez Perce Forestry & Fire Management Division developed a carbon offset strategy to market carbon sequestration credits. The purpose of the afforestation project, about 400 acres in size, was to establish marketable carbon offsets, develop an understanding of potential carbon markets and cover the costs of project implementation and administration.

As carbon markets soften and actual project development slows, the tribe cites the increased awareness and education of other tribes of the carbon sales process and opportunities for more carbon sequestration projects in Indian country as its biggest accomplishment of the last two years.

7. Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians: Attacking Greenhouse Gas Emissions

This tribe in southern California has taken numerous steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address the impacts of climate change on tribal peoples, land and resources. In 1998 the tribe formed the Santa Ynez Chumash Environmental Office.

"We are also looking into opening a public compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling station, replacing our fleet with CNG vehicles, are installing EV charging stations, implementing an innovative home, and building upgrade training program through an EPA Climate Showcase Communities grant," said Santa Ynez environmental director Joshua Simmons.

SYCEO's projects are numerous and have had impressive results, including major reductions of greenhouse gas emissions. An example is the Chumash Casino's implementation of a shuttle bus program that eliminated 800,000 car trips in 2009, replacing them with 66,000 bus trips. The casino is reducing its energy consumption, chemical waste and use of one-use materials. It also has an extensive rainwater and gray water collection and treatment system. Many of these initiatives have economic benefits and provide a model and economic incentive for tribal and non-tribal businesses to implement similar changes.

8. Newtok Village: Ultimate Adaptation Plan—Evacuation

This Native village on the western coast of Alaska is home to some of the U.S.'s first climate refugees. They leapfrogged over mere adaptation-mitigation as sea and river cut through and then eroded the permafrost beneath their village and a 1983 assessment found that the community would be endangered within 25 to 30 years. In 1994 Newtok began work on what then seemed the ultimate adaptation plan: relocation.

They selected Mertarvik nine miles to the south as the relocation site in 1996. Their efforts intensified when a study by the Army Corps of Engineers found that the highest point in the village would be below sea level by 2017. The Newtok community, government agencies and

nongovernmental organizations formed the Newtok Planning Group in 2006, but as Newtok's administrator Stanley Tom searched for funding he struck little pay dirt. Mostly, he hit walls. Now Tom is calling for evacuation, exposing it as the true ultimate in adaptation.

"It's really happening right now," He told the *Guardian* last May. "The village is sinking and flooding and eroding."

Tom told the British newspaper that he was moving his own belongings to the new, still very sparse village site over the summer–and advised fellow villagers to start doing the same.

http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2013/10/15/8-tribes-are-way-ahead-climate-adaptation-curve-151763#.Ul8F2cYpLbI.email

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October 16, 2013

Indigenous Nations Are at the Forefront of the Conflict With Transnational Corporate Power

By Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers
Truthout

On Monday, October 7, 2013, indigenous nations and their allies held 70 actions throughout the world proclaiming their sovereignty. The call to action was issued by Idle No more and Defenders of the Land to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the British Royal Proclamation of 1763, which was the first document in which an imperial nation recognized indigenous sovereignty and their right to self-determination. As we wrote last week, treaties with First Nations are not being honored, and even the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples does not adequately recognize the sovereignty of indigenous peoples.

In Canada, where the Idle No More movement was founded, an attack is being waged by the Harper government on the rights of the First Nations. A bill referred to as C-45 weakens laws that protect the land and allows transnational corporations to extract resources from First Nations' lands without their consent. Idle No More was founded on December 10, 2012 (the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), when Chief Theresa Spence began a hunger strike to protest C-45 on an island across from the Canadian Parliament.

The Idle No More (INM) movement has grown exponentially during the past year to become a worldwide movement. At its core, the INM taps into issues that are essential to all people. INM is a struggle against transnational corporations that collude with governments to allow the exploitation of people and the planet for profit, and it is a struggle for a new economic paradigm. INM is also about facing up to the horrific history of the way that colonizers have abused and disrespected indigenous peoples so that there can be reconciliation and justice and so that the peoples of the world can coexist peacefully. And INM is about the recognition that indigenous peoples are stewards of the Earth and must lead the way to protect the Earth and teach others to do the same.

Throughout the year, there have been teach-ins, round dances, flash mobs and rallies to raise awareness of the ongoing racist and exploitative treatment of indigenous nations as well as the continued decimation of their land to extract resources. There have been long walks, rides and canoe trips to call for healing of the Earth and for the recognition of indigenous sovereignty. And there have been blockades and other nonviolent direct actions to stop further degradation of the planet. INM has already achieved some successes.

Idle No More is an indigenous-led movement, but it is not a movement exclusive to indigenous people. As Clayton Thomas-Muller, an organizer with Defenders of the Land and Idle No More, states, "We understand that the rise of the native rights-based strategic framework as an effective legal strategy supported by a social movement strategic framework is the last best effort not just for Indigenous People but for all Canadians and Americans to protect the commons ... from the for-profit agenda of the neoliberal free market strategists that have taken over our governments ... and indigenous peoples have been thrust into the forefront of global social movements not just because of our connection to the sacredness of Mother Earth and our traditional ecological knowledge and understanding of how to take care of the Earth as part of that sacred circle of life but also because our ancestors ... made sure we had the legal instruments to be able to confront the enemies of today and that is what Idle No More is doing in the US and Canada and across the world where Indigenous People continue to live under occupation and oppression."

Sovereignty is Fundamental in the Struggle for Global Justice

The United States and Canada are two of the wealthiest nations in the world. Much of this wealth comes from the extraction of resources on land that belongs by treaty to Native Indians. Rather than honoring these treaties, the governments of the US and Canada have a long history, which continues today, of using laws and even manipulating the process of creating the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to exterminate indigenous sovereignty.

As the extraction of resources becomes more extreme through processes such as hydro-fracking and tar sands excavation and the serious consequences this has on the health of people and the Earth become more apparent, indigenous nations have realized that their struggle for sovereignty must intensify. The INM movement is one manifestation of this effort.

One of the six core demands of the INM movement is to "Honour the spirit and intent of the historic Treaties. Officially repudiate the racist Doctrine of Discovery and the Doctrine of Terra Nullius, and abandon their use to justify the seizure of Indigenous Nations lands and wealth." This is a particularly appropriate time to reflect on these doctrines as some in the United States celebrate Columbus Day.

Columbus used the Doctrine of Conquest to legitimize seizure of land in the Americas. This doctrine "grants invaders legal title to the lands they conquer." Additionally, the Doctrine of Discovery from the early 1800s allowed colonizers to occupy and claim title to any lands, and their resources, that were not part of the European Christian monarchy. And the Doctrine of Terra Nullius similarly permitted colonizers to occupy and claim land that was not settled according to European standards, such as having an established township.

These doctrines continue today. The Doctrine of Discovery was codified into law by the Supreme Court decision of *Johnson v. McIntosh* in 1823, which left Native Indians "with the mere 'right' to occupy their ancestral lands, subject to U.S. dominion." And so it is that Native Indians are subjected to policies that continue to allow corporations to extract resources and poison the air, land and water without their consent.

Although the INM movement began in Canada, it has also taken off in the US. And solidarity between Indian Nations in the US and Canada is developing. This summer, the Dakota Nation Unity Ride from Manitoba met up with the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign canoe trip in Woodstock, New York, to travel together to the United Nations in New York City. Two Row Wampum is the oldest treaty in North America between an Indian nation, the Haudenosaunee, and a European nation. This summer marked the 400th anniversary, which they highlighted with an epic canoe trip down the Hudson River.

The Two Row Wampum treaty "outlines a mutual, three-part commitment to friendship, peace between peoples, and living in parallel forever (as long as the grass is green, as long as the rivers flow downhill and as long as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west)." The Two Row Wampum campaign seeks to uphold the treaty by creating friendship and peace between all peoples and by working together for a sustainable future, as outlined in their campaign goals. They seek recognition of their laws, the right to self-determination, including living in accordance with their culture and laws, and to be leaders in restoration and stewardship of the Earth.

The Dakota Unity Ride and the Two Row Wampum canoe trip landed in New York City on August 9, which is the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. They walked together to the United Nations building, where they met with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, representatives of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and other officials. The UN press statement describes the theme of the meeting as "Indigenous peoples building alliances: honouring treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements."

This is a positive step, but the fight for sovereignty continues. Sylvia Mcadam, a founder of Idle No More and a professor and author, teaches that sovereignty includes "land, language and culture." It is not just land that has been taken from indigenous peoples but also their language and culture through the forced attendance at residential schools and barriers to access their traditional foods. Mcadam states that her involvement in Idle No More began when she returned to her traditional land with her parents to do research for her current book. She was shocked to see how the land had been developed without consent of the people.

Mcadam reminds us that the First Nations are not a lawless people but that the Creator's Laws are "expressed in everything we do." Colonizers have a lot to learn from Native Indians - not only about caring for the Earth and living in ways that preserve resources for future generations but also about governance. Native Indians are matriarchal societies that practice deep democracy.

While indigenous people describe themselves as people who follow laws, they have suffered injustice on their lands. Last week, a panel of judges at the International Peoples Tribunal on Leonard Peltier issued an executive summary and preliminary findings following three days of

testimony from Native Indians who described abuse inflicted by the US government and FBI agents. The tribunal concluded that US laws must be changed in order for FBI agents to be charged for their crimes of assault and murder on Pine Ridge Indian land in South Dakota and elsewhere. Further, the tribunal said justice is dependent on the immediate release of Leonard Peltier.

Non-indigenous groups are working in solidarity with Idle No More and other indigenous groups. For example, the Two Row Wampum campaign, led by the Onondaga Nation, works with Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation. This collaboration is particularly evident in the environmental movement.

Stewardship of the Land, Air and Water

Central to the Idle No More movement is protection of the land, air and water from corporations that steal resources without any regard for the environmental effects. Indigenous Peoples believe that many harmful substances, such as uranium and oils and gases, were put in the ground because they were meant to stay there. They oppose the extreme methods of extraction being used today.

During the past year, often with leadership from indigenous nations, the environmental movements in the US and Canada (and elsewhere around the world) have escalated their tactics to protect the Earth. Their focus has primarily been on stopping the pipelines that carry bitumen from the Alberta Tar Sands and stopping fracking for oil and gas. Throughout the summer, there were numerous direct action campaigns, including Sovereignty Summer and Fearless Summer, which collaborated to blockade roads and equipment to prevent pipeline construction.

We highlight three active campaigns that are being led by indigenous nations: The Red Nation's efforts against an Enbridge pipeline, the Nez Perce fight to stop Megaloads from carrying humongous pieces of equipment through their lands and the Mi'kmaq Warrior Society, which evicted a fracking company, SWN Resources, from its land.

On February 28, Marty Cobenais from the Indigenous Environmental Network led the beginning of an occupation, which included building a sacred fire on top of a pipeline that runs across Red Lake Tribal land in Leonard, Minnesota. The pipeline carries bitumen from the Alberta Tar Sands, which is being mined and poisoning the land of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation in Canada without their consent. The pipeline is owned by Enbridge, and the Red Lake tribal members say that it is illegal. They understood that there was a requirement that if there were a permanent structure over the pipeline it would have to be shut down. Unfortunately, that has not happened, and in fact the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission voted unanimously this summer to allow the pipeline to be expanded to carry more tar sands bitumen even though hundreds attended the hearing in opposition to it.

The occupation is ongoing and is being supported by indigenous and non-indigenous environmental organizations. In October 2013, Winona LaDuke and the Indigo Girls led a weeklong Honour the Earth horseback ride along the route of the pipeline to raise awareness.

They are very concerned about spills from the pipeline, which are inevitable. Enbridge has a poor safety record.

Spills have occurred already. In 2002, 48,000 gallons spilled near Cass Lake, Minnesota, and continues to pollute the water table. In 2010, more than 800,000 gallons spilled into the Kalamazoo River in Michigan, and nearly 300,000 gallons remain today. And last year, 50,000 gallons spilled near Grand Marsh, Wisconsin. The pipeline runs through the Straits of Mackinac, which connect Lakes Huron and Michigan, and so it threatens to contaminate large supplies of fresh water.

A very similar battle is occurring between the Yinka Dene Alliance in British Columbia and Enbridge. There the Yinka Dene is accusing the British Columbia government of violating international law by issuing permits to Enbridge Inc. for drilling and tree removal in their territories along the proposed path for the Northern Gateway pipeline, despite their opposition and the lack of consultation on the proposed pipeline. They made the accusations in a 15-page submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Although the fight against Enbridge and the governments that collude with them have not made much progress, the Nez Perce in Idaho have won a significant victory. Last month a judge ordered the prohibition on the use of 100 miles of roadways through tribal lands to transport huge pieces of equipment, called Megaloads, made by General Electric that are used in extracting Canadian tar sands.

Tribal members filed a court case in August to prevent the Megaloads from crossing their land, something that is already illegal but wasn't being enforced. They also blockaded the road in August to prevent passage of a Megaload. During the four-day blockade, eight of nine Nez Perce Tribal Council leaders were arrested.

The judge's decision suspends the passage of Megaloads for now and may be lifted after an impact study is completed. However, another significant aspect of this decision is that the Nez Perce Tribal Council must be involved in future decisions to permit the Megaloads to use roads through their lands.

Another active occupation to protect tribal land is in New Brunswick, where the Elsipogtog have been taking action for months to stop a Houston-based company, SWN Resources, from exploring their land to begin fracking. Tribal members blockaded SWN work trucks throughout the early summer to prevent them from testing the land for potential fracking. In addition to blockading, some of SWN's equipment was destroyed.

There was a temporary peace beginning in late July, when SWN Resources agreed to leave for the summer. Negotiations at that time included dropping charges against 25 of the 35 people who had been arrested. SWN did say it expected to return in September.

When SWN Resources recently attempted to return, it was met with an eviction notice and another blockade, which included a sacred fire. The Elsipogtog First Nation and Mi'kmaq Warrior Society contend that the land being explored was supposed to be held in trust for them

but that the Canadian government has done such a poor job of caring for the land that the tribes are concerned whether the land will be able to support them. Along with the eviction notice, they are claiming sovereignty over the land and their responsibility to care for it.

On October 7, in solidarity with the days of action to proclaim indigenous sovereignty, activists in Houston delivered an eviction notice from the Elsipogtog to the office of SWN Resources. Office staff members refused to accept the letter, so it was left on the receptionist's desk and copies were faxed directly to the office. The letter requested a response within 48 hours.

At present, the blockade continues. Some of the chiefs met with David Alward, premier of New Brunswick, but the talks have not been satisfactory. Alward would not allow members of the Mi'kmaq Warrior Society to attend the meetings. The Mi'kmaq Warrior Society is calling for solidarity actions October 18, when they expect SWN to serve a court injunction. The blockade has brought together tremendous support from the surrounding community and tribes across Canada.

Moving Toward Peace and a Healthy Planet for Future Generations

Also on October 7, members of Veterans for Peace and their allies held a ceremony in the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in New York City to mark the 12th anniversary of the US invasion of Afghanistan and to oppose all wars. As they did last year, the veterans read the names of those who were killed in wars and laid flowers at the base of the memorial. However, this year, the organizer, Tarak Kauff, began the ceremony by recognizing the 500-year war against First Nations and read the names of Native Indian warriors who were killed.

A shift seems to be happening in public awareness of the ongoing effects of colonialism on indigenous peoples and the importance of indigenous leadership in the struggle to heal and protect the Earth. During the past year, the indigenous-led movement in collaboration with non-indigenous allies has grown, and the tactics being employed to protect the land from extreme energy extraction have escalated.

Just as we must abolish imperialism abroad, we must also end it at home. To accomplish this, we must begin by understanding the ongoing 500-year war against Native Indians, and we must begin to speak about it. The Idle No More and other indigenous-led movements seek a peaceful solution that recognizes the sovereignty of indigenous peoples and their laws so that everyone can live in peace. And they understand that if we are to end the practices that are destroying the Earth, we must learn from those who are stewards of the Earth.

It is time for all of us to be Idle No More. We face common opponents - corporations that profit by exploiting people and the planet and the governments who collude with them. The Trans-Pacific Partnership, currently being negotiated, continues this global exploitation of the planet and people by transnational corporate interests. It is time to end imperialism and the neoliberal economic agenda that perpetuates this destructive behavior.

It is time for solidarity, cooperation, reconciliation and restoration of peaceful human relationships and the land, air and water. It is imperative that we act now so our children and future generations will have the opportunity for healthy lives. The future is literally in our hands.

This article is the second in a two-part series on the ongoing struggle for indigenous rights. The first article was It Is Time to Recognize the National Sovereignty and Human Rights of Native Indians.

To hear Margaret Flowers interview with Clayton Thomas Muller, Sylvia Mcadam and SuZanne MoniQue Patels of Idle No More on Indigenous Nations Around the World Proclaim Sovereignty click here.

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http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/19445-indigenous-nations-are-at-the-forefront-of-the-conflict-with-trans-national-corporate-power-that-affects-us-all

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October 16, 2013

Nuns with a new creed: Environmentalism

By Angela Evancie
The Atlantic

While many of their aged peers are living out their days in quiet convents, these women are digging gardens and offsetting carbon.

Every woman in this story is confoundingly non-descript. Short hair, often grey. Conservative dress. Unmarried; soft-spoken. Most are well into their 70s, and all will tell you that their way of life is dying out. They will also tell you, with surprising conviction, that the world is in peril.

They are Roman Catholic sisters, from a variety of orders — Dominican, Mercy, Passionist — but don't think Whoopie Goldberg or a young Sally Field. While many of their aged peers are living out their days in quiet convents, these women are digging gardens and offsetting carbon. They're as well-versed in solar and geothermal technology as they are in the Gospels of Luke and John, and some wear Carhartts and work boots like they're habits. At the heart of the women's action is a belief that the changing climate and world demand a new kind of vocation — that *Ave Marias* won't cut it anymore, but maybe clean energy will. Called Green Sisters, or Sisters of Earth, they are pushing the bounds of their tradition toward a new, and deeply spiritual, kind of environmentalism.

"The Judeo-Christian tradition is so beautiful, and it has such wisdom, but it doesn't have a lot to say about fracking," Miriam MacGillis, a Dominican sister in her mid-70s, told me. We were eating lunch at Genesis Farm, an earth literacy center in Blairstown, N.J., that MacGillis founded

in 1980. Our mesclun mix and roasted squash came from fields just across the road where, in 1982, MacGillis launched one of the first community supported agriculture programs in the country. “There’s some wisdom in the Scriptures, like how you treat your neighbor, and being kind and compassionate,” she continued. “But they took for granted that the earth was there to be their resource.” In this regard, MacGillis is part of a growing movement of Christians assessing the applicability of biblical teachings to the climate movement, though some — like evangelical environmentalists — see in the Bible not a disregard for the planet, but a direct mandate for protecting it. Nearby, MacGillis’ Prius sat parked behind her small straw-bale home, which is in turn set behind a much larger solar array.

There were other hybrid vehicles on the premises. Earlier that day, the leadership team from Slow Foods USA had caravanned from their New York offices to Blairstown to hold their annual retreat. They were a young group — not one of them looked older than 35 — and of a generation for which devotion to a life of prayer is about as likely a career option as becoming a chimney sweep or milkman. During a tour of the kitchen gardens, orchards and fields, Josh Viertel, then the organization’s president, told me he had been surprised to learn that Genesis Farm was run by a Roman Catholic sister. “I thought it was far out,” he said. “Most of the people I know doing work like this are opposed to things like organized religion.”

But nuns — women religious, as they call themselves — have been doing work like this for a while. Consider the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Monroe, Mich., who, in 2000, renovated their 370,000-square-foot motherhouse for LEED certification. On their 280-acre campus, they introduced a three-acre wetland to recycle grey water and established what was, at the time, one of the largest geothermal fields in the country. The IHM sisters spent $56 million, calling energy efficiency a “spiritual and moral mandate for the 21st century” and part of a “renewed vision for bringing about the dream of God on earth.”

In 1994, when a small group of Mercy Sisters from the Confert Diocese in Ireland’s County Galway set out to establish an organic garden and ecology center, the diocese opposed the center, asking the women to take their project elsewhere. But the leadership eventually capitulated. “It was a clash between the old world and the new world,” Sister Noreen Lyons said on the last morning of my stay, during which she and Sister Anne Mills had distributed countless scones and pots of tea to students in gardening, building and forestry classes led by visiting experts. The center is called An Gáirdín (Irish for “the garden); it runs its classes, mostly for locals, behind the site of the former Rural Domestic School, where Mercy sisters lived and held similar courses for women for over 100 years. Today, the large brick building is an apartment complex. An Gáirdín’s organic gardens and unassuming outbuildings — and its own geothermal system, the second in Ireland — sit behind the building’s parking lot.

It comes as no surprise that Catholic sisters have been among the leaders in the ongoing, if fractured, environmentalist movement. Catholic sisters have a long history of hands-on progressivism in the form of both protest (civil rights, Vietnam, nuclear energy) and humanitarianism (establishing schools, fighting poverty). In *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology*, Sarah McFarland Taylor traces sisters’ activism back to the 17th century, when the Sisters of St. Joseph in Le Puy, France “administered hospitals, taught children, and provided houses of refuge for the poor.” In the United States, sisters routinely tended to patients in disease-ridden and

disaster-stricken new cities; in Civil War field hospitals, they stayed with soldiers when bombardments caused other medics to flee. When asked how people responded to the IHM motherhouse renovation, Sister Janet Ryan told the NBC *Today Show*, "They think we're mad. But they've always thought we were mad, so what's the difference, right?"

The way Sister Gail Worcelo talks about it, sisters are almost like first-responders. "Religious communities come into existence because of a cultural or political or historical urgency," she says. "Sisters have addressed urgencies for education, or for a reconstitution of a life of prayer. And in our time, we see the urgency — the urgency is planetary." In 2005, Worcelo and Sister Bernadette Bostwick founded the Green Mountain Monastery, a wood-heated farmhouse and unheated yurt on 160 acres of balsam forest in northern Vermont. They were joined by Sister Amie Hendani, from Jakarta, last year. The women give retreats (upcoming: Monastic School of Collective Emergence), grow their own vegetables and travel to lecture on the way in which the Catholic tradition is moving into its planetary, or cosmological, phase.

This last part, and the inspiration for the Green Mountain Monastery (as well as for Genesis Farm, and, in one way or another, for the dozens of female-led spirituality farms and eco-justice centers across the country and on every continent) came, perhaps ironically, from a man. His name was Thomas Berry, and he was a Passionist priest, cultural historian, and self-proclaimed "geologian," a historian of the earth. Worcelo and Bostwick first met him in 1984, when he came to lecture at St. Gabriel's Monastery in Pennsylvania, where they were novitiates. He told the community that it was time to respond to the planetary crisis, Worcelo recalls, and begin to think of humanity as intricately connected to the natural world. "We go into the future as a single, sacred community," he said, "or we'll perish on the way."

His message was unlike any other circulating in the Church at that time, and predated much of the secular, scientific writing that would later ignite the climate movement. For the next 25 years, until his death in 2009 (he is buried at the Green Mountain Monastery), Berry expanded upon his thesis, writing, most notably, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future.* In it, he distills a sweeping survey of religious, economic, and cultural history into a call for change. Berry himself was inspired by a predecessor: the Jesuit Priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who wrote, in 1901, "The true summons of the cosmos is a call consciously to share in the great work that goes on within it; it is not by drifting down the current of things that we shall be united with their one, single soul, but by fighting our way, with them, toward some goal still to come."

Though Berry's works are grounded in a sense of the sacred, they're also deeply scientific, and a far cry from the Holy Scriptures — none so far as *The Universe Story*, which Berry wrote with the physicist Brian Swimme in 1992. The book charts the 15-billion-year history of the mysteriously perfect chain of events that led from the "Primordial Flaring Forth" (i.e. the Big Bang) to the Great Adventure (i.e. evolution) of life on earth to the development of human consciousness and cultures. The Church also recognizes this history; it condones theistic evolution, or evolutionary creationism, which holds that theology and modern science are not incompatible. And yet *The Universe Story* is striking because while it considers the historical impacts of Christianity, there is no Christian God involved in its account of creation. The book closes with an explanation of our newest geologic era, the Ecozoic Era, which requires a "mutually enhancing human presence upon the Earth." Shaped by science, reverence, and a sense

of urgency, *The Universe Story* reads like a cross between Richard Dawkins, Jared Diamond, and Al Gore. It's also mind-muddling to the last sentence: "When the curvature of the universe, the curvature of the Earth, and the curvature of the human are once more in their proper relation, then Earth will have arrived at the celebratory experience that is the fulfillment of earthy existence."

Despite — or perhaps because of — its heady genre bending, *The Universe Story* resonates strongly with women religious. (Many refer to the Universe Story as though it is a worldview unto itself; it is also called the New Story, or the Earth Story.) "Many of them [sisters] have an innate sense of the natural world as revelatory of the divine," says Mary Evelyn Tucker, a senior lecturer at Yale and co-founder and co-director of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology. (Tucker and Swimme have rendered the Universe Story for a popular audience with *The Journey of the Universe*, a book, DVD, and lecture series.) "Many of them have come out of farm communities and grew up close to the land, so this is very natural to them … It's in their spiritual life, it's in their ritual life, it's in their sacramental life. And it's very innate in many of them to be inspired by, as Teilhard de Chardin would call it, the hymn of the universe, the *divine milieu*."

"I think one of the things that I heard deeply was that the human is the being in whom the earth has become conscious of itself," MacGillis recalls of her first encounter with Berry and the Universe Story, in 1977. "And something just broke open in me. It's funny, because I don't think I've ever thought or spoken about it," she continued. "But all my life, I had this memory of Hackettstown, this place where I grew up in the woods. And my relationship with dogs, and animals … I always felt like there was something strange about me. I was unusual — none of my friends were that way, or my family. So I always wondered, was I a little wacko, you know? And hearing Thomas Berry speak helped me say no, actually. It just flooded me with some sort of affirmation."

Sometimes, it can seem like the emphasis in "Sisters of Earth" falls more heavily on the word "Earth" than it does on "Sister." Some of the women I met eschew Mass for more earth-based rituals like solstice or equinox celebrations; one sister told me she found conventional Catholic ceremonies "very difficult. Because they are in forms that are constrained by this literal, historic interpretation … that I find extremely dangerous and so counterproductive. So I try to stay away from that. Because it's too upsetting." Another called the leadership of the Catholic faith community "clueless." And then there's the women's immersion in and promotion of the Universe Story, hardly a sanctified doctrine. Some have faced discipline — or the threat of discipline — from the male leadership in their dioceses; others are simply ignored.

At An Tairseach, a Dominican convent-turned-ecology center in Ireland's County Wicklow, four sisters run a 10-week intensive seminar centered on the Universe Story. Women and men from a variety of orders and missions around the world attend; they hold Mass in striking natural settings, walk a labyrinth laid out on the floor of the chapel, and share meals made with veggies harvested from the sister's farm up the hill. Apart from challenging students' assumptions about the earth and cosmos, the goal of the program, says An Tairseach's director Sister Marian O'Sullivan, is to build a "basic foundation for spirituality that could give students the energy to care for the earth which they don't get by just getting the bad news." Sisters have been dealing in good news since the beginning of the Christian tradition — perhaps the Universe Story is a new

kind of Gospel. “You could be depressed at the state of the world,” says O’Sullivan. “And we’d rather give [students] an energy to say, ‘I can do something. And I will do something. I know the problems, and I know they’re huge, but each person can do something.’ So that’s how it works.”

One morning, the group gathered for a lecture on the history of women in the Church. Mary T. Malone, a visiting scholar, raced through 2,000 years’ worth of this history, touching on episodes where women religious challenged, unbalanced, or strongly influenced the otherwise male-led Church. These began, according to Malone, with the women who were followers of Christ (“Mary Magdalene, as far as I’m concerned, was the founder of Christianity”) and continued through to the “explosion of feminism” and women in ministries in the 1960s and ’70s. But the greatest upset, Malone said, was caused by the women mystics of the medieval era. Women like Hildegard von Bingen and Marguerite Porete rejected the notion of original sin, and claimed direct experience of God by simply being alive. (The former was excommunicated; the latter burned at the stake.)

The women mystics’ understanding of the sacred was also strikingly similar to that put forth by the Universe Story. “They were the only ones,” Malone said, “to base their thought and writings on the first creation story, the story of original grace. Until fairly recently, when the ecologists and cosmologists got in on the act, and began to think about the whole of creation and interconnectedness.” The kind of progressive theology taking hold today may have a precedent in the women mystics, Mary Evelyn Tucker says, but it didn’t originate with them. “The mystics didn’t have access to the scientific stories of the universe unfolding,” Tucker told me. “Understanding that we’re part of a 14 billion year unfolding process expands, hugely, our understanding of the divine.” Still, the circumstances of recent developments seem to serve a comparable need. “It happens to women in the history of Christianity that when theology gets too conservative, if you want to use that word, something gives,” Malone said, shielding her eyes from a beam of light that had slid into the room. “Women’s spiritual needs explode, and all they have to go on are their own resources.”

When I asked Sister Miriam MacGillis why, despite her changing spirituality, she hadn’t left the Church entirely, she responded, “I am the Church … And Christianity as a way of being conscious isn’t finished. What does Christianity do when it looks through the Hubble telescope? … I can’t leave, it’s who I am. But I’m it, evolving. And that’s faith to me. That’s faithfulness. It’s not easy, but it’s how I make sense of it.” For Marian O’Sullivan, the price of leaving the Church would be the loss of her community. “You either walk away, and you have no community of faith. Or you stay, and you do the best you can.” She continued, “Community is central to the universe. You know? Attraction of matter to matter, gravity, all that. That’s how things get drawn together. And central to humanity as well — we’re all connected, we’re all one, we’re all interdependent.”

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http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/10/nuns-with-a-new-creed-environmentalism/280608/

October 30, 2013

Religious Leaders Have ‘Enormous Influence’ to Bring About Change,

Secretary-General Tells World Council of Churches Assembly

United Nations

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s message to the tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 30 October to 8 November:

I am pleased to send greetings to all participants at the tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC). I applaud the WCC for its work with the United Nations to advance our common goals.

Our world today is beset by challenges that cross geographical, cultural and religious lines. Climate change, poverty, environmental degradation, conflict and other threats demand a global response by Governments along with other partners, including non-governmental organizations and religious groups.

As we focus on broad global challenges, we must pay close attention to people as key agents of change. Religious leaders can have an enormous influence on their followers, and are well placed to help bring about a change in mindsets that can lead to progress in society. By spreading messages of respect, compassion and love, WCC members can combat bigotry and hatred, and foster greater tolerance and trust.

Twenty-first century realities, such as economic integration, migration flows and environmental concerns underscore how we must work across identity lines to reach our shared goals, from resolving conflicts to empowering young people to bringing the poor and vulnerable in from the margins.

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations provides a platform where Governments, religious leaders, businesses and civil society groups, especially those representing young people, can stand up for inclusivity and against extremism.

I count on all of you to contribute to this effort by helping to lay the foundations of trust and friendship on which we can build lasting peace and prosperity in our world.

http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2013/sgsm15428.doc.htm

November 2013

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=42&key=e3c6be032db2d1ae4d52b2404193f45d&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

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November 4, 2013

Religious leaders highlight significance of water at WCC assembly

Ecumenical Water Network of the World Council of Churches

A symbolic act of pouring water into one common vessel, carried out by religious leaders representing Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish and Buddhist faiths, marked the significance of water in various religious traditions. This action took place at the World Council of Churches (WCC) 10th Assembly, currently underway in Busan, Republic of Korea.

The ceremony on 4 November at the "inter-religious space" in the Madang hall of the BEXCO centre, venue of the WCC assembly, featured diverse spiritual reflections on water.

The religious leaders, sharing examples from their own traditions, noted there is a great need to raise awareness concerning the preservation of water in all communities. A natural resource, still scarce in many parts of the world and serving as a root cause for conflicts, water is at the centre of social and political issues and causes to which they pledged their commitment, vowing to work together for water justice.

In almost all religions and their sacred texts, water is a symbol of cleansing, justice, peace, and it is therefore profoundly relevant to the WCC assembly theme.

The WCC theme is a prayer, "God of life, lead us to justice and peace", and on this day it was interpreted by the participants especially in terms of water issues.

The ceremony came as a joint initiative of the WCC's Ecumenical Water Network and the WCC programme for inter-religious dialogue and cooperation. It was opened by the WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit who offered Christian theological reflections on water.

Among other religious leaders in the ceremony were Prof. Ram Puniyani from the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Dr Ali Mohammad Helmi from the Islamic Culture and

Relations Organization – Centre for Interreligious Dialogue, Dr Deborah Weissman from the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) and Dr Parichart Suwanbubha from the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand.

In a common declaration read at the ceremony, the religious leaders recognized that the scarcity and inequitable accessibility of water can pose threats to justice and peace. Reminding the audience of the spiritual, cultural and healing value of water, they committed themselves to work together towards water justice, as shown in their symbolic action of sharing water.

More information on the Ecumenical Water Network

WCC programme for inter-religious dialogue and cooperation

Official website of the WCC 10th Assembly

High resolution photos available via *photos.oikoumene.org*

http://water.oikoumene.org/en/whatwedo/news-events/news-from-wcc/religious-leaders-highlight-significance-of-water-at-wcc-assembly

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November 6, 2013

Study: Focus on place motivates conservation behavior in faith-based communities

University of Wisconsin - Cooperative Extension
Press Release

A new study published in the Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture explores how religion can play a positive role in encouraging conservation behavior. The study focused on a congregation's shared sense of connection to their church and local community. By targeting the congregation's sense of place--the meanings and emotions people associate with a particular place--outreach campaigns geared toward a faith-based audience may inspire participants to care for their local environment.

"Research has already shown that the meanings we associate with places that are special to us can be motivating factors to protect that place. Most of this research has focused on natural places, but our study provides evidence that these findings can be extended to the environment where one's place of worship resides," said Jenny Seifert, lead author of the study and science writer and outreach coordinator for the Water Sustainability and Climate Project at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The study examined the impact of a conservation outreach program designed to encourage environmentally responsible behavior among members of a faith-based community. The program used scripturally based messages and targeted the congregation's sense of place by focusing their motivations on their church and surrounding community. Most participants said the program increased their awareness of their role in caring for the environment, and many adopted new environmentally friendly behaviors.

"Churches are influential sources of social mobilization in the United States, and working with them to promote conservation behaviors in their own communities is one important way to broaden public interest in protecting their environment," said study co-author Bret Shaw, environmental communication specialist for UW-Extension and associate professor in the Department of Life Sciences Communication at UW-Madison.

Seifert and Shaw believe the program was effective because it addressed participants' existing belief systems, which previous research has shown are among the strongest determinants of environment-related attitudes and behavior, in combination with the focus on place. They suggest this emphasis on place increases the relevancy and need to care for the environment.

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http://www.uwex.edu/news/read/2013/11/Study%3A_Focus_on_place_motivates_conservation_behavior_in_faith-based_communities

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November 6, 2013

Hartford Hosts Multifaith Summit On Climate Thursday

'The Great Moral Challenge Not Only Of Our Time But Of All Time'

By Bernard T. Davidow, bdavidow@courant.com
The Hartford Courant

HARTFORD — Buddhists, Baptists, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Unitarians and others are gathering in Hartford on Thursday for an unusual interfaith meeting on the world climate — a topic that has been emerging as an ecumenical cause in recent years.

"We cannot allow it to be simply a political issue," said Terri Eickel, an organizer of the Climate Stewardship Summit. She called care of the Earth "a moral issue, an ethical issue, a spiritual issue." Eickel is executive director of the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network, the event's sponsor.

At least 150 people are expected at the daylong meeting, which will be held at Asylum Hill Congregational Church.

"It is the great moral challenge not only of our time but of all time," said another organizer, the Rev. Tom Carr, senior pastor at Second Baptist Church in Suffield. "It is a moral imperative that we act … from our particular spiritual traditions. We're called to preserve, conserve and restore creation."

The Earth, he said, is "a gift to be used for our needs, not our greeds." Carr said the theme runs through the Bible, from the Book of Genesis, with Adam's being raised from the Earth in the Garden of Eden, through the Book of Revelation, with its reference to the "tree of life" and leaves "for the healing of the nations."

"Right from the beginning, the writers of the Bible understood this stuff intuitively," Carr said. "That's what science tells us today; we are literally stardust. We come from the great supernova that created our solar system."

The sacredness of creation runs through many religions.

Native Americans, Buddhists, Hindus, Jains and other faith traditions have statements addressing climate change on the website of The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, an internationally recognized program that bridges the science of environmental studies and religious worldviews. A co-founder of that program, Mary Evelyn Tucker, will be the keynote speaker Thursday.

"The world's religions are entering into the discussions regarding climate change as they see this as not only a scientific or policy problem but essentially as a moral problem," Tucker said in an email Tuesday.

"The warming of our planet is undermining the ecological integrity of our planetary life support systems and threatening food stability," she said. "It is also creating climate refugees due to rising seas, droughts, hurricanes and other weather related problems. We will begin to make changes when we see that this is an EcoJustice issue — affecting both people and the planet on a massive scale. This is why the voices of the religious traditions are so crucial."

Carr is a co-founder of the Eco-Justice Network, the Connecticut affiliate of Interfaith Power & Light, a national ecumenical group addressing global warming.

"Climate change must take its place as a central concern of communities of faith, which have long played pivotal roles in addressing the moral challenges inherent in slavery, apartheid, chronic poverty, chronic violence, epidemics, and natural disasters," the network says on its website. "Climate change and its causes must now be recognized as increasingly interwoven in — and often exacerbating — the series of fundamental ills that call people of faith to express moral vision and lead moral action. As people of faith, we have a responsibility to help society decisively confront this crisis."

Carr said the purpose of Thursday's summit is threefold:

To confirm, from a religious vantage point, that the planet and its people are in a crisis.

To motivate and empower people to act out of their faith convictions.

To work across religious boundaries in this common purpose — to remind each other, to pray for each other, and to work together.

Ideally, Carr said, participants will go back to their congregations energized to conserve resources and promote use of green fuels and renewable energy in their homes, in their congregations, and in their communities — and to advocate for it with elected officials and businesses.

Awatef Gacem, a Muslim and a member of the Berlin Mosque, helped organize the summit. She said respect for the environment and the creatures in it is a core tenet of her faith.

She said God gave people the intelligence, the power — the trust — to look after nature. "Unfortunately, we forgot about that trust, and we have been abusing the Earth and nature in order to gain more materials in this life," she said.

"Our role is to take care of everything around us. If we are failing in this task, we are going to be held accountable," she said. "The Earth will testify against us."

More information on Thursday's summit is available at http://irejn.org/what-we-do/climate-stewardship-summit/ Registration costs $30 and is available at https://climatestewardshipsummit.eventbrite.com/ Same-day registration will be available, although organizers say those paying at the door should bring their own lunch.

http://fore.research.yale.edu/news/item/hartford-hosts-multifaith-summit-on-climate-thursday/

November 7, 2013

Guilty but Green

Why India keeps coming out on top of environmental sustainability surveys.

By Tori Jane Quante
Slate

In perhaps no other place in the world are the streets as crowded as in New Delhi. Streams of cars, bikes, people, and even animals impossibly weave through one another. For thousands of years, New Delhi and the cities that preceded it have been sustained by the sacred water of the Ganges and her tributaries. But as India continues to develop into one of the world's leading economies, the stress of a fast-growing population and increased urbanization has rendered the

Ganges polluted almost beyond use. India's air pollution is among the worst in the world. Garbage is heaped in streets and often left uncollected for weeks, or longer.

The sight and even more, the stench of inescapable pollution may well be why, when asked as part of Greendex study (a survey that ranks the environmental sustainability of 14 industrialized and developing countries) Indians were most likely to claim that they "feel guilty about the impact [they] have on the environment." As anyone who has forgotten to roll the trash to the curb for a week or two can tell you, the tangibility of one's own waste accumulating unchecked can become a bit overwhelming. Further still, it's incredible how little trash one manages to make when the can is already full.

The 2012 Greendex study, conducted by the National Geographic Society, captures this "full-can" phenomenon on a larger scale: The guiltier a country feels about its environmental impact, the greener its behavior. It is no surprise then that India, the country that feels the most guilt of the 14 surveyed, is also ranked first in the Greendex study for the fourth time running. In fact, developing countries such as India, China, and Brazil, though often portrayed as contributing more than their fair share of pollution to support their growing economies, are consistently ranked *higher* in terms of sustainable behavior than the established industrial countries of North America and Europe, despite the developed countries' longer history of environmental regulations. In part because people in developing countries tangibly experience environmental problems such as water and air pollution, they adopt more sustainable behavior. Americans, who reported the least guilt about their impact on the environment, were ranked dead last in the most recent Greendex study—for the fourth time in a row. (You can learn your own Greendex score at *National Geographic*'s Greendex Calculator.)

Of course, there is more to environmentally sustainable behavior than feeling accountable for one's impact. Greendex scores are determined on the basis of 65 measures in four main categories of consumption: housing, transportation, food, and goods. The indices cover everything from the purchase of bottled water to whether one owns a second home. Many of these measures fit under the big umbrella of energy consumption. For example, participants were asked if they washed their clothes in cold water; walked, biked, or drove to work; heated or cooled their homes; and whether they purchased energy-saving appliances. India leads the rest of the countries in the Greendex in three of the big four categories, coming in third to China and Hungary in the category of transportation alone.

Indians hold an especially strong lead in the category of food consumption, in part because of their cultural distaste for consuming beef. In fact, 64 percent of those surveyed in India claimed they didn't eat it at all. (The next lowest score isn't even close: Among Hungarians, only 12 percent claimed no beef consumption.) Indian consumption of chicken and seafood is among the lowest of countries surveyed as well. A large percentage of Indians are vegetarians either by choice or by circumstance. More and more studies have revealed harmful effects of livestock farming, such as water contamination from fecal matter and a nearly 20 percent contribution of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. It has become clear that meatless diets can have a big impact on the environment, and these consumption measures contribute greatly to India's sustainability ranking. In addition, Indians frequently eat locally grown food, and even more so, food that they have personally cultivated.

Although India remains the reigning Greendex champ, the country suffered losses in every category but housing since 2010, most notably in the categories of goods consumption and transportation. Indians are also among the likeliest of those surveyed to say that they aspire to own a big house and the most likely to say they desire a luxury car. These attitudes about consumption correlate with the growing middle class in India. Like many of us with some disposable income, Indians are now more likely to purchase new goods rather than repair old ones, and because luxury cars and large houses are obvious status symbols, it's natural for those who hope for new wealth to dream of making such purchases. The growing middle classes in China and Brazil also demonstrate a relatively high desire for luxury cars and large houses. At the same time, increases in wealth sometimes translate to the purchase of more costly energy-saving appliances and cars, and many Indians are opting for the extra investment in these types of big-ticket items. It is still too soon to tell whether responsible purchasing will be enough to offset the effects of an increased number of middle-class Indian consumers.

India is poised to move solidly into the category of "developed" rather than "developing" countries, and it's up to the people of India to decide what that means. Sadly, the average wealth of a country's citizen is as negatively correlated to environmentally sustainable behavior as guilt is: The more easily we meet our individual needs, the less likely we are to consider our impact on the world around us. India could become a powerful example for the rest of the world if it is able to break that trend and strike the balance between economic growth and environmental responsibility.

Thanks to Pankaj Jain of the University of North Texas, author of Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communties.

http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/energy_around_the_world/2013/11/india_is_polluted_but_the_greenest_country_in_a_national_geographic_society.html

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November 10, 2013

Learning How to Die in the Anthropocene

By Roy Scranton
New York Times Opinionator

I.

Driving into Iraq just after the 2003 invasion felt like driving into the future. We convoyed all day, all night, past Army checkpoints and burned-out tanks, till in the blue dawn Baghdad rose from the desert like a vision of hell: Flames licked the bruised sky from the tops of refinery towers, cyclopean monuments bulged and leaned against the horizon, broken overpasses swooped and fell over ruined suburbs, bombed factories, and narrow ancient streets.

With "shock and awe," our military had unleashed the end of the world on a city of six million — a city about the same size as Houston or Washington. The infrastructure was totaled: water,

power, traffic, markets and security fell to anarchy and local rule. The city's secular middle class was disappearing, squeezed out between gangsters, profiteers, fundamentalists and soldiers. The government was going down, walls were going up, tribal lines were being drawn, and brutal hierarchies savagely established.

I was a private in the United States Army. This strange, precarious world was my new home. If I survived.

Two and a half years later, safe and lazy back in Fort Sill, Okla., I thought I had made it out. Then I watched on television as Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. This time it was the weather that brought shock and awe, but I saw the same chaos and urban collapse I'd seen in Baghdad, the same failure of planning and the same tide of anarchy. The 82nd Airborne hit the ground, took over strategic points and patrolled streets now under de facto martial law. My unit was put on alert to prepare for riot control operations. The grim future I'd seen in Baghdad was coming home: not terrorism, not even W.M.D.'s, but a civilization in collapse, with a crippled infrastructure, unable to recuperate from shocks to its system.

And today, with recovery still going on more than a year after Sandy and many critics arguing that the Eastern seaboard is no more prepared for a huge weather event than we were last November, it's clear that future's not going away.

This March, Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, the commander of the United States Pacific Command, told security and foreign policy specialists in Cambridge, Mass., that global climate change was the greatest threat the United States faced — more dangerous than terrorism, Chinese hackers and North Korean nuclear missiles. Upheaval from increased temperatures, rising seas and radical destabilization "is probably the most likely thing that is going to happen…" he said, "that will cripple the security environment, probably more likely than the other scenarios we all often talk about.''

Locklear's not alone. Tom Donilon, the national security adviser, said much the same thing in April, speaking to an audience at Columbia's new Center on Global Energy Policy. James Clapper, director of national intelligence, told the Senate in March that "Extreme weather events (floods, droughts, heat waves) will increasingly disrupt food and energy markets, exacerbating state weakness, forcing human migrations, and triggering riots, civil disobedience, and vandalism."

On the civilian side, the World Bank's recent report, "Turn Down the Heat: Climate Extremes, Regional Impacts, and the Case for Resilience," offers a dire prognosis for the effects of global warming, which climatologists now predict will raise global temperatures by 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit within a generation and 7.2 degrees Fahrenheit within 90 years. Projections from researchers at the University of Hawaii find us dealing with "historically unprecedented" climates as soon as 2047. The climate scientist James Hansen, formerly with NASA, has argued that we face an "apocalyptic" future. This grim view is seconded by researchers worldwide, including Anders Levermann, Paul and Anne Ehrlich, Lonnie Thompson and many, many, many others.

This chorus of Jeremiahs predicts a radically transformed global climate forcing widespread upheaval — not possibly, not potentially, but inevitably. We have passed the point of no return. From the point of view of policy experts, climate scientists and national security officials, the question is no longer whether global warming exists or how we might stop it, but how we are going to deal with it.

II.

There's a word for this new era we live in: the Anthropocene. This term, taken up by geologists, pondered by intellectuals and discussed in the pages of publications such as The Economist and the The New York Times, represents the idea that we have entered a new epoch in Earth's geological history, one characterized by the arrival of the human species as a geological force. The Nobel-Prize-winning chemist Paul Crutzen coined the term in 2002, and it has steadily gained acceptance as evidence has increasingly mounted that the changes wrought by global warming will affect not just the world's climate and biological diversity, but its very geology — and not just for a few centuries, but for millenniums. The geophysicist David Archer's 2009 book, "The Long Thaw: How Humans are Changing the Next 100,000 Years of Earth's Climate," lays out a clear and concise argument for how huge concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and melting ice will radically transform the planet, beyond freak storms and warmer summers, beyond any foreseeable future.

The Stratigraphy Commission of the Geological Society of London — the scientists responsible for pinning the "golden spikes" that demarcate geological epochs such as the Pliocene, Pleistocene, and Holocene — have adopted the Anthropocene as a term deserving further consideration, "significant on the scale of Earth history." Working groups are discussing what level of geological time-scale it might be (an "epoch" like the Holocene, or merely an "age" like the Calabrian), and at what date we might say it began. The beginning of the Great Acceleration, in the middle of the 20th century? The beginning of the Industrial Revolution, around 1800? The advent of agriculture?

The challenge the Anthropocene poses is a challenge not just to national security, to food and energy markets, or to our "way of life" — though these challenges are all real, profound, and inescapable. The greatest challenge the Anthropocene poses may be to our sense of what it means to be human. Within 100 years — within three to five generations — we will face average temperatures 7 degrees Fahrenheit higher than today, rising seas at least three to 10 feet higher, and worldwide shifts in crop belts, growing seasons and population centers. Within a thousand years, unless we stop emitting greenhouse gases wholesale right now, humans will be living in a climate the Earth hasn't seen since the Pliocene, three million years ago, when oceans were 75 feet higher than they are today. We face the imminent collapse of the agricultural, shipping and energy networks upon which the global economy depends, a large-scale die-off in the biosphere that's already well on its way, and our own possible extinction. If homo sapiens (or some genetically modified variant) survives the next millenniums, it will be survival in a world unrecognizably different from the one we have inhabited.

Geological time scales, civilizational collapse and species extinction give rise to profound problems that humanities scholars and academic philosophers, with their taste for fine-grained

analysis, esoteric debates and archival marginalia, might seem remarkably ill suited to address. After all, how will thinking about Kant help us trap carbon dioxide? Can arguments between object-oriented ontology and historical materialism protect honeybees from colony collapse disorder? Are ancient Greek philosophers, medieval theologians, and contemporary metaphysicians going to keep Bangladesh from being inundated by rising oceans?

Of course not. But the biggest problems the Anthropocene poses are precisely those that have always been at the root of humanistic and philosophical questioning: "What does it mean to be human?" and "What does it mean to live?" In the epoch of the Anthropocene, the question of individual mortality — "What does my life mean in the face of death?" — is universalized and framed in scales that boggle the imagination. What does human existence mean against 100,000 years of climate change? What does one life mean in the face of species death or the collapse of global civilization? How do we make meaningful choices in the shadow of our inevitable end?

These questions have no logical or empirical answers. They are philosophical problems par excellence. Many thinkers, including Cicero, Montaigne, Karl Jaspers, and The Stone's own Simon Critchley, have argued that studying philosophy is learning how to die. If that's true, then we have entered humanity's most philosophical age — for this is precisely the problem of the Anthropocene. The rub is that now we have to learn how to die not as individuals, but as a civilization.

III.

Learning how to die isn't easy. In Iraq, at the beginning, I was terrified by the idea. Baghdad seemed incredibly dangerous, even though statistically I was pretty safe. We got shot at and mortared, and I.E.D.'s laced every highway, but I had good armor, we had a great medic, and we were part of the most powerful military the world had ever seen. The odds were good I would come home. Maybe wounded, but probably alive. Every day I went out on mission, though, I looked down the barrel of the future and saw a dark, empty hole.

"For the soldier death is the future, the future his profession assigns him," wrote Simone Weil in her remarkable meditation on war, "The Iliad or the Poem of Force." "Yet the idea of man's having death for a future is abhorrent to nature. Once the experience of war makes visible the possibility of death that lies locked up in each moment, our thoughts cannot travel from one day to the next without meeting death's face." That was the face I saw in the mirror, and its gaze nearly paralyzed me.

I found my way forward through an 18th-century Samurai manual, Yamamoto Tsunetomo's "Hagakure," which commanded: "Meditation on inevitable death should be performed daily." Instead of fearing my end, I owned it. Every morning, after doing maintenance on my Humvee, I'd imagine getting blown up by an I.E.D., shot by a sniper, burned to death, run over by a tank, torn apart by dogs, captured and beheaded, and succumbing to dysentery. Then, before we rolled out through the gate, I'd tell myself that I didn't need to worry, because I was already dead. The only thing that mattered was that I did my best to make sure everyone else came back alive. "If by setting one's heart right every morning and evening, one is able to live as though his body were already dead," wrote Tsunetomo, "he gains freedom in the Way."

I got through my tour in Iraq one day at a time, meditating each morning on my inevitable end. When I left Iraq and came back stateside, I thought I'd left that future behind. Then I saw it come home in the chaos that was unleashed after Katrina hit New Orleans. And then I saw it again when Sandy battered New York and New Jersey: Government agencies failed to move quickly enough, and volunteer groups like Team Rubicon had to step in to manage disaster relief.

Now, when I look into our future — into the Anthropocene — I see water rising up to wash out lower Manhattan. I see food riots, hurricanes, and climate refugees. I see 82nd Airborne soldiers shooting looters. I see grid failure, wrecked harbors, Fukushima waste, and plagues. I see Baghdad. I see the Rockaways. I see a strange, precarious world.

Our new home.

The human psyche naturally rebels against the idea of its end. Likewise, civilizations have throughout history marched blindly toward disaster, because humans are wired to believe that tomorrow will be much like today — it is unnatural for us to think that this way of life, this present moment, this order of things is not stable and permanent. Across the world today, our actions testify to our belief that we can go on like this forever, burning oil, poisoning the seas, killing off other species, pumping carbon into the air, ignoring the ominous silence of our coal mine canaries in favor of the unending robotic tweets of our new digital imaginarium. Yet the reality of global climate change is going to keep intruding on our fantasies of perpetual growth, permanent innovation and endless energy, just as the reality of mortality shocks our casual faith in permanence.

The biggest problem climate change poses isn't how the Department of Defense should plan for resource wars, or how we should put up sea walls to protect Alphabet City, or when we should evacuate Hoboken. It won't be addressed by buying a Prius, signing a treaty, or turning off the air-conditioning. The biggest problem we face is a philosophical one: understanding that this civilization is already dead. The sooner we confront this problem, and the sooner we realize there's nothing we can do to save ourselves, the sooner we can get down to the hard work of adapting, with mortal humility, to our new reality.

The choice is a clear one. We can continue acting as if tomorrow will be just like yesterday, growing less and less prepared for each new disaster as it comes, and more and more desperately invested in a life we can't sustain. Or we can learn to see each day as the death of what came before, freeing ourselves to deal with whatever problems the present offers without attachment or fear.

If we want to learn to live in the Anthropocene, we must first learn how to die.

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http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/10/learning-how-to-die-in-the-anthropocene/?_r=2&

November 11, 2013

Climate COP-19 Edition of UNEP Magazine, 'Our Planet', now available online

United Nations Environment Programme
Press Release

Please note that the Climate COP edition of UNEP's magazine, "**Our Planet**", is now available online at http://www.unep.org/pdf/OP-2013-12-EN.pdf

The theme for the issue is ***The Future is Priceless***.

In addition to an introduction by UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner, articles include:

-- Marcin Korolec, Minister of Environment, Poland, and President of UNFCCC COP 19:
Opening a new chapter: COP 19 in Warsaw will be a milestone on the path to a new agreement on combating climate change

-- Maria van der Hoeven, Executive Director, International Energy Agency:
Green growth: Look to renewables and energy efficiency to improve security and sustainability

-- Rajendra K. Pachauri, Director-General, The Energy & Resources Institute (TERI), and Chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):
Advancing our understanding: The IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report adds further weight and confidence to previous reports and provides new estimates and quantitative information on climate change

-- Margaret Chan, Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO):
Healthy measures: The increasing evidence of the effects of climate change on health adds to the many arguments for taking action

-- Yangyang Xu, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego, and Durwood Zaelke, Founder and President, Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development:
Unpacking the problem: Simultaneous efforts to tackle carbon dioxide and short-lived climate

pollutants provide the best chance of avoiding dangerous climate change

-- Romina Picolotti, President, Center for Human Rights and the Environment, Argentina:
Fast and refreshing: Action is increasingly being taken to tackle the short-lived climate pollutants that are responsible for nearly half of global warming

-- Sheila Watson, Executive Secretary, Global Fuel Economy Initiative:
Driving change: Existing cost-effective technologies could halve carbon dioxide emissions for cars and light duty vehicles

-- Alfred Ofosu Ahenkorah, Executive Secretary, Energy Commission and Deputy Chair, Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP), and Martin Hiller, Director General, REEEP:
Developing Solutions: Development must be the priority in moving to a low-carbon future

-- Bianca Jagger, Chair, Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation:
Gaining ground: Restoring land must lie at the heart of any successful strategy to mitigate, and adapt to, climate change

http://fore.research.yale.edu/news/item/climate-cop-19-edition-of-unep-magazine-our-planet-now-available-online/

November 11, 2013

"It's time to stop this madness" – Philippines plea at UN climate talks

Responding to Climate Change (RTCC)

Philippines lead negotiator Yeb Sano has just addressed the opening session of the UN climate summit in Warsaw – calling for urgent action to prevent a repeat of the devastating storm that hit parts of his country at the weekend. A full transcript of his speech is below.

Mr. President, I have the honor to speak on behalf of the resilient people of the Republic of the Philippines.

At the onset, allow me to fully associate my delegation with the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of the Republic of Fiji, on behalf of G77 and China as well as the statement made by Nicaragua on behalf of the Like-Minded Developing Countries.

First and foremost, the people of the Philippines, and our delegation here for the United Nations Climate Change Convention's 19th Conference of the Parties here in Warsaw, from the bottom of our hearts, thank you for your expression of sympathy to my country in the face of this national difficulty.

In the midst of this tragedy, the delegation of the Philippines is comforted by the warm hospitality of Poland, with your people offering us warm smiles everywhere we go. Hotel staff and people on the streets, volunteers and personnel within the National Stadium have warmly offered us kind words of sympathy. So, thank you Poland.

The arrangements you have made for this COP is also most excellent and we highly appreciate the tremendous effort you have put into the preparations for this important gathering.

We also thank all of you, friends and colleagues in this hall and from all corners of the world as you stand beside us in this difficult time. I thank all countries and governments who have extended your solidarity and for offering assistance to the Philippines. I thank the youth present here and the billions of young people around the world who stand steadfast behind my delegation and who are watching us shape their future. I thank civil society, both who are working on the ground as we race against time in the hardest hit areas, and those who are here in Warsaw prodding us to have a sense of urgency and ambition. We are deeply moved by this manifestation of human solidarity. This outpouring of support proves to us that as a human race, we can unite; that as a species, we care.

It was barely 11 months ago in Doha when my delegation appealed to the world… to open our eyes to the stark reality that we face… as then we confronted a catastrophic storm that resulted in the costliest disaster in Philippine history. Less than a year hence, we cannot imagine that a disaster much bigger would come. With an apparent cruel twist of fate, my country is being tested by this hellstorm called Super Typhoon Haiyan, which has been described by experts as the strongest typhoon that has ever made landfall in the course of recorded human history. It was so strong that if there was a Category 6, it would have fallen squarely in that box. Up to this hour, we remain uncertain as to the full extent of the devastation, as information trickles in in an agonizingly slow manner because electricity lines and communication lines have been cut off and may take a while before these are restored. The initial assessment show that Haiyan left a wake of massive devastation that is unprecedented, unthinkable and horrific, affecting 2/3 of the Philippines, with about half a million people now rendered homeless, and with scenes reminiscent of the aftermath of a tsunami, with a vast wasteland of mud and debris and dead bodies. According to satellite estimates, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration also estimated that Haiyan achieved a minimum pressure between around 860 mbar (hPa; 25.34 inHg) and the Joint Typhoon Warning Center estimated Haiyan to have attained one-minute sustained winds of 315 km/h (195 mph) and gusts up to 378 km/h (235 mph) making it the strongest typhoon in modern recorded history. Despite the massive efforts that my country had exerted in preparing for the onslaught of this monster of a storm, it was just a force too powerful and even as a nation familiar with storms, Super Typhoon Haiyan was nothing we have ever experienced before, or perhaps nothing that any country has every experienced before.

The picture in the aftermath is ever so slowly coming into clearer focus. The devastation is colossal. And as if this is not enough, another storm is brewing again in the warm waters of the western Pacific. I shudder at the thought of another typhoon hitting the same places where people have not yet even managed to begin standing up.

To anyone who continues to deny the reality that is climate change, I dare you to get off your ivory tower and away from the comfort of you armchair. I dare you to go to the islands of the Pacific, the islands of the Caribbean and the islands of the Indian ocean and see the impacts of rising sea levels; to the mountainous regions of the Himalayas and the Andes to see communities confronting glacial floods, to the Arctic where communities grapple with the fast dwindling polar ice caps, to the large deltas of the Mekong, the Ganges, the Amazon, and the Nile where lives and livelihoods are drowned, to the hills of Central America that confronts similar monstrous hurricanes, to the vast savannas of Africa where climate change has likewise become a matter of life and death as food and water becomes scarce. Not to forget the massive hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico and the eastern seaboard of North America. And if that is not enough, you may want to pay a visit to the Philippines right now.

The science has given us a picture that has become much more in focus. The IPCC report on climate change and extreme events underscored the risks associated with changes in the patterns as well as frequency of extreme weather events. Science tells us that simply, climate change will mean more intense tropical storms. As the Earth warms up, that would include the oceans. The energy that is stored in the waters off the Philippines will increase the intensity of typhoons and the trend we now see is that more destructive storms will be the new norm.

This will have profound implications on many of our communities, especially who struggle against the twin challenges of the development crisis and the climate change crisis. Typhoons such as Yolanda (Haiyan) and its impacts represent a sobering reminder to the international community that we cannot afford to procrastinate on climate action. Warsaw must deliver on enhancing ambition and should muster the political will to address climate change.

In Doha, we asked “If not us then who? If not now, then when? If not here, then where?” (borrowed from Philippine student leader Ditto Sarmiento during Martial Law). It may have fell on deaf ears. But here in Warsaw, we may very well ask these same forthright questions. “If not us, then who? If not now, then when? If not here in Warsaw, where?”

What my country is going through as a result of this extreme climate event is madness. The climate crisis is madness.

We can stop this madness. Right here in Warsaw.

It is the 19th COP, but we might as well stop counting, because my country refuses to accept that a COP30 or a COP40 will be needed to solve climate change. And because it seems that despite the significant gains we have had since the UNFCCC was born, 20 years hence we continue to fail in fulfilling the ultimate objective of the Convention. Now, we find ourselves in a situation where we have to ask ourselves – can we ever attain the objective set out in Article 2 – which is

to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system? By failing to meet the objective the Convention, we may have ratified the doom of vulnerable countries.

And if we have failed to meet the objective of the Convention, we have to confront the issue of loss and damage. Loss and damage from climate change is a reality today across the world. Developed country emissions reductions targets are dangerously low and must be raised immediately, but even if they were in line with the demand of reducing 40-50% below 1990 levels, we would still have locked-in climate change and would still need to address the issue of loss and damage.

We find ourselves at a critical juncture and the situation is such that even the most ambitious emissions reductions by developed countries, who should have been taking the lead in combatting climate change in the past 2 decades, will not be enough to avert the crisis. It is now too late, too late to talk about the world being able to rely on Annex I countries to solve the climate crisis. We have entered a new era that demands global solidarity in order to fight climate change and ensure that pursuit of sustainable human development remains at the fore of the global community's efforts. This is why means of implementation for developing countries is ever more crucial.

It was the Secretary general of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro, 1992, Maurice Strong who said that "History reminds us that what is not possible today, may be inevitable tomorrow."

We cannot sit and stay helpless staring at this international climate stalemate. It is now time to take action. We need an emergency climate pathway.

I speak for my delegation. But more than that, I speak for the countless people who will no longer be able to speak for themselves after perishing from the storm. I also speak for those who have been orphaned by this tragedy. I also speak for the people now racing against time to save survivors and alleviate the suffering of the people affected by the disaster.

We can take drastic action now to ensure that we prevent a future where super typhoons are a way of life. Because we refuse, as a nation, to accept a future where super typhoons like Haiyan become a fact of life. We refuse to accept that running away from storms, evacuating our families, suffering the devastation and misery, having to count our dead, become a way of life. We simply refuse to.

We must stop calling events like these as natural disasters. It is not natural when people continue to struggle to eradicate poverty and pursue development and gets battered by the onslaught of a monster storm now considered as the strongest storm ever to hit land. It is not natural when science already tells us that global warming will induce more intense storms. It is not natural when the human species has already profoundly changed the climate.

Disasters are never natural. They are the intersection of factors other than physical. They are the accumulation of the constant breach of economic, social, and environmental thresholds. Most of the time disasters is a result of inequity and the poorest people of the world are at greatest risk

because of their vulnerability and decades of maldevelopment, which I must assert is connected to the kind of pursuit of economic growth that dominates the world; the same kind of pursuit of so-called economic growth and unsustainable consumption that has altered the climate system.

Now, if you will allow me, to speak on a more personal note.

Super Typhoon Haiyan made landfall in my family's hometown and the devastation is staggering. I struggle to find words even for the images that we see from the news coverage. I struggle to find words to describe how I feel about the losses and damages we have suffered from this cataclysm.

Up to this hour, I agonize while waiting for word as to the fate of my very own relatives. What gives me renewed strength and great relief was when my brother succeeded in communicating with us that he has survived the onslaught. In the last two days, he has been gathering bodies of the dead with his own two hands. He is hungry and weary as food supplies find it difficult to arrive in the hardest hit areas.

We call on this COP to pursue work until the most meaningful outcome is in sight. Until concrete pledges have been made to ensure mobilization of resources for the Green Climate Fund. Until the promise of the establishment of a loss and damage mechanism has been fulfilled; until there is assurance on finance for adaptation; until concrete pathways for reaching the committed 100 billion dollars have been made; until we see real ambition on stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations. We must put the money where our mouths are.

This process under the UNFCCC has been called many names. It has been called a farce. It has been called an annual carbon-intensive gathering of useless frequent flyers. It has been called many names. But it has also been called the Project to save the planet. It has been called "saving tomorrow today". We can fix this. We can stop this madness. Right now. Right here, in the middle of this football field.

I call on you to lead us. And let Poland be forever known as the place we truly cared to stop this madness. Can humanity rise to the occasion? I still believe we can.

Update

During his speech, Sano added an unscripted pledge to fast during the conference, until meaningful progress had been made. He said:

"In solidarity with my countrymen who are struggling to find food back home and with my brother who has not had food for the last three days, in all due respect Mr. President, and I mean no disrespect for your kind hospitality, I will now commence a voluntary fasting for the climate. This means I will voluntarily refrain from eating food during this COP until a meaningful outcome is in sight."

http://www.rtcc.org/2013/11/11/its-time-to-stop-this-madness-philippines-plea-at-un-climate-talks/

November 12, 2013

Worlds apart: Indigenous leaders abandon faith in UN to find climate solution.

Thousands of delegates are gathered in Warsaw for another round of climate talks. On the other side of the globe, indigenous leaders say they're done with the UN talks.

By Douglas Fischer
The Daily Climate

GHOST RANCH, N.M. – As United Nations delegates gather in Warsaw in the 19th annual effort to craft a global climate treaty, indigenous leaders from across North America met half a world away and offered a prophecy: The solution to climate change will never come via the UN talks.

Tribal elders from the United States, Greenland and Mexico spoke of the need for individual action rather than government edicts, and of the difficulty – and urgency – of replacing economic questions with moral ones.

They spoke of grandfathers and grandmothers, of battles with alcoholism and disenfranchisement, of a world that's changing around them and a need to do something for their grandchildren. Most of all, though, they talked of a need for a new direction in an increasingly unsustainable world.

Organized by the Bozeman, Mont.- based American Indian Institute, the gathering drew about 80 people from across North America.

Different palette

Here amid the hills and mesas that painter Georgia O'Keeffe made famous, these elders presented a different palette with which to look at environmental woes. They placed little faith in the weighty United Nations process that opened Monday and will draw thousands of people to Warsaw over the next two weeks to try to find a way to stem emissions of greenhouse gases.

"I have nothing to say to them," said Angaangaq, an Inuk known here as Uncle and who since 1975 has been "runner" for his elders in Greenland, spreading their words worldwide. "Not one of those United Nations people responsible has ever changed."

"They are orators of the highest quality, but ... the time for excuses has gone long ago."

The dismissal of the UN was all the more striking given that it came from those who, in the 1970s, spearheaded the quest to have the world body recognize indigenous rights.

Forty years later, they have moved on.

Faithkeeper

Oren Lyons is faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan of the Onondaga Nation in the Haudenosaunee, formerly the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. In the late 1970s he saw the UN as a "beacon" that would finally begin to address and restore indigenous rights. No longer.

He spent years traveling to and talking before various global forums. At a summit in Davos, Switzerland, a few years ago he realized he had a "guaranteed prophecy" to offer. It still applies today:

"You will meet again next year, and nothing will have changed."

Of course, Native elders are not the only ones feeling disenfranchised by the UN talks. Occasionally a "people's summit" sprouts near the official one, offering space and a platform to artists, activists and others frustrated by lack of action on social and environmental justice issues at the UN proceedings.

Even at the UN talks, hope has been tempered: No breakthroughs are expected this year. Delegates and observers say the best they can hope for is progress toward a more ambitious agreement in Paris in 2015.

But for the elders gathered here in New Mexico, time is up. Change, they said repeatedly, must come from a far more personal level.

Seven generations

"The work that we have is for all of us to do," said Vickie Downey, a clan mother at the Tesuque Pueblo in New Mexico. "We do this for our grandchildren."

Many at the three-day forum referenced the ancient Haudenosaunee tradition of thinking seven generations into the future.

"We're a small group, the indigenous peoples of the Earth, but we're very old," Lyons said.

And Lyons, who is getting old, too, senses a return to the "old values:" Respect, concern for the future, sharing.

"How do you instruct 7 billion people as to their relationship to the Earth?" he asked. "It's very difficult – when you're struggling to protect your people and you're hanging by a thread – to instruct other people."

Uncle brought a pair of drums from Greenland. He spoke of Nanoq, the polar bear, and of the 78 new species of fish swimming in Greenland's waters – "I grew up knowing every single fish in the world of my home. Now I have 78 new ones to learn" because of dramatic changes in the environment.

Not just beautiful words

He spoke, too, of his reluctance to join the circle of elders and be a runner. But as a runner – as "the world's most-traveled Eskimo," as he said – he's seen a universal message coming from tribes:

Change, he said, "is going to come from you."

"Many, many Native people have the same sayings: It is you, not your city, not your state, not your government, not the UN."

"These people are not just talking beautiful words," he added. "These people are talking wisdom if only you and I are able to listen."

Correction (Nov. 13, 2013): About 80 people attended the American Indian Institute forum. Earlier versions of this story underreported the number.

Douglas Fischer is editor of The Daily Climate, a news service covering energy, the environment and climate change. Find us on Twitter @TheDailyClimate or email Douglas Fischer at dfischer@DailyClimate.org

http://wwwp.dailyclimate.org/tdc-newsroom/2013/11/ancient-voices-climate-change

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November 13, 2013

Divine intervention? Pope opposes fracking

By John Upton
Grist

The worldwide leader of the Catholic Church, none other than the motherfracking pope himself, has come out in opposition to the worldwide scourge of hydraulic fracturing.

OK, so Pope Francis didn't exactly make a policy statement or a speech denouncing fracking. But hints have emerged that he might do so soon. And Twitter is afire with pictures of His Holiness holding up anti-fracking T-shirts. The pictures were taken Monday following meetings with Argentinians dealing with environmental issues: [photos]

Environmental filmmaker Fernando 'Pino' Solanas told *elEconomista* that the pope had indicated during a Monday meeting that he was working on a papal memo, known as an encyclical, that will address environmental issues.

John Upton is a science fan and green news boffin who tweets, posts articles to Facebook, and blogs about ecology. He welcomes reader questions, tips, and incoherent rants: johnupton@gmail.com.

http://grist.org/news/divine-intervention-pope-opposes-fracking/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=update&utm_campaign=socialflow

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November 14, 2013

An Anti-Fracking Pope?

By J. David Nolan
First Things

A recent image of Pope Francis holding a T-shirt with the slogan "No al Fracking"—"No to Fracking"—has sparked varied response, including worries from Sarah Palin and praise from environmental groups.

Reports from a meeting held on Monday between Francis and Argentine environmentalists hint that the pope may be preparing an encyclical dedicated to environmental issues, including the issue of fracking. If these reports are true, the pope would be following in the steps of Benedict XVI and John Paul II, who both recognized the depths of our current environmental crisis and eloquently encouraged appropriate responses. It also makes sense that the namesake of St. Francis would dedicate thought and energy to environmental action, especially after John Paul proclaimed St. Francis "the heavenly Patron of those who promote ecology" in 1979.

John Paul had some very strong words on the human duty to address the current environmental crisis in his 1990 World Day of Peace address. He explicitly emphasizes the moral character of environmental issues:

Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past. . . . Moreover, a new *ecological awareness* is beginning to emerge which, rather than being downplayed, ought to be encouraged to develop into concrete programmes and initiatives. . . .

[W]e must go to the source of the problem and face in its entirety that profound moral crisis *of which the destruction of the environment is only one troubling aspect.*

Certain elements of today's ecological crisis reveal its moral character. First among these is the *indiscriminate* application of advances in science and technology.

Fracking is a relatively old technology—the first well in the USA began operations in 1968. And the recent boom (of perhaps "indiscriminate application") undoubtedly has its benefits. It offers a major economic boost, especially for communities that sit on top of shale gas reserves. Furthermore, fracking has already contributed to the U.S.A.'s energy independence, and offers the promise of energy stability for years to come.

But the past three popes have all argued that short-term economic gains do not justify themselves, especially given the challenges humanity faces in terms of climate change and widespread environmental destruction. It is unfair and immoral to pursue current prosperity at the expense of the wellbeing of our children and grandchildren.

Additionally, John Paul recognized that environmental issues cannot be disconnected from a care for the poor. And it makes sense that Pope Francis, with his vision of a "Church for the poor," would worry about the dual exploitation of nature and worker that can occur when an economy is based on non-renewable resources. We only have to look to areas of the U.S.—Appalachia, for example—to see what can happen to rural communities when mines run dry (sorry, mixed metaphor). As John Paul said:

Proper ecological balance will not be found without *directly addressing the structural forms of poverty* that exist throughout the world. Rural poverty and unjust land distribution in many countries, for example, have led to subsistence farming and to the exhaustion of the soil. Once their land yields no more, many farmers move on to clear new land, thus accelerating uncontrolled deforestation, or they settle in urban centers which lack the infrastructure to receive them. . . . In the face of such situations it would be wrong to assign responsibility to the poor alone for the negative environmental consequences of their actions. Rather, the poor, to whom the earth is entrusted no less than to others, must be enabled to find a way out of their poverty. This will require a courageous reform of structures, as well as new ways of relating among peoples and States.

If the pope speaks out explicitly against fracking there surely will be a lot of noise, but given the various papal declarations from the last twenty-five years, we shouldn't be hearing gasps of surprise.

http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2013/11/14/an-anti-fracking-pope/

November 19, 2013

OP-ED: Nuclear Weapons and the Unfolding Universe

By Winslow Myers
HuntingtonNews.net

Through the work of the eco-philosopher Thomas Berry and his protégés, a new way of looking at the universe and our human place in it has been established. While still not "mainstream," this

new story has given hope not only to hundreds of thousands of environmental activists around the world, but as well to thoughtful people in many fields, including economics, theology, education, politics, and science.

The new story of the universe goes something like this: we moderns, using tools like the Hubble Telescope, are the first generation that possesses the resource of the continuous 14 billion-year story of the unfurling from the original flaring forth, through the establishment of the galaxies, stars, and planets, to the development of cellular life, to the expanding diversity of life here on earth, to the rise of a particular kind of self-reflective consciousness that is the hallmark of human beings. The cosmologist Brian Swimme offers one of the most concise and beautiful retellings of this story in his prize-winning one hour DVD, "Journey of the Universe" (*www.**journeyoftheuniverse**.org/*). This life-changing account of our origins and creative potential ought to be seen by every student, every congressman, every pastor, rabbi, mullah, every businessman, in short, everyone.

What are the implications? First, this scientific story of the universe is the basis for all stories, all religions, all the mythic systems humans have devised to give meaning to our presence here—and further, this story is the basis not only for our religious myths and symbols, but also for our educational systems, our economics, and our political arrangements. We humans belong in this universe. We emerged from it. The elements in our bodies, carbon and oxygen and calcium, were forged in the furnace of the stars.

A second obvious implication is that our economic systems must be based in the reality of the economics of the earth itself. As Berry said over and over, you cannot have healthy humans on a sick planet. We cannot extract more resources than the planet can naturally replace, or pollute its systems to the point where it is unable to heal itself. At present our world economic system is based on doing exactly that.

A third clear implication is that all humans are intimately related and connected in their collective story and their collective fate, and connected to all the living systems of the earth without which our lives would be impossible. All our divisions, in the context of the universe story, are artificial abstractions based upon fears, labels, and projections: Arab and Jew, Shia and Sunni, Islam and "the West," capitalist and socialist, Republican and Democrat.

The degree of this interdependence has taken on a fresh intensity of meaning in the light of our ecological awareness of global interdependence. We cannot save the earth in parts. If Brazil fails to preserve the rain forest, the very lungs of the earth, none of us will breathe oxygenated air. Among thoughtful citizens worldwide, such ideas are already well-worn clichés. But the cliché falls far behind the actions we need to undertake to actually address the problems.

It is astonishing to realize that as a part of this awesome unfolding story, our reflective self-consciousness has also managed to unlock the enormous destructive power at the heart of the atom—threatening everything on our small planet. In the same way our minds and hearts have not caught up with the need for radical concerted action to address our ecological challenges, we also experience a distance between the reality that humans cannot afford to use nuclear weapons,

and concrete political efforts to abolish them, efforts which are still considered pie-in-the-sky by our leaders.

Nuclear weapons are a symptom of our security fears, but these very fears can become a motive for action toward disarmament if the shared *system* of mutual fears is made the basis of diplomacy. The fatal combination of our us-and-them thinking and weapons themselves, no matter who has them, is the threat. It is an illusion to think that just because we are American or French or Pakistani or Chinese, we are infallible and wouldn't misuse them. There is no going back. They can't be uninvented. They cannot provide security, because if they were detonated above a certain not-so-large number (some scientists speculate about 5% of existing weapons), a planet-ending nuclear winter would ensue.

Most of the media seems utterly wed to the apparently unchangeable truth of this fear system. But the*normative* political gesture of people who understand that they all emerged from one universe begins with reaching out beyond an automatic assumption of competitiveness toward the familiarity that establishes safe spaces for dialogue, friendship and gradually built trust, in the context of challenges shared by all.

Were I a diplomat, I would base my confidence-building overtures with perceived adversaries on this new way of thinking—that this nation or that may be enemies on one level, but on a planetary level we all face this threat together. I would pledge no-first-use. I would push hard for a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, especially difficult as that might be.

In the larger context of the universe story, may there soon come a time when the nations of the world, accepting the uselessness of nuclear weapons in war, might cooperate to create a reliable system of rockets and warheads for diverting asteroids on a collision path with our earth. People tend to cooperate more effectively if they can join forces toward a common goal. Then these destructive weapons will take their place in the creative context that we already know to be true: we're all in this 14-billion-year-old adventure together.

•••••

Winslow Myers is the author of "Living Beyond War: A Citizen's Guide," serves on the advisory board of the War Prevention Initiative, and writes for PeaceVoice. This commentary was submitted by Tom H. Hastings, Ed.D., Director, PeaceVoice Program, Oregon Peace Institute

http://www.peacevoice.info/

http://www.huntingtonnews.net/77161

November 24, 2013

Religious leaders urged to aid Earth

By Christy Brown
Courier-journal.com

Editor's note: Last week, Christy Brown of Louisville delivered the keynote address at the Religions for Peace Ninth World Assembly in Vienna, Austria. More than 600 international religious leaders and other concerned governmental and non-governmental representatives met to "advance multi-religious action for the common good. Brown spoke about the sacredness of air, water and soil, and the responsibility of people of faith to revere life. Here are excerpts from her address:

It is an exceptional honor to be here at your truly remarkable Religions for Peace 9th World Assembly. I am humbled to be before you because I sincerely believe that you represent the very best of the best of our world.

Each one of you in carrying out your vitally important vocations, is a true beacon and model of peace and of hospitality because you daily lead by love, inspiring faith, hope, and charity around our entire suffering world.

I accepted your invitation out of my gratitude to you and to Religions for Peace, which I have been privileged to serve many years as an international trustee. This has allowed me to witness firsthand your loving and powerful work of developing an ever expanding Religions For Peace global movement.

Finally, I accepted because of my extremely deep concern for the health of all of life, and my alarm at the terrifying rate at which we are currently destroying our world's environment.

The breadth of your developing Religions for Peace family is truly exceptional, showing me and all of our globe's faith-filled individuals the endless potential power of all faiths working together to effect serious, positive global change.

My Louisville colleague, Dr. Kathleen Lyons, and I have brought you two gifts from our Kentucky home:

The first is a global toolkit, which is your invitation to please become recognized as the world's voice for the preservation of our sacred air, water and soil so as to create healthy communities that are essential for the survival of all of life — human and natural.

Our other gift is your personal key and bookmark, which is a symbol of our prayer that you will continuously unlock your minds and hearts in new kinds of ways to discover that you are the true spiritual and inter-religious guardians of health and the loving protectors of all of life.

HRH Prince Charles laments that we have for years been encouraged to think of ourselves as disconnected from nature, perhaps even the "masters of nature." As a result, we have lost touch with the holiness of nature, which has been left in our care in a very, very sacred trust.

He believes, as many of us do, that to be restored to wholeness we must be reinstated consciously, spiritually and emotionally, with the vast, larger life of which we are a part. This larger life is sustained by the sacred air, water, and soil — all of which are the gifts of life from the great author of life.

There is widespread evidence that we are scarcely conscious of our unity with all of life. The U.N.'s Millennium Ecosystem Assessment warns that "nearly two-thirds of the natural machinery that supports life on Earth is being degraded by human pressure" and yet the reality is that this alarming news has scarcely drawn a response.

Gandhi has told us "the Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed." Again, no response.

My fellow Kentuckian and dear friend, Wendell Berry, has said "industrial humanity has brought about phase two of original sin, making us all now absolutely complicit in the murder of creation." But I ask you, our religious leaders — who is listening?

Thich Nhat Hanh, a brilliant thinker in his own right and a friend to one of my personal heroes and fellow Kentuckians, Thomas Merton, has been telling us, "The bells of mindfulness are sounding. All over the Earth, we are experiencing floods, draughts, and massive wildfires. Sea ice is melting in the Arctic, hurricanes and heat waves are killing thousands. Mother Earth is being destroyed and Mother Earth is angry … and yet we continue to consume, ignoring the ringing bells." So I ask you again — who is listening?

We hear comments equally startling on a daily basis from those who love the Earth, like His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew who tells us that "the way we respond to the natural environment directly reflects the way we treat human beings and that the survival of the natural environment is also the survival of ourselves and that a crime against nature is a crime against ourselves and sin against God."

Pope Francis is asking us “to protect with love all that God has given us.” So with our hearts full of love, let’s begin now by heeding the voices that speak on behalf of nature and encouraging our followers to do the same.

The challenge before us is twofold: We face an ecological crisis as well as an unheeding populace. While I do not underestimate the magnitude of this challenge, I believe that our faiths give each of us hope that an improved understanding of the urgency of climate change can and will take place through you, our world’s religious leaders. We will see positive change when you begin to teach daily from your mosques, your cathedrals, your temples and your synagogues that all of human life is precious. Health, harmony and peace can only be achieved when we practice justice towards the world’s sacred elements, the source of all life and our connection with the divine.

I am confident that our connection to this one planet is one of our greatest commonalities. You, the religious leaders of our globe, who have “the allegiance of billions of believers,” hold the world’s keys and are the prophetic voices that our suffering Earth has been waiting for. You are the voices of faith, of hope and of charity which can create that one unified interreligious voice that will empower all religious leaders to find the much needed new ways to apply our universally shared moral principles to all life, natural and human, such as:

• Thou shalt not kill.

• Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.

• And thou shall do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

Fifty years ago at the young age of 16, I was among the 250,000 participants in the Civil Rights March on the Mall in Washington, D.C. It was on that August day in 1963 that I witnessed for the first time in my life what I believe to be the absolutely remarkable power of successful inter-religious leadership.

It was there that those very diverse religious leaders, speaking from their hearts, insisted that the racial atrocities that our suffering United States of America were tolerating were absolutely immoral and therefore completely unacceptable. Because of their fervor, we, the 250,000 plus people of all ages, creeds, and colors learned that day that, yes, together, “We must overcome,” and that, yes together we shall overcome.

Two years ago, in September, my extraordinary husband of 43 years, Owsley Brown II, a fellow Religions for Peace international trustee, died very unexpectedly and tragically from an extremely rare form of MRSA. His shocking and completely surprising death, I will always believe, was absolutely connected to our destruction of life's natural balance.

So I stand before you, a widow with a broken heart, asking that you in the name of all of the children and grandchildren of our globe, please use this your Ninth World Assembly to heed Prince Charles' recommendation to create and lead a global sustainability movement that will restore our world and all of its people to moral and physical wellness.

This sustainability movement will allow you, our religious leaders, to become globally recognized as "Mother Earth's Moral Agents of Change" and the Moral Voices for all of Life as you teach each of us to use prayer, song, and love to celebrate the miraculous interconnectedness between our natural and human world. Together, we learn that each of us, bound in a single miraculous unity of life, is blessed to hold the whole world in our collective hands.

Christy Brown, of Louisville, is a founding board member of the Center for Interfaith Relations.

http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013311240007&gcheck=1&nclick_check=1

http://fore.research.yale.edu/news/item/religious-leaders-urged-to-aid-earth/

November 27, 2013

8 Days of Hanukkah, my True Love said to me:"Please heal My Earth!"

By Rabbi Arthur Waskow
The Shalom Center

Hanukkah brings with it again this year three crucial teachings about healing our Mother Earth from the ravages of global scorching

- **The Green Menorah**, a Tree of Light that is a fusion of human craft and Earth's growth. On this Shabbat we read the Prophetic passage from Zechariah that emplaces the Temple Menorah as part of a tiny forest of olive trees that give forth their oil straight into the Menorah.

We breathe in what these Trees of Light breathe out; they breathe in what we breathe out. We take new inner strength by breathing in the God Who breathes all life, by opening our eyes to the Source of all Light in this wintry season of our dark foreboding.

We realize that Hanukkah teaches: We humans are not lords of the Earth, but part of the Earth. These trees feed us as we feed them. Read a little further to see how we at The Shalom Center are ourselves doing this, with your help.

- The tradition of resistance to Imperial Antiochus and his Empire's desecration of the Temple – a resistance crystallized in the teaching by Zechariah: "Not by might and not by power, but by My Spirit [b'ruchi — or, "by My breath," "by My wind!"]. We take new inner strength to resist the Empires of our day — Big Carbon – that today are burning, despoiling, desecrating the Holy Temple of all cultures and all creatures: Earth. We take new inner strength not only to resist harm but to heal and grow the sprouts for our own Trees of Light.
- The legend that **one day's worth of olive oil lasted for eight days** –a teaching that we ourselves can minimize our use of oil and coal and unnatural gas; can through conservation and the sustainable use of sun and wind reshape our country and the world; can shave off seven-eighths of the fossil-fuel burning that is scorching earth and killing thousands in droughts and hurricanes, typhoons and floods.

This year, the first night of Hanukkah comes this very evening, November 27. We are taught not only to light the Hanukkah menorah, but to publicize the miracle, to turn our individual actions outward for the rest of the world to see and to be inspired.

So we invite you to join, this Hanukkah, in The Shalom Center's Green Menorah Commitment for taking action -– personal, communal, and political – to heal the earth from the global climate crisis.

We ourselves are committed to take an active part in healing the Earth. In the wake of the disastrous typhoon in the Philippines, far worse because of global scorching, we created a Climate Disaster Relief Fund — half for immediate relief and half for preventive action. Details are at the end of this letter. We ask you to give part of your Hanukkah giving not only as a gift to The Shalom Center's work, but much more as a healing gift to those who are suffering already and those who will be suffering even more, if the scorching of our Mother Earth gets even worse. To help in that healing, please click here: https://theshalomcenter.org/civicrm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=11

That is **our *Green Menorah*** commitment. We ask you — after lighting your menorah each evening — to dedicate yourself to making the changes in your life that will allow our limited sources of energy to last for as long as they're needed, and with minimal impact on our climate.

Day 1: This year, when the first day of Hanukkah is also Thanksgiving Day in the USA, begin the meal of harvest with these words:

We thank you, Holy One, Who makes of one Breath, one Harvest,
All the life-forms of our Earth, Your Earth;
Who breathes into us the wisdom to know that our mouths connect us
With all life:
That as we breathe in and out,
We share our breath, Your breath,
With each other and with all of life;
That as we share this food,
We are sharing from Your Harvest,
Being fed by all Your life-forms;
We thank You, Holy One, Who breathes into us
The wisdom to shape our breath into words;
The wisdom to shape our words as we speak together
At this table, our table, Your table,
So that our speaking aims toward fuller wisdom;
Who breathes into us the wisdom
To share our food with all who need it,
And to choose what we eat so that it nourishes all life
Upon our planet, Your planet. [And let us say, Ameyn]

Day 2: Congregation, Hillel, JCC, retirement home, etc: Urge your congregation or community building to do an energy/insulation audit. Urge switching to wind-powered rather than coal-powered electricity. Call your utility company to learn how.

Day 3. (which this year is Shabbat). Your Automobile: If possible, choose today or one other day every week to not use your car at all. Every day, lessen driving: use public transit, bike, walk. Shop where you can walk and at locally owned stores, if at all possible. Cluster errands. Carpool. Don't idle engine beyond 20 seconds.

Day 4. Your network of friends, Twitter buddies, Facebookers, and the members of civic or professional groups you belong to: If you have friends like newspaper editors, labor union or professional association leaders, real-estate developers, architects, bankers, etc. urge them to strengthen the green factor in all their decisions and actions.

Day 5: Home and workplace: On Monday morning, call your electric-power utility to switch to wind-powered electricity. (For each home, 100% wind-power reduces CO2 emissions the same as not driving 20,000 miles in one year.) Urge the top officials of your workplace to arrange an energy audit and switch to wind-powered electicity.

Day 6: Town/City: Write a letter to your Mayor or City Councilperson, urging them to require greening of buildings through persuasion of businesses, ordinances, tax policy, and executive orders. Creating change is often easier on the local level!

Day 7: State: Urge state legislators to reduce subsidies for highways, increase them for mass transit. In states (like Pennsylvania and NY) where high-profit oil/ gas companies are fracking

Oil Shale deposits, demand a moratorium until we can get full information on what poisonous chemicals are being poured into the water table and our drinking water.

Day 8: National: Some Senators and Congressmembers are seeking to cripple EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), mostly to protect Big Coal. Oppose them! Urge your Congressmember and Senators to strengthen EPA to regulate CO2 emissions from coal-burning plants, autos, oil refineries, etc. — for the sake of our planet's climate, and to lessen asthma outbreaks among our children.

Finally, this is where we stand with our own Hanukkah gift — our own Green Menorah Commitment to the Cimate Disaster Relief Fund. We asked you to give to that Fund so that half would go to immediate relief to the Philippines and half to working to prevent future climate disasters. We have so far received $2392. The half for immediate Philippine relief we have given to the American Jewish World Service and Doctors Without Borders, both of which have emergency efforts under way there. We ask you to contribute more to that fund, as your Hanukkah gift not only to The Shalom Center but more broadly to Mother Earth and the human beings who suffer when Earth suffers. To do so, please click here: https://theshalomcenter.org/civicrm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=11

Thanks!

Happy Hanukkah for Mother Earth —- and you!

Blessings of light in a time of dark, active hope and hopeful action in a time of doubt.

https://theshalomcenter.org/8-days-hanukkah-my-true-love-said-meplease-heal-my-earth

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November - December 2013

BeFriending Creation
Bi-monthly newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness
Volume 26, Number 6

http://www.quakerearthcare.org/bfc/volume-26-number-6

December 2013

New Documentary Asks, Will We Have Wisdom to Survive?

Press Release

Release Date: Nov. 1, 2013

Contact: Angela Alston, 718-407-0670, angela at mocamedia.tv

"You can't talk about it. Mainstream society doesn't want to hear about our sorrow for life on Earth." Author Joanna Macy's soft voice delivers the heartfelt message of *The Wisdom to Survive: Climate Change, Capitalism and Community*. The new film is one of the few to face the impending climate catastrophe head on.

The film accepts the consensus of scientists that climate change has already arrived, and asks—what is keeping us from action? In discussions with thought leaders and activists, *The Wisdom to Survive* explores how unlimited growth lies behind climate disruption, and is devastating our planet's life support system, our social fabric, and the lives of billions of people. The film features Bill McKibben (350.org), author Joanna Macy, whale scientist Roger Payne, Herschelle Milford (Surplus People Project), Quincy Saul (Ecosocialist Horizons), and more. They provide insights, answers, and hope. What becomes clear is, we already have the tools we need to change our economy and lifestyle. Our attention must focus on taking action and building community.

Writes Mary Evelyn Tucker of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale: "This film is deeply moving and profoundly engaging. Indeed, it has the potential to transform lives because it provides visions of how we should live in the midst of massive environmental challenges. I cannot recommend it more highly!"

Bullfrog Films is the the educational distributor for *The Wisdom to Survive*. It's available for individual purchase on the Old Dog Documentaries website.

Featured in the Film

- Rucha Chitnis, Women's Earth Alliance
- Nikki Cooley, Jihan Gearon and Roberto Nutlouis, Black Mesa Water Coalition
- Ben Falk, Whole Systems Design
- Eugene M Friesen, Composer and Cellist
- Terran Giacomini
- Richard Heinberg
- Rev. Daniel Jantos
- Anya Kamenskaya, Future Farmers
- Stephanie Kaza and Amy Seidl, University of Vermont
- Joanna Macy, Author
- Bill McKibben, Founder of 350.org

- Herschelle Milford, Surplus People Project
- Lawrence Mkhaliph
- Roger Payne, Whale.org
- Quincy Saul and Joel Kovel, Eco Socialists
- Gus Speth, Co-Founder, National Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
- Seema Tripathi, Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG)

Directors' Statement

"Our primary goal for *The Wisdom to Survive* is to recruit activists. We need a big movement. And we have to connect existing movements. Some of what we're showing is hard to watch. Whales being killed. Children starving. We're urging our audience not to look away: take a good look! You must. Otherwise, you won't do anything about it. You can't remain the same, once you know. We want to inspire our viewers. Yes, climate change is horrifying. We need to know the facts and their implications, and then take action. You can be fully involved, fully aware, know that your house is on fire, and still be joyful and committed."

About the Filmmakers

Ankele divides his time between Accord, NY, and New York City. As a producer of radio and TV programming in the 1960s, Ankele used mass media to empower faith communities advocating for civil rights and against the Vietnam War. During the struggle for independence in southern Africa, he worked with and trained political activists in the use of media to bring about social change. As an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church and as a student in the Zen and Shambhala Buddhist traditions, he has been involved for many years in interfaith dialogue around contemplative practice and social justice.

Macksoud is based in Woodstock, VT, and is co-founder of Sustainable Woodstock. She spent 17 years as a teacher (English literature, photography, and music) before transitioning to film and video production. Once she discovered the "eye-opening" power of the documentary medium, she brought rented documentaries into her classroom on a regular basis. Eventually, Macksoud began helping her students make their own films and slide shows on the issues of the day (civil rights, the Vietnam War, and global poverty, to name a few). She approaches filmmaking from the perspective of an artist as well as an educator.

Through their non-profit company Old Dog Documentaries, Macksoud and Ankele have produced timely documentaries on urgent issues about the environment, social justice, and spirituality for over 25 years. Some of their films, such as *The Global Banquet: The Politics of Food* and *Arms for the Poor*, are classic references for educational use. Like their past films, *The Wisdom to Survive* supports Old Dog's mission of promoting environmental justice and inspiring viewers to become activists.

For more information about *The Wisdom to Survive* or to view the trailer visit: olddogdocumentaries.org.

For a press screener or to book interviews with the filmmakers, contact Angela Alston at angela@mocamedia.tv or 718-407-0670.

December 3, 2013

Major New Review of Ethics of Animal Testing Research

Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics
Press Release

A new review of the ethics of the use of animals in research is being pioneered by an international group of academics.

The rigorous academic document — one of the first to address the ethics of animal testing at length — will be produced by a Working Group of 18 international academics from six countries under the leadership of the Revd Professor Andrew Linzey, Director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics.The Working Group includes ethicists, philosophers, scientists and lawyers (see list below).

Professor Linzey, said: "During the past thirty years, there has been a paradigm shift in ethical thinking about our treatment of animals. From being regarded as things, tools, machines or resources for us – animals are increasingly regarded as sentient beings with their own inherent value, dignity and rights. Given this paradigmatic change spurred on in no small part by academic ethicists, philosophers and theologians, we believe that the time is right for a new ethical assessment of our use of animals in research."

The project is the result of collaboration between the Oxford Centre and the animal protection society, the BUAV (http://www.buav.org/).

The BUAV's CEO, Michelle Thew, said: "The BUAV is delighted to collaborate with the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics on this pioneering project. While the use of animals in experimentation is being increasingly questioned across the moral and ethical spectrum, it is fitting that a new review of our use of animals in research should be carried out."

"It is much to the BUAV's credit that they are prepared to commission independent academic work in this controversial area" commented Professor Linzey.

Notes to editors:

1. The Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics is an independent centre founded in 2006 by its director, Professor Linzey. It is the first in the world dedicated to pioneering ethical perspectives on

animals through academic research, teaching, and publication. The Centre comprises a fellowship of more than 70 academics worldwide from a range of disciplines.

2. The BUAV, with a history of over 100 years, is one of the oldest and most widely respected organisations in the field of animal protection. It is an authority on animal testing issues and is frequently called upon by governments, media, corporations and official bodies for its advice and expert opinion.

3. Below are the members of the Working Group. All write in their individual capacity

Dr Aysha Akhtar, MD, MPH
is a neurologist and public health specialist. She works for the Office of Counterterrorism and Emerging Threats of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Professor Mark H. Bernstein, PhD
holds the Joyce and Edward E Brewer Chair in Applied Ethics at Purdue University.

Dr Darren Calley, PhD
is a Lecturer of Law at the University of Essex and Director of the University's Animal Welfare and Wildlife Law undergraduate programme.

Professor Jodey Castricano, PhD
is an Associate Professor of English and Cultural Studies, University of British Columbia (Okanagan), Canada.

Professor Grace Clement, PhD
is a Professor of Philosophy at Salisbury University, Maryland.

Dr Lydia de Tienda, PhD
is currently a JSPS postdoctoral research fellow, Department of Philosophy at Hokkaido University, Japan.

Professor Natalie Evans, PhD
is Sessional Lecturer and Professor in the Department of Media Studies, University of Guelph-Humber and the Department of Philosophy, University of Guelph.

Professor Lawrence A. Hansen, MD
is Professor of Neuroscience and Pathology at the University of California, San Diego.

Professor Lisa Johnson, PhD, JD
is an Associate Professor at the University of Puget Sound, where she teaches environmental law and animal law.

Dr Les Mitchell, PhD
is the Director of the Hunterstoun Centre of the University of Fort Hare, South Africa.

Dr Katherine Morris, PhD
is Fellow in Philosophy at Mansfield College, University of Oxford.

Dr Kay Peggs, PhD
is Reader in Sociology in the Faculty of Humanities, and the Social Sciences Research Degrees Co-ordinator, University of Portsmouth.

Professor John Simons, PhD, FRSA
is Executive Dean of Arts at Macquarie University, Sydney.

Jordan Sosnowski, JD
Is a Juris Doctor from Monash University currently working in the field of legal research.

David Spratt, FLS (Lond), FIBMS
is Manager of the Department of Cellular Pathology for the North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust.

Frances Robinson, MRCVS
is a veterinarian and a philosopher.

Professor Mark Rowlands, DPhil
is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Miami, Florida.

Clifford Warwick, FSB
is an independent consultant biologist and medical scientist, whose current main role is as senior scientific advisor to the Emergent Disease Foundation (UK).

http://www.oxfordanimalethics.com/2013/12/news-release-major-new-review-of-ethics-of-animal-testing-research/

December 3, 2013

New Report Offers Menu of Solutions to Close the Global Food Gap

Actions Needed to Improve Food Production and Consumption to Close the Projected 70 Percent Gap by 2050

United Nations Environment Programme
Press Release

JOHANNESBURG/WASHINGTON — New research presents solutions to meet the world's growing food needs, while advancing economic development and environmental sustainability. The analysis finds that the world will need 70 percent more food, as measured by calories, in order to feed a global population of 9.6 billion people in 2050. It is possible to close the food

gap, while creating a more productive and healthy environment through improvements in the way people produce and consume food.

The findings are being unveiled in the new interim report of the *World Resources Report: Creating a Sustainable Food Future*, produced by the World Resources Institute (WRI), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank. The report is being released at the 3rd Global Conference on Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security and Climate Change, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

"Over the next several decades, the world faces a grand challenge—and opportunity—at the intersection of food security, development and the environment," said **Dr. Andrew Steer**, President and CEO of WRI. "To meet human needs, we must close the 70 percent gap between the food we will need and the food available today. But, we must do so in a way that creates opportunities for the rural poor, limits clearing of forests, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture."

The report finds that boosting crop and livestock productivity on existing agricultural land is critical to saving forests and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but that the world is unlikely to close the food gap through yield increases alone. The new report finds that crop yields would need to increase by 32 percent more over the next four decades than they did in the previous four to avoid more land clearing.

Fortunately, additional solutions are available. The report offers several "menu items" for achieving a sustainable food future.

"The waste of over 1.3 billion tons of food every year, worth around USD $1 trillion, is causing the world significant economic losses, while placing added pressure on the natural resources needed to feed the planet," said **Achim Steiner**, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director. "Undermining the ecological foundation of food systems comes at a steep environmental price, with adverse impacts on land quality, water quantity, biodiversity and the global climate. To bring about the vision of a truly sustainable world, we need to transform the way we produce and consume our natural resources. The restoration of ecosystems will not only increase the amount of food produced but also improve the state of the environment upon which food production is dependent."

The report includes recommendations to close the food gap by reducing excessive consumption, such as:

* **Reduce food loss and waste: 25 percent** of calories from food grown for human consumption is currently lost or wasted. Cutting the rate of food loss and waste in half by 2050 would close **20**

percent of the food gap.

* **Shift diets:** Increasing demand for pasture land caused more than **half** of all agricultural expansion since the 1960s, and beef consumption is projected to grow by **80 percent** between 2006 and 2050**.** Reducing excessive demand for animal products, particularly by developed countries, would spare hundreds of millions of hectares of forests that otherwise would be cleared for grazing.

* **Achieve replacement level fertility:** Sub-Saharan Africa will need to more than **triple** its crop production between 2006 and 2050 to provide adequate food per capita, given projected population growth. Most of the world is nearing achievement of replacement level fertility by educating girls, reducing child mortality, and providing access to reproductive health services. Helping sub-Saharan Africa in its efforts to reduce fertility rates through improvements in healthcare and education could help close the food gap by **25 percent** in the region, and generate important economic and social benefits.

"From reducing food waste to improving agricultural practices, feeding a growing population requires working on several fronts at the same time," said **Juergen Voegele**, World Bank Director for Agriculture and Environmental Services. "Applying the principles of Climate Smart Agriculture across landscapes—that means crops, livestock, forests and fisheries—has the potential to sustainably increase food security, enhance resilience and reduce agriculture's carbon footprint. Pursuing this approach is not a luxury, it's an imperative."

The report also includes recommendations to close the food gap by improving food production, such as:

* **Improve soil and water management:** Farmers can increase crop yields on existing agricultural land by implementing a suite of soil and water management practices such as agroforestry and water harvesting. Such practices, for instance, have **doubled yields** of maize and other grains in Burkina Faso, Niger and Zambia over the past decade.

* **Improve pastureland productivity:** Pastures and grazing lands for livestock occupy **twice** the amount of land area than croplands worldwide. Farmers can increase milk and meat production on existing pasturelands through sustainable intensification practices such as using rotational grazing, improving livestock health care, and integrating shade trees and nitrogen-fixing shrubs into pastures, which reduces animal stress and improves grass quality.

* **Use degraded lands:** The world has many "low-carbon degraded lands," areas where native vegetation was cleared long ago and that now have very low levels of carbon, biodiversity, and human use. Any future expansion in agricultural area should focus on restoring these degraded

lands into productivity, with the consent of local communities.

* **Avoid shifting agricultural land from one place to another:** New satellite data show that even when total agricultural land area in a region remains steady or declines, agriculture shifts within the region causing millions of hectares of deforestation.

* **Leave no farmer behind:** Yield gaps, the difference between a farm's actual yields and its potential yields, still exist in many places. Focusing on bringing the most inefficient farmers up to standard farming efficiency levels will help close yield gaps and improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. Ensuring that women farmers have access to the same resources—such as fertilizer, seeds, finance, and land—as male farmers is an important step.

"As agriculture is a major economic sector in many developing countries, supporting farmers to close the identified gap between existing and potential yields represents a huge opportunity to advance inclusive and sustainable development," said **Helen Clark**, Administrator of UNDP. "A 'leave no farmer behind' approach is needed. As women produce between 60 and 80 percent of food crops in developing countries, such an approach should begin with efforts to close the gender gap in agriculture which is perpetuating cycles of poverty and hunger."

The final version of the *World Resources Report 2013-2014: Creating a Sustainable Food Future* will be released in mid-2014 and will further quantify the contribution of each "menu item" toward closing the food gap, while paying particular attention to the policies, practices, and incentives needed to effectively bring change to scale.

Download the report at: http://www.wri.org/publication/creating-sustainable-food-future-interim-findings

Find out more about the World Resources Report at: http://www.worldresourcesreport.org

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About World Resources Institute
WRI is a global research organization that spans more than 50 countries, with offices in the United States, China, India, Brazil and more. Our more than 300 experts and staff work closely with leaders to turn big ideas into action to sustain our natural resources—the foundation of economic opportunity and human well-being. www.wri.org

About United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP, established in 1972, is the voice for the environment within the United Nations system. UNEP acts as a catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the global environment. To accomplish this, UNEP works with a

wide range of partners, including United Nations entities, international organizations, national governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society. www.unep.org

About United Nations Development Programme

UNDP is the United Nations' global development agency, working on the ground in 177 countries to provide knowledge, experience and resources to craft country-owned solutions to global and national development challenges. UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. UNDP's focus is helping countries build and share solutions to the challenges of: Poverty Reduction; Democratic Governance; Crisis Prevention and Recovery; and Environment and Energy for Sustainable Development. UNDP's network also links and coordinates global and national efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

About World Bank

The World Bank Group is one of the world's largest sources of funding and knowledge for developing countries. It comprises five closely associated institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA), which together form the World Bank; the International Finance Corporation (IFC); the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA); and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). Each institution plays a distinct role in the mission to fight poverty and improve living standards for people in the developing world. For more information, please visit www.worldbank.org, www.ifc.org, and www.miga.org.

About Think.Eat.Save – Reduce your foodprint

A global campaign launched in January 2013 by UNEP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and partners to cut food waste. The campaign is in support of the SAVE FOOD initiative to reduce food loss and waste along the entire chain of food production and consumption (run by FAO and Messe Dusseldorf) – and the UN Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge. The campaign targets food wasted by consumers, retailers and the hospitality industry. It aims to accelerate action and provide global vision and information sharing. More at: http://www.thinkeatsave.org.

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http://www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2756&ArticleID=9716

December 10, 2013

Founders of Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology to discuss Thomas Berry and the New Story of Our Times

Press Release

CONTACT: Rachel Myslivy 785-764-2055 MysRachel@gmail.com

Lawrence, Kansas – Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, Founders of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, will present a community lecture and discussion on "Thomas Berry and the New Story of Our Times" on Sunday, December 29 at 3:30 at the Oread Friends Meeting House, 1146 Oregon St.

Mary Evelyn Tucker is a Senior Lecturer and Senior Research Scholar at Yale University where she has appointments in the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies as well as the Divinity School. She is also Research Associate at the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard. In 2011 Tucker completed the Journey of the Universe with Brian Swimme, which includes a book from Yale University Press, a film on PBS, and an educational series of interviews.

John Grim is currently a Senior Lecturer and Senior Research Scholar at Yale University teaching courses that draw students from the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, Yale Divinity School, the Department of Religious Studies, the Institution for Social and Policy and the Yale Colleges. He teaches courses in Native American and Indigenous religions and World religions and ecology. He has undertaken field work with the Crow/Apsaalooke people of Montana and Salish people of Washington state.

Tucker and Grim are Co-Directors of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale. Together they organized a series of ten conferences on World Religions and Ecology and edited the ten volume series from the conferences distributed by Harvard University Press. Long-time companions of Thomas Berry, Tucker and Grim are managing trustees of the Thomas Berry Foundation.

The lecture, "Thomas Berry and the New Story of Our Times" will begin at 3:30 on December 29. There will be ample time for discussion following the presentation.

December 10, 2013

Operation Noah questions biased survey on church divestment from fossil fuels

Operation Noah Press Release

The Church of England's Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) has shown itself to be biased and ill-informed when it comes to fossil fuel disinvestment, says Operation Noah.

The EIAG is reviewing its policy advice on climate change for the Church's national investing bodies. As part of the process it has just produced a survey asking if, and how, the Church of England should reduce the carbon emissions of its investments, and in particular whether the Church should disinvest from fossil fuels.

Operation Noah, who are currently campaigning for churches to disinvest from fossil fuels, today released a statement questioning the survey: 'we find [it] biased and ill-informed, containing both leading questions and false choices. It suggests that EIAG has a clear agenda against fossil fuel disinvestment, and makes it difficult for stakeholders to express their views effectively'.

The statement questions the assumptions behind a lot of the questions in the survey. Though EIAG suggest that the £8 billion of investments held by the Church of England investment bodies (which pay clergy pensions and fund the work of the Church) must be managed in the financial interests of the beneficiaries of the funds, they fail to mention that the Church of England's own ethical investment policy accepts a duty to avoid 'profiting from, or providing capital to, activities that are materially inconsistent with Christian values'. Operation Noah argues that this must surely include activities that encourage the use of fossil fuels.

Operation Noah also questions the presumption in the survey that disinvestment from fossil fuels would be financially difficult. Publicly listed fossil fuel companies, with reserves valued in trillions of dollars on the world's stock markets, will have to leave most of their assets in the ground if we are to keep global warming below 2°C. Their shareholders risk being left with stranded assets – worthless fuel stocks that regulation will prevent from being burned, or can only be consumed at unimaginable cost to us all. Either result will be a disaster for investments and pension funds.

We do not have a choice as to how we respond to climate change, as the survey implies. 'This is simply not true!' says Isabel Carter, Chair of Operation Noah. 'Climate change threatens everything on earth, and its impacts are already being felt in extreme weather events around the world'. Participants are asked to indicate what level of temperature increase they think we can live with (ranging from 1 – 6°C). Operation Noah's statement argues that this is naïve at best.

Currently world governments have committed to limit global warming to below 2°C to avoid catastrophic climate change (and even this would be 'disastrous' according to recent research). A 4°C temperature rise would be far from that of a flourishing creation.

If we are to get off the trajectory towards a 6°C rise in temperature which we are currently on, we all need to act very quickly. The longer we leave it, the more rapid and thus more painful, the drop in emissions will need to be. The survey asks who is most responsible for acting, but Operation Noah asserts that there is no one solution for a problem of this magnitude. Solutions will and must come from multiple fronts. However, those in positions of power through wealth or moral authority have a particular responsibility to act and to lead. And this certainly includes the Church.

Through the Bright Now campaign, Operation Noah is calling on Churches to disinvest from fossil fuels – on a theological, moral, scientific and financial basis. Mark Letcher, Operation Noah campaigner says: 'This survey seems intended to exclude disinvestment from fossil fuels as an option by suggesting it would be too difficult both financially and morally. This is both unfair and untrue, as Bright Now shows. We welcome a constructive debate on these issues, but to enable that to happen, stakeholders need genuine and open opportunities to express their views, and this survey does not do that'.

To read the full statement visit http://brightnow.org.uk/action/church-england-biased-survey-fossil-fuel-disinvestment

Issued by Operation Noah http://www.operationnoah.org

For more information contact Mark Letcher on 0117 903 0361 / 0795 148 2804, email campaigns@operationnoah.org

Notes for editors

- Operation Noah is an ecumenical Christian charity providing leadership, focus and inspiration in response to the growing threat of catastrophic climate change.

- Operation Noah has produced an authoritative report 'Bright Now: towards fossil fuel churches', which sets out the moral, theological, scientific, financial and practical case for churches to disinvest from fossil fuel companies, and examines why they must actively seek to support clean, alternative forms of energy generation through their investment portfolios. This is available to download from http://brightnow.org.uk/resources

- The EIAG survey has been aimed at a range of people within the Church of England, including Church of England-linked environmental groups, members of Church of

England pension schemes, funding bodies and investors. The deadline for responding is 18 December. It can be found here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/S2NFLNX.

http://www.operationnoah.org/eiag_survey

December 15, 2013

Kentucky Nuns Issue "Energy Vision", Urge Halt to Pipeline

By Keith Runyon
Huffington Post

Most of the snow from a string of storms over the past week had evaporated in Nelson County, Kentucky, Tuesday afternoon when more than 60 concerned people, many of them Roman Catholic nuns, gathered on the Boone Family Farm to declare an Energy Vision, and with it they hope to launch a nationwide movement to oppose the practice of "fracking" for natural gas and the transport of its byproducts through pipelines. Their region known as the Kentucky Holy Land contains extensive land holdings by various religious orders. The stewards of these many acres understand that with land comes power, and a good number of them are dedicated to use that power to stop what they see as an onslaught against the earth's sacred soil, sacred air and sacred water as well as the safety and well-being of human communities.

The proposed construction of a natural gas pipeline across the rolling hills of central Kentucky has ignited a wave of protests and last week a lawsuit challenging the developers' use of eminent domain to acquire rights of way for the project. Earlier this year, the Sisters of Loretto, who have been established in Kentucky since 1812, announced their opposition to the Bluegrass Pipeline, and refused to permit its developers to run their hazardous natural gas liquids pipeline across a portion of their 780 acres. In the face of their resistance, the pipeline developers said they would route their lines around the sisters' property. But the pipeline -- one of several being proposed to go through Kentucky -- would carry hydrocarbons from natural gas drilling to processors on the Gulf of Mexico. Opponents have cited a number of examples where these toxic liquids have either exploded in pipelines or leaked causing destruction to soil and ground water.

December 10 was the 45th anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk whose writings have influenced generations of people concerned with peace and interfaith relations. The Interfaith Prayer Ritual at Boone's Farm included a tribute to Merton with a reading from his "When the Trees Say Nothing:"

"Our mentioning of the weather, our perfunctory observations on what kind of day it is, are perhaps not idle," Merton wrote. "Perhaps we have a deep need to know in our entire being what the day is like, to see it and to feel it, to know how the sky is gray with patches of blue in the southwest, with snow on the ground, the thermometer at 18 degrees and cold wind making your ears ache. I have a need to know these things because I myself am a part of the weather and part of the climate and part of the place. A day in which I have not shared truly in all of this is no day

at all. How central a truth that we are purely and simply part of nature, though we are the part that recognizes God."

References to the kinship between the earth, its people and God continued through more than thirty minutes of prayer, singing and meditation. Participants came from a variety of faith traditions including Native American, Buddhist, Jewish and Muslim groups. But the highlight of the afternoon was the reading aloud of the Energy Vision statement by members of the three Roman Catholic religious groups that created it, the Dominican Sisters and Associates of Peace, the Loretto Community, and the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth and Associates.

The Energy Vision statement articulates the participants' solidarity with those who are endangered by projects like the pipeline, and it also calls for a transition to alternative forms of energy. The text, written by Sister Claire McGowan, Susan Classen and Sister Joetta Venneman, promises leadership in the effort:

"We will learn, teach, and model alternative ways of viewing energy sourcing and conservation that reduce risks to water, land, air, climate, and human safety. We commit ourselves to use our spiritual and social resources and our public credibility in all possible ways to promote the transition from fossil fuel energy to renewable energy resources."

During the ritual, a message from Kentucky poet, environmentalist and author Wendell Berry was read by Jessica Shelton, a senior at St. Catherine's College in Springfield, Ky., and an intern for New Pioneers for a Sustainable Future in Springfield, a community sustainability organization that Sister Claire leads.

"Like mountaintop removal, fracking and the Bluegrass Pipeline reveal our willingness not only to use without care or thanks a world we did not make, but to put it entirely at risk, which is to say our willingness to ruin it entirely, and to do this in order to have things that we do not need but merely want," Berry declared.

Rural landowners, environmentalists and some Kentucky legislators have called upon Gov. Steve Beshear to convene a special session of the legislature to prevent the use of eminent domain for natural gas liquids pipelines and to enact rules regulating the construction and operations of natural gas pipelines. But the governor has resisted such requests, saying that they can be addressed in the regular session of the General Assembly, which convenes next month.

Meanwhile, the interest of the religious orders in the pipeline is only part of a growing movement in America, much of it vibrant in Kentucky, to exercise leadership in sustainable agriculture, as well as in lifestyles to bring along great changes to face the issues of global warming. Religious organizations own one-seventh of the world's land, a striking platform for achieving change. In Louisville, a city of just under a million people 50 miles north of the Boone Family Farm, Mayor Greg Fischer has committed his administration to building a healthy city that is also a compassionate one. Last spring, the Dalai Lama endorsed those efforts in a visit to the city.

As the speakers took turns in the fading afternoon sun, a flatbed truck behind them was outfitted with symbols of traditional energy -- a bucket of coal, a can of gasoline and a natural gas container -- at one end. At the other end were symbols of the renewable sources -- solar, wind, geothermal and water power. These served as visual aids for the closing ritual in which Sister Claire McGowan articulated the spiritual basis for moving from fossil fuels to alternative energy sources:

"Our human species has begun a journey, a journey from one set of energy sources to a completely other set of energy sources. As we make this great turning, let us take time now in the name of all those who've gone before us to give thanks to the fossil fuels that have built our societies for these past centuries, the coal, the oil, and the gas. These gifts of the Earth have enabled much progress for our world. They have been integrated into our daily lives. They have provided our warmth, our transportation, our manufacturing and so much more. As we begin our great farewell to the fossil fuels we pause to say thank you, coal, oil, and natural gas. You have served us well and we are grateful."

Loretto co-member Susan Classen then urged a step forward toward renewable energy sources:

"We turn to solar, we turn to wind, we turn to geothermal, we turn to water power. I invite all those who are able to take a step forward, to literally take a step forward as we give thanks and welcome a new energy vision, a vision which no longer sees human needs and Earth in competition with each other, but rather recognizes that we are all one, we are all part of the same web of life. Let us welcome the vast number of new jobs that will come with this new energy vision. And let's pray for those who fear for their livelihoods during this time of transition. We pause now in just a moment of gratitude for you, sun, wind, earth and water. And with gratitude for those with the creativity and ingenuity needed to call forth our new sources of power for our future."

Follow Keith Runyon on Twitter: www.twitter.com/keithlrunyon

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/keith-runyon/kentucky-nuns-issue-energy_b_4427853.html

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December 2013

Energy Vision Statement Call for Signatures

Center for Interfaith Relations

Show your support and sign the statement by December 6:
http://www.lorettocommunity.org/energy/

As a follow-up to the November 15 Festival of Faiths Fall Forum "Energy Independence Boom: A Call for Religious Leadership," the Center for Interfaith Relations is asking all communities of faith of all religious traditions, organizations and individuals to join the Dominican Sisters of Peace, the Loretto Community and the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth in raising your voices in support of clean energy in Kentucky.

An Energy Vision from the Heart of Kentucky's "Holy Land" is a public statement that was developed in response to the development of natural gas pipelines, which will connect hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") operations in the northeast with chemical processing plants in the south. It speaks out against all plans for expanded extraction of fossil fuel or infrastructures such as pipelines that require the plundering of God's creation and the endangerment of human communities. The statement advocates instead for immediate regional and national plans for the transition to renewable sources of energy.

Read the Energy Vision Statement: http://www.lorettocommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Energy-Vision-Statement-for-printing-12.6.13.pdf

This Energy Vision Statement will be formally publicized Tuesday, December 10, at a press conference hosted by several faith leaders from the region. Details about the event will be available soon.

Show your support and sign this important statement as an individual or on behalf of your organization. Signatures are needed no later than **Friday, December 6**, in order to be listed in the initial press release. However, signatures will be accepted after December 6 as well.

Sign the Energy Vision Statement: http://www.lorettocommunity.org/energy/

The Center for Interfaith Relations is a proud supporter of this initiative, which is in keeping with the organization's efforts to use interfaith dialogue as a means to encourage common action among all faith traditions to address issues that affect our entire community.

Our thanks to you for your ongoing support.

http://fore.research.yale.edu/news/item/kentucky-nuns-issue-energy-vision-urge-halt-to-pipeline/

December 30, 2013

We Must Fight Injustice to Animals as We do Injustice to Blacks, Women and Gays, says Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics
Press Release

“I have spent my life fighting discrimination and injustice, whether the victims are blacks, women, or gays and lesbians. No human being should be the target of prejudice or the object of vilification or be denied his or her basic rights.

“But there are other issues of justice – not only for human beings but also for the world’s other sentient creatures. The matter of the abuse and cruelty we inflict on other animals has to fight for our attention in what sometimes seems an already overfull moral agenda. It is vital, however, that these instances of injustice not be overlooked.

“I have seen firsthand how injustice gets overlooked when the victims are powerless or vulnerable, when they have no one to speak up for them and no means of representing themselves to a higher authority. Animals are in precisely that position. Unless we are mindful of their interests and speak out loudly on their behalf, abuse and cruelty go unchallenged.

“It is a kind of theological folly to suppose that God has made the entire world just for human beings, or to suppose that God is interested in only one of the millions of species that inhabit God’s good earth,” says Archbishop Desmond Tutu in his forthright foreword to the *Global Guide to Animal Protection* to be published by the University of Illinois on 30 December.

In his first major statement on animal welfare Archbishop Tutu says “Our dominion over animals is not supposed to be despotism. We are made in the image of God, yes, but God – in whose image we are made – is holy, loving, and just. We do not honour God by abusing other sentient creatures.

If it is true that we are the most exalted species in creation, it is equally true that we can be the most debased and sinful. This realization should give us pause … There is something Christ-like about caring for suffering creatures, whether they are humans or animals.”

Archbishop Tutu concludes with his warm support for the *Global Guide to Animal Protection* and urges the reader to seek justice and protection for all creatures, humans and animals alike: “Churches should lead the way by making clear that all cruelty – to other animals as well as human beings – is an affront to civilized living and a sin before God.”

Desmond Tutu is archbishop emeritus of Cape Town and won the Nobel Peace Prize for his anti-apartheid work. Nelson Mandela described Tutu as: “sometimes strident, often tender, never afraid and seldom without humour, Desmond Tutu’s voice will always be the voice of the voiceless”.

The Global Guide to Animal Protection is the result of collaboration between the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, a world-wide association of academics from all disciplines, and the University of Illinois Press. Raising awareness of human indifference and cruelty toward animals, *The Global Guide* includes more than 180 introductory articles that survey the extent of worldwide human exploitation of animals from a variety of perspectives.

In addition to entries on often disturbing examples of human cruelty toward animals, the book provides inspiring accounts of attempts by courageous individuals –including Jane Goodall,

Shirley McGreal, Biruté Mary Galdikas, Bernard E. Rollin, and Roger Fouts – to challenge and change exploitative practices.

The volume is edited by Oxford theologian Professor Andrew Linzey. Linzey is a member of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oxford and director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics (www.oxfordanimalethics.com). Coeditor of the *Journal of Animal Ethics*, he has written or edited more than twenty books, including *Animal Theology*, *Animals on the Agenda: Questions about Animals for Theology and Ethics*, and *Why Animal Suffering Matters: Philosophy, Theology, and Practical Ethics.*

The Global Guide to Animal Protection is published in both the UK and USA on 30 December, priced USD95 (cloth) and USD27 (paper). More information is here.

http://www.oxfordanimalethics.com/2013/12/we-must-fight-injustice-to-animals-as-we-do-injustice-to-blacks-women-and-gays-says-archbishop-desmond-tutu/

December 30, 2013

There Should Be An International Court to Try Cases of Animal Cruelty, says Oxford ethicist

Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics
Press Release

Humanitarian organizations worldwide should collaborate in setting up an international court to judge cases of animal cruelty and specifically to assess the culpability of governments, says Oxford ethicist Professor Andrew Linzey, Director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics.

"Individuals and groups should be able to bring cases before the court where governments have failed to take reasonable steps to prevent systematic and widespread occurrence of cruelty to animals. The court would consist of eminent humanitarians drawn from the legal and veterinary professions, together with ethicists, philosophers, theologians, and those accomplished in anti-cruelty work worldwide."

"Although animal protection is obviously a matter of global concern, animal protectionists have sometimes been slow in recognizing this fact and have contented themselves with working on an issue-by-issue, country-by-country basis. But what this approach neglects is the need for international strategies to tackle what are global problems."

The call is made in Professor Linzey's Introduction to *The Global Guide to Animal Protection* published today by the University of Illinois Press.

"Government and industries found guilty (or who fail to participate in the hearings) would be named and shamed and placed on a register. Like Amnesty International's published list of countries that allow torture, the register would focus attention not only on the distressing fact of

cruelty itself, but also on the culpability of governments and industries in justifying and supporting cruelty.

The Global Guide to Animal Protection is the result of collaboration between the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, a world-wide association of academics from all disciplines, and the University of Illinois Press. Raising awareness of human indifference and cruelty toward animals, *The Global Guide* includes more than 180 introductory articles that survey the extent of worldwide human exploitation of animals from a variety of perspectives.

The Global Guide to Animal Protection is published in both the UK and USA on 30 December and is available from http://bit.ly/1kPNYUmUSD95 (cloth) and USD27 (paper).

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http://www.oxfordanimalethics.com/2013/12/there-should-be-an-international-court-to-try-cases-of-animal-cruelty-says-oxford-ethicist/