

**United Nations Environmental Program
Archive of E-Articles
July – December 2013**

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 of 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 settlers. 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 paradisaal 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 than 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 slurring 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.

For more information or interviews with the principles, please contact:

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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@oxfordanimaethics.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.oxfordanimaethics.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>

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.

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 awakened 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.

(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

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

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>

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

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>

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 megalosaurus, 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 Kittittinny 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 led 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 Powhatan 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 Saddam 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 better 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 LDSSES 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>

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>

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 grid 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

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 Minamata 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 (DELIC), 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/>

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unepnewsdesk@unep.org

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2726&ArticleID=9607&l=en>

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 (CO₂) 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 CO₂.

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-CO₂ 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 CO₂. 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 CO₂ 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

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<http://www.unep.org/environmentalgovernance/News/PressRelease/tabid/427/language/en-US/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2726&ArticleID=9608&Lang=en>

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 processors 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, composting, 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 is 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 CO₂ 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 as 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 CO₂ 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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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 than those 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>


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=bZYGy2yDpKs&feature=c4-overview&list=UUyXH8k7w7atZUXIYVOj8bVw>

http://www.umb.edu/news/detail/chancellor_assesses_campus_environment_during_2013_convocation

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>

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

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 critical role 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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<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 to 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 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 the 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 worldwide, 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>

October 2013

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=41&key=fcbf13f4a3394262512d3bfb7559edd1&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

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.emergingeearthcommunity.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 encouraged 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., Versuichen, 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. McNeely 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 visits.

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/20131004085253-14gqn/>

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>

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 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#.UI8F2cYpLbI.email>

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>

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

“geologist,” 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

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>

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](http://www.uwex.edu/news/read/2013/11/Study%3A+Focus+on+place+motivates+conservation+behavior+in+faith-based+communities)

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 Communities](#).

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

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 millennia. 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.

Roy Scranton served in the United States Army from 2002 to 2006. He is a doctoral candidate in English at Princeton University, and co-editor of "[Fire and Forget: Short Stories from the Long War](#)." He has written for The New York Times, Boston Review, Theory & Event and recently completed a novel about the Iraq War. Twitter @RoyScranton.

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://www.dailyclimate.org/tdc-newsroom/2013/11/ancient-voices-climate-change>

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

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.

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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](http://www.peacevoice.info/). 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)
<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 electricity.

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 Congressman 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 Climate 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/civcrm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=11)
<https://theshalomcenter.org/civcrm/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>

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](tel: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 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 Mkhali
- 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](tel: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](http://www.emergentdiseasefoundation.org/) (UK).

<http://www.oxfordanimaethics.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 Voegelé**, 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>

- END -

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>.

For more information, please contact:

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Amy Stilwell, World Bank, + (1-202) 458-4906, astilwell@worldbank.org (Washington, D.C.)

<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](tel: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>

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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 about 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

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/>
