

News Items from UNEP and Other Sources September – December 2014

September 2014

SAFCEI - South African Faith Communities Institute Newsletter

<http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=ff44bb84c4&e=d85b57a294>

September 2014

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=52&key=ec242a96a1a202053fbf235a01df022a&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

September 2014

Green Church Newsletter

Special Edition

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=53&key=a8c0de4697b7be48d6fcc08afcdc9ab5&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

September 2014

The Emory CREATE (Culture, Religion, Ethics, and the Environment) Program

By Cory Andrew Labrecque, PhD
Emory University Center for Ethics

After reading Paul Hawken's *The Ecology of Commerce*, Ray C. Anderson, the visionary entrepreneur who sat at the helm of the globe's largest designer-manufacturer of carpet tile (Interface, Inc.), came to see things differently. It was, perhaps, the straw that broke his lingering uneasiness with the business-as-usual routine of the everyday. Concerns about "industrial ecology," the earth's "carrying capacity," and "stewardship" were suddenly on the radar and Ray wanted to make certain that the corporate world was paying attention. "If we're successful," Ray

contended, “we’ll spend the rest of our days harvesting yester-year’s carpets and other petrochemically derived products, and recycling them into new materials; and converting sunlight into energy; with zero scrap going to the landfill and zero emissions into the ecosystem. And we’ll be doing well ... very well ... by doing good. That’s the vision.”

The “radical industrialist” was convinced that *good* business and the cultivation of *good* biotic citizenship must come hand-in-hand.

Saint Francis of Assisi, who the historian Lynn White called “the greatest radical in Christian history since Christ,” is said to have counseled his followers in this way: “preach the Gospel always and, if necessary, use words.”(1) Ray seems to have made this his own. By 2010, Interface, Inc. was able to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 35 percent, fossil fuel consumption by 60 percent, waste to landfill by 82 percent, and water use by 82 percent. And yet the company marked an increase in sales by 63 percent and more than doubled its earnings.(2)

In honor of the late “green capitalist,” the Ray C. Anderson Foundation was established to promote its patron’s “notion of businesses doing well by doing good.”(3) The Emory University Center for Ethics is privileged to have recently been awarded a four-year grant from the Foundation to examine the cultural, religious, and ethical underpinnings of American environmentalism and our evolving understanding of what it means to live sustainably.

In January 2014, the Center for Ethics officially launched the Emory CREATE (Culture, Religion, Ethics, and the Environment) Program, which has stirred a considerable amount of excitement and interest across campus and in the region. This multidisciplinary program will draw on the wisdom of some of the nation’s best thinkers in the field to produce high-level scholarship on the religious, ethical, and cultural narratives and justifications for the environmental and sustainability movements in the United States and abroad, with a particular focus on their impact on business and industry. Over the course of the grant, we will host two conferences, produce an edited volume and numerous articles, and generate action-oriented curricula that will enable clergy, faculty, community-based businesses, and service and leadership organizations to constructively engage – each in their respective communal contexts – the cultural, religious, and ethical sensibilities of our current approaches to environmentalism, sustainability, and care of the earth.

In August 2014, the Center gathered a small number of leading scholars – social scientists, academics of religion, ecologists, corporate sustainability experts, historians, community activists, and others – to constitute a National Advisory Council that will help identify pressing needs at the intersection of culture, religion, ethics, environment, sustainability, and industry in order to effectively and efficiently guide the work of the CREATE Program.

For more information, please contact Prof. Cory Andrew Labrecque at cory.a.labrecque@emory.edu.

Notes

1. Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155.3767 (1967): 1206.

2. Ray C. Anderson Foundation, "Ray C. Anderson Biography," <http://www.raycandersonfoundation.org/bio-ray-anderson> (accessed April 30, 2014).

3. Ray C. Anderson Foundation, "About the Foundation," <http://www.raycandersonfoundation.org/about> (accessed April 30, 2014).

<http://fore.research.yale.edu/news/item/the-emory-create-culture-religion-ethics-and-the-environment-program/>

September 1, 2014

Our Planet: small island developing states

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

http://apps.unep.org/publications/index.php?option=com_pmtdata&mid=10&ftype=Our%20Planet

September 1, 2014

Momentum Building for a Greener and more Inclusive Economy

A quarter of the world's countries are now pursuing green economy plans

Three new reports to support governments in building greener and more inclusive economies unveiled at the Green Economy Coalition annual meeting

United Nations Environment Programme

London – Green economy policies are spreading worldwide at an increasing pace, with more than 65 countries now actively pursuing green economy policies and 48 of them taking steps to develop national green economy plans.

These figures were presented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at the Green Economy Coalition's first public annual meeting, which is assessing the status of green economy around the world and particularly progress towards financial reform.

"The green economy is a viable approach for countries interested in pursuing inclusive and sustainable growth strategies," said Sheng Fulai, Head of Research and Partnerships for UNEP's

Economics and Trade Branch. “The new Green Economy Toolkit for Policymakers is intended to better equip countries as they advance in their plans to achieve sustainable development.”

“The change is happening, but for it to spread more quickly and more deeply, it must better respond to people’s hopes and fears. The green economy must benefit all of society,” said Oliver Greenfield, Convenor of the Green Economy Coalition.

The annual Green Economy Coalition meeting (1-2 September 2014) brings together leaders from civil society, media, policy and business for a public dialogue around the green economy. Over 200 participants are attending the event, including featured speaker Sir David King, Special Representative for Climate Change, UK Foreign Office; Hunter Lovins, President, Natural Capital Solutions; and Melissa Leach, Director of the Institute of Development Studies.

“Governments will have to take the lead and set out a clear pathway for business and finance to follow,” said Sir David King. “A transition to a green economy is needed to tackle the enormous environmental challenges we face, and to take advantage of new economic opportunities.”

During the Coalition meeting, UNEP also released three new reports to guide countries interested in advancing their national green economy transitions. The *Green Economy Toolkit for Policymakers* provides countries with practical guidance on how to formulate and assess policies, measure progress and model future effects of the transition.

The new toolkit was produced under the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), which aims to assist governments in their efforts to develop and implement green economy policies and strategies. The Green Economy Coalition has been instrumental in its support of PAGE, hosting dialogues and conducting national and regional-level outreach and catalysing a global movement for change.

The toolkit includes the following three reports:

A guidance manual for green economy policy assessment advises governments on how to set targets, identify policy reform needs, estimate the amount of investment and assess policy impacts. Examples and case studies illustrate how fiscal policy, trade policy and regulatory measures have been used in a wide range of countries. In South Africa, for instance, a 2013 assessment study found that green economy investments could create 169,000 new jobs, restore land and increase water availability with the right enabling conditions to advance their national green economy plans.

A guidance manual for green economy indicators outlines how indicators can be used to measure progress towards a more resource-efficient and inclusive economy. The report argues that targets and priorities need to be country specific, and provides guidance on how to identify and use indicators well suited to the national context. The report also calls for prioritising green economy in the agenda-setting stage and for building green economy strategies on existing policy priorities.

Using models for green economy policymaking concerns macroeconomic planning for both short and long term, and provides countries with a range of modelling tools for formulating and evaluating the impacts of green economy policies. The report emphasizes that modelling for green economy policies requires broad stakeholder involvement and estimation of impacts across sectors. It argues that impacts must be assessed on the short, medium and long term, and that both direct and indirect effects of action and inaction must be considered.

Note to editors:

Since the UNEP Green Economy Initiative was established in 2008, it has assisted more than 30 countries in their pursuit of greener and more inclusive economies. Following the 2012 Rio+20 Conference, the green economy has been increasingly promoted by governments as an important tool for achieving social, economic and environmental sustainable development.

The Green Economy Coalition is made up of over 40 organisations including businesses, research institutes, trade unions and NGOs. It is the world's largest multi-stakeholder network working on green economy. Link: www.greeneconomycoalition.org

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<http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/PAGE/PAGENewsEvents/GreenEconomyToolkitforPolicyMakers/tabid/794172/Default.aspx>

September 7, 2014

Faith groups bring ethical voice to UN Climate Summit

The role of faith groups in helping articulate a moral and ethical response to climate change is not only important, but essential.

By Stephen Bede Scharper
The Star

As politicians, scientists and activists from across the globe prepare to converge on New York City later this month for a [UN Climate Summit](#), they will be joined by a seasoned, forceful presence — faith communities and spiritual leaders deeply concerned about climate change.

The UN talks slated for Sept. 23 serve as a prelude to next year's UN Climate Summit in Paris, where a formal agreement addressing climate change will, it is hoped, be successfully forged.

While 350.org, an international climate advocacy group spearheaded by U.S. environmentalist Bill McKibben, is organizing buses for the event from across the U.S. and Canada, and online groups such as Avaaz are rallying their members in what they hope will be the largest march for climate change ever on Sept. 21 on the sidewalks — and streets — of New York, faith groups also will be adding spiritual grist and faith-filled commitment to the gatherings.

The World Council of Churches, representing more than half a billion Christians from over 100 nations, along with Religions for Peace will be organizing an [Interfaith Summit on Climate Change](#) Sept. 21-22. Accenting the participation of indigenous peoples and youth, the summit will conclude with concrete action pledges to address climate change.

The interfaith summit dovetails with an interfaith workshop bringing together Aboriginal, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Indic scholars to reflect on their traditions in light of climate change. The workshop will be hosted by [Union Theological Seminary](#), which voted in June to begin divesting its US\$100.4 million endowment from fossil fuels.

According to Union president Serene Jones, climate change poses “a catastrophic threat” and as “stewards of God’s creation” we simply “must act.”

The same drive to act has prompted numerous Canadian faith groups to join the interfaith initiatives planned for the summit. According to Joe Gunn, executive director of the Ottawa-based [Citizens for Public Justice \(CPJ\)](#), a national faith-based organization focusing on issues of poverty and climate change, many religious leaders are headed to New York for the events, including Right Rev. Mark MacDonald, who became the Anglican Church of Canada’s first national indigenous Anglican bishop in 2007.

For those not travelling to New York, CPJ has posted ecumenical sermon suggestions as well as a list of music/hymns, prayers of intercession and workshop ideas to coincide with the climate summit.

Faith groups across the country will be incorporating climate change themes into their weekly celebrations to mark the event.

Why are faith groups becoming so involved in climate change?

First, climate change has become one of the world’s most pressing ethical issues. As has become clear through the work of the World Council of Churches and other groups, the poor of the world consistently bear the brunt of climate change, through flooding, drought and dislocation, and will continue to suffer severely as climate change deepens.

All of the world’s spiritual and religious traditions embrace an ethical framework, many of which focus on the special needs of the poor. Climate change thus falls within the heartland of these spiritual teachings.

Second, climate change raises fundamental spiritual questions: What is our proper place here? What is our role as humans within the created world? And in the case of changing the very climate of the planet, what on earth are we doing? While science and policy are critical aspects of the climate change debate, so too are these foundational ethical and spiritual questions, which religions are helping bring to the fore through such international climate gatherings.

Many in the Jewish and Christian traditions have, in response, revisited the notion of “steward” as the proper role for the human family. Noting biblical passages proclaiming that the earth is God’s, not ours, these voices highlight that the world is neither our jungle gym nor our dumpster; rather, it is a gift we will be held accountable for if we trash it.

With more than 85 per cent of the human family embracing a religious tradition, the role of faith groups in helping articulate a moral and ethical response to climate change is not only important, but essential.

Such responses can serve not only as ethical guides, but as refreshing wellsprings of hope within a climate-changed future.

Stephen Bede Scharper is associate professor of religion and environment at the University of Toronto. His column appears monthly. Stephen.scharper@utoronto.ca

http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2014/09/07/faith_groups_bring_ethical_voice_to_u_n_climate_summit_scharper.html

September 8, 2014

Why climate change concerns pro-life Christians

By Tom Krattenmaker
USA Today

When the weather goes wild, people die.

This is not a column dedicated to bludgeoning those unmoved by liberals' warnings about climate change. It is an invitation to people, especially Christians, to think about what's happening to the water, and what will happen to us if there's not enough of it to go around.

For whatever reason, 58% of California is in "[exceptional drought](#)," which is even worse than "extreme." Also in the headlines: a [tap-water drinking ban](#) in Toledo, Ohio, precipitated by Lake Erie algae blooms that researchers attribute, in part, to warmer temperatures.

These and similar phenomena are more than a boutique concern for silly liberals. If you care about life — and I know you do, especially if you're a Christian who believes in the sanctity of life — please pay attention to what is happening with the water.

In California's Central Valley, the rich bounty of [agricultural products is in jeopardy](#) as the water becomes scarcer. People are rightly worrying about what they are going to drink if the drought goes on. If this isn't a "life" issue, it's hard to say what is.

A worldwide problem

The United Nations "[Water for Life](#)" campaign warns that water scarcity is one of the main problems staring down the world of the 21st century. "Even without climate change," says [Peter Brabeck](#), the chairman of Nestlé, "we are running out of water."

One of the environmental movement's biggest mistakes has been to give the impression that [enviros care more about old trees](#) and rare animals than human beings. That problem, thankfully, is being remedied as a new ethos in the movement connects the dots between a healthy environment and the viability of human life.

Meanwhile, more theologically conservative Christians are breaking out of an old "lordship over the earth" way of thinking and embracing "creation care" as a religious imperative, notes Christian Piatt, author of the new book [postChristian](#). Typifying this evangelical ethic is ministry leader Randy Alcorn, who touts his anti-abortion commitment but adds, "I am also concerned about the welfare of the environment God has entrusted to our care, in which ... human lives are also at stake." Alcorn's statement appears in [Gardening Eden](#), a book by evangelical Michael Abbaté.

Nothing against polar bears, but it's not about them primarily. The issue is the life-threatening impact on human beings as parts of our habitat become less able to support human life.

Biblical implications

Water has deep resonance with Christians. That includes the spiritual "[living water](#)" of Christ as well as the actual stuff, which many missionary travelers help secure through well-digging in less developed countries.

Fish likewise feature in the Bible — and in today's climate analyses. [Warmer ocean waters](#), in tandem with [overfishing](#) and [seawater acidification](#), threaten this important source of food. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [warns](#) that the changes will likely "increase the vulnerability of human societies, by affecting income, employment and food security."

When the weather goes wild, people die. The [science does not back](#) the oft-made connection between climate change and the severity of the tornadoes we have endured in recent years. But the IPCC says climate trends will likely supersize [tropical cyclones](#) in the future, taking wind speeds and rainfall levels from bad to worse. It hardly needs to be pointed out that the coastal zones, vulnerable to typhoons, tend to be [high-population areas](#).

Lately, because of political controversies and headline-grabbing court cases such as the Supreme Court Hobby Lobby decision, the public's view of evangelical reverence for life has been reduced mainly to fetuses and fertilized eggs. In truth, evangelicals are addressing myriad threats

to life, from poverty and slavery to genocide. If the life movement can devote itself to fighting these, can't it also confront the threat to our life-giving water — and compel the small- and large-scale actions that will conserve it for human beings today and tomorrow?

I have been around enough Christians to know there is room in their hearts, and on their agenda, for this life issue, too.

Tom Krattenmaker is a Portland writer specializing in religion in public life and a member of USA TODAY's Board of Contributors. His most recent book is The Evangelicals You Don't Know.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/09/08/climate-change-pro-life-issue-environment-religion-column/15304831/>

September 10, 2014

Ozone Layer on Track to Recovery: Success Story Should Encourage Action on Climate

United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi/Geneva (UNEP/WMO) - The Earth's protective ozone layer is well on track to recovery in the next few decades thanks to concerted international action against ozone depleting substances, according to a new assessment by 300 scientists.

The Assessment for Decision-Makers, a summary document of the *Scientific Assessment of Ozone Depletion 2014*, is being published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and is the first comprehensive update in four years.

The stratospheric ozone layer, a fragile shield of gas, protects the Earth from harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun. Without the Montreal Protocol and associated agreements, atmospheric levels of ozone depleting substances could have increased tenfold by 2050. According to global models, the Protocol will have prevented 2 million cases of skin cancer annually by 2030, averted damage to human eyes and immune systems, and protected wildlife and agriculture, according to UNEP.

The phase-out of ozone depleting substances has had a positive spin-off for the global climate because many of these substances are also potent greenhouse gases. However, the assessment report cautions that the rapid increase in certain substitutes, which are themselves also potent greenhouse gases, has the potential to undermine these gains. The assessment also notes that there are possible approaches to avoiding the harmful climate effects of these substitutes.

“There are positive indications that the ozone layer is on track to recovery towards the middle of the century. The Montreal Protocol – one of the world’s most successful environmental treaties –

has protected the stratospheric ozone layer and avoided enhanced UV radiation reaching the earth's surface," said UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

"However, the challenges that we face are still huge. The success of the Montreal Protocol should encourage further action not only on the protection and recovery of the ozone layer but also on climate. On September 23, the UN Secretary General will host Heads of State in New York in an effort to catalyse global action on climate. The Montreal Protocol community, with its tangible achievements, is in a position to provide strong evidence that global cooperation and concerted action are the key ingredients to secure the protection of our global commons," he added.

"International action on the ozone layer is a major environmental success story," said WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud. "This should encourage us to display the same level of urgency and unity to tackle the even greater challenge of climate change. This latest assessment provides solid science to policy-makers about the intricate relationship between ozone and climate and the need for mutually-supportive measures to protect life on earth for future generations."

"Human activities will continue to change the composition of the atmosphere. WMO's Global Atmosphere Watch programme will therefore continue its crucial monitoring, research and assessment activities to provide scientific data needed to understand and ultimately predict environmental changes, as it has done for the past 25 years" said Mr Jarraud.

Key findings:

Actions taken under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer are enabling the return of the ozone layer to benchmark 1980 levels.

- Under full compliance with the Montreal Protocol, the ozone layer is expected to recover to 1980 benchmark levels- the time before significant ozone layer depletion- before the middle of the century in mid-latitudes and the Arctic, and somewhat later in the Antarctic.
- The Montreal Protocol and associated agreements have led to decreases in the atmospheric abundance of gases, such as CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) and halons, once used in products such as refrigerators, spray cans, insulation foam and fire suppression.
- Total column ozone declined over most of the globe during the 1980s and early 1990s. It has remained relatively unchanged since 2000, but there are recent indications of its future recovery.
- The Antarctic ozone hole continues to occur each spring and it is expected to continue occurring for the better part of this century given that ozone depleting substances persist in the atmosphere, even though their emissions have ceased.
- The Arctic stratosphere in winter/spring 2011 was particularly cold, which led to large ozone depletion as expected under these conditions.

The climate benefits of the Montreal Protocol could be significantly offset by projected emissions of HFCs (hydrofluorocarbons) used to replace ozone depleting substances.

- The Montreal Protocol has made large contributions toward reducing global greenhouse gas emissions. In 1987, ozone-depleting substances contributed about 10 gigatonnes CO₂-equivalent emissions per year. The Montreal Protocol has now reduced these emissions by more than 90 per cent. This decrease is about five times larger than the annual emissions reduction target for the first commitment period (2008–2012) of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.

- Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) do not harm the ozone layer but many of them are potent greenhouse gases. They currently contribute about 0.5 gigatonnes of CO₂-equivalent emissions per year. These emissions are growing at a rate of about 7 per cent per year. Left unabated, they can be expected to contribute very significantly to climate change in the next decades.

- Replacements of the current mix of high-GWP HFCs with alternative compounds with low GWPs or not-in-kind technologies would limit this potential problem.

The annual Antarctic ozone hole has caused significant changes in Southern Hemisphere surface climate in the summer.

- Ozone depletion has contributed to cooling of the lower stratosphere and this is very likely the dominant cause of observed changes in Southern Hemisphere summertime circulation over recent decades, with associated impacts on surface temperature, precipitation, and the oceans.

- In the Northern Hemisphere, where the ozone depletion is smaller, there is no strong link between stratospheric ozone depletion and tropospheric climate.

CO₂, Nitrous Oxide and Methane will have an increasing influence on the ozone layer

- What happens to the ozone layer in the second half of the 21st century will largely depend on concentrations of CO₂, methane and nitrous oxide – the three main long-lived greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Overall, CO₂ and methane tend to increase global ozone levels. By contrast, nitrous oxide, a by-product of food production, is both a powerful greenhouse gas and an ozone depleting gas, and is likely to become more important in future ozone depletion.

The Scientific Assessment Panel is expected to present the key findings of the new report at the annual Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, to be held in Paris in November 2014. The full body of the report will be issued in early 2015.

Notes for Editors:

The Scientific Assessment of Ozone Depletion 2014 was prepared and reviewed by 282 scientists from 36 countries (Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, People's Republic of China, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway,

Poland, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Togo, United Kingdom, United States of America, Zimbabwe.)

Co-Chairs of the ozone assessment are: Prof. Ayité Lô Nohende Ajavon, Université de Lomé, Togo; Prof. John Pyle, University of Cambridge and National Centre for Atmospheric Science, UK; Dr. Paul Newman, NASA/ Goddard Space Flight Center, USA; Prof. A.R. (Ravi) Ravishankara, Colorado State University, USA.

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The pre-print version of the ADM can be downloaded from:

http://ozone.unep.org/Assessment_Panels/SAP/SAP2014_Assessment_for_Decision-Makers.pdf

Relevant links include <http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/arep/gaw/ozone/index.html> and www.unep.org/ozone

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?documentid=2796&articleid=10978&l=en>

September 10, 2014

From Mobile Solar Computer Classrooms to Novel Baobab Products: Green Entrepreneurship is Thriving Across Africa and Beyond

2014 SEED Awards Honour Low Carbon and Women-Led Enterprises.

United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi - Nairobi plays host to one of the largest gatherings of start-up social and environmental enterprises ever, as 41 green entrepreneurs are celebrated at the 2014 SEED Awards Africa Symposium, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) announced today.

The SEED Awards identify and support innovative social and environmental start-up enterprises which can tackle key sustainable development challenges at community level, in developing and emerging economies. As in previous years, the 2014 SEED Awards have a special focus on Africa, with 28 Awards made to enterprises in Ethiopia, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. A further ten SEED Low Carbon Awards go to climate-smart enterprises across the globe that contribute towards grassroots climate change mitigation and/or adaptation. Special recognition is also given to three women-led enterprises that promote gender equality and women's empowerment as their core objectives.

Every SEED Award Winner will receive a financial contribution, technical assistance, access to different supporting institutions, and tailor-made support to develop their business and skills.

From an enterprise that produces premium outdoor furniture out of recycled plastic and organic waste materials in Colombia, to a women's farming cooperative that improves food security in Nepal, to enterprises that market solar electricity kiosks in rural off grid areas of Malawi and promote bikes as subsidised moving billboards for the rural poor in Mozambique - this year's SEED Winners again demonstrate that innovation, working in partnerships, and a dedicated focus on sustainability contribute significantly towards building a world of flourishing communities in which eco-entrepreneurship drives sustainable development.

The 2014 call for applications saw contributions from 84 countries, representing the collaborative efforts of partnerships between enterprises, non-governmental organizations, women's and youth groups, labour organizations, public authorities, international agencies, and academia. Most of the applications were in the agricultural and rural development sectors; others were in energy and climate change, and ecosystem management. Many entries at the same time addressed IT applications, and education and training.

All the 2014 SEED winners were honoured at a high-level International Awards Ceremony at The Nairobi Safari-Park Hotel in Kenya. The Award winners will receive from SEED a package of individually tailored support for their businesses, technical assistance, access to other supporting institutions, and a financial contribution of US\$5,000.

The winners were selected by the independent SEED International Jury of experts (details below).

The International Awards Ceremony was a highlight of the SEED Africa Symposium, which brought together over 250 entrepreneurs and business people, policymakers, and representatives from civil society and support institutions from across Africa around the theme "Making growth sustainable: co-creating solutions through social and green entrepreneurship."

Representatives of the SEED Partners said about the SEED Winners:

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General, UNEP Executive Director: "The SEED Winners are visionaries who are spearheading the green economy among diverse communities and across a wide range of sectors. We are especially proud of the SEED's acknowledgement of women-led green enterprises having introduced the Gender Equality component since 2011."

"We salute the vision, innovation and resilience of these trailblazers as they lead the way towards a greener and more sustainable future," he said.

Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator: "The 2014 SEED Winners, have followed enlightened social and environmental pathways in their entrepreneurial activities. They offer good examples of how local entrepreneurs can contribute to successful and sustainable development."

Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General IUCN: "With the environment at their heart, these innovative enterprises create economic opportunities for communities that are often located close to natural resources, but are nonetheless deprived of sustainable livelihoods and social facilities. Speaking as Chairman of the SEED Board, we are impressed by the entrepreneurial spirit and the commitment these new SEED Winners bring to their communities. They can count on our support to help them to scale up and replicate, and so to inspire others to follow suit."

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director UN Women: "Women's economic empowerment is central to achieving gender equality. It's more than a matter of basic fairness: it's an established positive cycle. With a livelihood and an income of their own, women have increased status, can provide for their families, and become empowered in other parts of their lives as well, such as making decisions about education, housing, food choices, and medical care. We are pleased to be working with SEED and supporting the SEED Gender Equality Awards for the outstanding women-led social and environmental enterprises that are leading the way."

Li Yong, Director General UNIDO: "Economic growth, environmental sustainability and the alleviation of poverty cannot take place without women. Women's empowerment is crucial for inclusive and sustainable industrial development and UNIDO is committed to promote gender equality in its work. This year's SEED Gender Equality Award Winners are best case examples of how women-led enterprises can be leading the way towards a green industry growth path and we are eager to see their businesses flourish in the months and years ahead."

The 2014 SEED Gender Equality Award winners (by country) are:

Bangladesh:

- "JITA Social Business" is an innovative rural distribution network, providing jobs and a regular income for women from low socio-economic communities across Bangladesh. Called Aparajitas - meaning "women who never accept defeat" - the women earn commissions selling a range of products from solar lamps to food and sanitary items on a door-to-door basis.

Nepal:

- "Women's Off-season Vegetable Production Group" is a women-led initiative growing and marketing organic vegetables in a climate where weather usually limits year-round production. The enterprise deploys agricultural techniques, notably poly-tunnels and greenhouses, to help improve food security and nutrition while empowering marginalised women through job creation.

Zimbabwe:

- "Precious Life Foundation's Outgrower Project" teaches bio-intensive, organic agricultural techniques to vulnerable women living at its shelter who then pass on their knowledge to the community. The enterprise empowers these women as teachers while working towards improved food security in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland South Region. Women farmers who benefit from the training donate labour or produce back as a form of payment for service.

The 2014 SEED Gender Equality Awards are largely supported by UN Women, the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) which promotes inclusive and sustainable industrial development. Additional support is given by the international law firm, Hogan Lovells.

The 2014 SEED Low Carbon Award winners (by country) are:

Colombia:

- "Diseclar: Ecological design and production" makes furniture, decks and pergolas from recycled plastic and agro-industrial waste, including sugar cane pulp, coffee and rice chaff, based on a method developed by the enterprise itself. Diseclar is working in co-operation with a university and a local government agency.
- "Fundación Huellas Verdes" helps to protect communities at risk of landslides by planting tiva, at the same time as providing a carbon offset mechanism for enterprises and institutions. The grass, also known as vetiver, has great potential to store carbon in its roots and prevents erosion when planted on slopes at risk of landslides. Working closely with the affected communities the enterprise ensures maximum benefits for them.
- "Proplanet" transforms materials that are hard to recycle, such as long-life Tetra Paks, into food packaging, construction materials and paper fibre. It is the first enterprise in Colombia recycling Tetra Paks. Through intensive research on how to improve its recycling processes, Proplanet managed to increase the spectrum of recycled materials and expand its product range, considerably reducing the pressure on landfills in Colombia.

India:

- "Frontier Markets" provides rural low-income families with affordable solar energy lanterns, torches, and home-lighting systems using a hub-and-spoke distribution model. The specific needs of rural low-income families are integrated into the business model through after-sales services and regular product use needs assessments. Using solar

energy products allows customers to reduce their energy expenses and to reduce the use of traditional polluting fuel sources such as kerosene.

- "Last Forest Enterprises" is a marketing platform promoting fair trade principles, sustainable harvesting and biodiversity in India. The enterprise markets and sells 68 kinds of organic, forest-based or indigenous products such as handicrafts, garments, honey and timber products. Founded by a non-profit organization (NGO), the platform sells the sourced and branded products at its own retail sites or on e-commerce portals.
- "Switch ON: ONergy" overcomes the obstacle of last-mile distribution of solar-energy products by providing solutions such as solar micro-grids and lanterns to rural communities, using a full-service distribution infrastructure, based at Renewable Energy Centres. By partnering with national banks, microfinance institutions and credit co-operatives, the enterprise ensures off grid village households can sustainably finance the products.

Tanzania:

- "L's Solution" promotes and sells solar powered lamps, chargers and cookstoves at village trade fairs and installs larger-scale devices such as solar water pumps and solar PV panels. By focusing on promotional activities the enterprise generates income and entrepreneurial opportunities for vendors, marketers and distributors, especially women. The products themselves reduce fuel consumption by 60 per cent, reducing deforestation and reducing health risks from indoor air pollution.

Uganda:

- "Green Bio Energy" is an enterprise distributing its own brand of Briketti charcoal briquettes, solar lamps and EcoStove outdoor cookstoves to low-income families in Uganda through its network of trained micro-entrepreneurs. Its long-burning briquettes are made of 100 per cent recycled agricultural waste and its cookstoves have very low carbon emission rates. The enterprise regularly implements capacity-building workshops for its network of micro-entrepreneurs, thus enabling them to generate higher incomes for their families.
- "Green Heat" is an enterprise installing and marketing biogas digesters that convert decaying organic material from latrines and agricultural waste into biogas fuel for cooking and heating. By using biogas digesters, urban and rural households, schools, prisons, hospitals and tourist lodges in Uganda reduce their dependence on firewood and charcoal, improve their waste management systems, and help reduce deforestation and greenhouse gas emission rates related to methane release.

Vietnam:

- "The Elegance Company" showcases agricultural products and livestock, renewable energy technologies, and organic farming techniques through its zero-waste, multi-culture, multi-crop and closed loop system implemented on its model farm. Partnering with NGOs and research institutions the enterprise provides consultancy services for product incubation, sustainable farm design, and development of new technologies.

The 2014 SEED Low Carbon Awards are largely supported by the International Climate Initiative of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety.

The 2014 SEED Africa Award winners (by country) are:

Ethiopia

- "Asrat & Helawi Engineering Partnership" manufactures and sells clean cookstoves for private and institutional customers. Heated with electricity, biogas, or ethanol the stoves considerably reduce both fuel costs and health risks related to indoor air pollution. Local communities help produce the stoves while additional indirect jobs are created through a retail network.

Tanzania

- "Arusha Women Entrepreneurs" is an enterprise training and employing women in the production and marketing of aflatoxin-free peanut butter. Smallholder farmers supply the peanuts which are processed into peanut butter and sold in bulk to a large wholesaler as well as to supermarkets and kiosks, and through door-to-door sales. Gender quotas ensure women are able to hold leadership positions in the enterprise.
- "Mesula - Meru Sustainable Land" supports bio-intensive farming by providing Arusha smallholder farmers with technical advice on how to convert to organic farming. Smallholder farmers see increased crop yields and higher incomes. Mesula buys their organic produce and sells it, together with preserves made by a group of local women, at a farmer's market and a local supermarket.
- "Village Inc. Africa" supports the creation of village companies in the Babati area of Tanzania. Communities structure their village like a business, thus giving them access to low interest loans to fund enterprises and projects. Profits are used to fund urgent social projects, such as sanitation. Villagers become shareholders once a village company meets a series of good governance and fiscal targets.

Uganda:

- "Appropriate Energy Saving Technologies" works closely with local farmers in Uganda's Teso District to provide households in the district with clean, sustainable cooking fuel. The farmers provide the enterprise with bio-waste which is used to manufacture the biomass briquettes. The enterprise then sells and distributes biomass charcoal briquettes and fuel-efficient cookstoves to local community groups.
- "Bringing gas nearer to people" has developed a strategy to reach underserved rural and peri-urban communities in the central region of Uganda with Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as an alternative clean energy solution for cooking purposes. The enterprise is trialling a door-to-door gas delivery service and alternative payment schemes tailored to the needs of rural low income communities, such as pioneering pay-as-you-go LPG community kitchens.

- "Budongo Women Bee Enterprise" is a co-operative beekeeping enterprise producing honey and beeswax products. In mobilising women in the Masindi region to become beekeepers, the enterprise uses the honey business as a vehicle for community development, including promotion of sustainable land-use and climate change adaptation.
- "Girls Agro Investment", implemented by KadAfrica, trains young rural women to manage and run smallholder agricultural businesses in passion fruit farming. The girls are given rent-free land and training for two and a half years, during which KadAfrica buys back their produce. Empowering the girls to continue farming at the end of their internship, the enterprise offers an economic alternative to rural exodus in western Uganda.
- "Kataara Women's Poverty Alleviation Group" runs an innovative small-scale enterprise selling handicrafts made with paper produced from elephant dung. The paper is used to make cards, menus, and notebooks that are sold to tourists. Women employed by the enterprise are also trained to construct energy-efficient cookstoves which are marketed locally. The group aims to not only alleviate regional poverty but also to conserve its environment for future generations.
- "KingFire Briquettes" is an urban recycling enterprise in Kampala which uses organic material, otherwise considered waste, to create biomass briquettes. Sourced from local materials, the briquettes offer an alternative energy source to firewood or charcoal and provide quality, affordable, sustainable fuel for heating and cooking.
- "Southwestern Women Bean Growers Union" works to rally together the existing smallholder sugar bean farming community in south western Uganda. Women can join the enterprise's collective where they are trained in how to increase production and sales and receive social support and wide market access. Through multiple partnerships, the enterprise also works to protect the local environment, replanting trees that have been cut to stake the beans.
- "The Mobile Solar Computer Classroom" is helping bridge the digital divide in Uganda by making computer skills accessible, affordable, and relevant to rural schools and community libraries in Uganda. The enterprise uses solar powered computers - housed in modified SUV vehicles fitted with solar panels - to bring its technology to its trainees. A digital literacy curriculum is delivered to each participating venue over the course of two years.
- "The Sustainable Mushroom Farming Initiative" is a community enterprise which farms and sells organic oyster mushrooms in the Kanungu District of Uganda. Providing alternative livelihoods for disadvantaged women and indigenous Batwa people living adjacent to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, the enterprise reduces pressure on the gorilla habitat, as fewer community members engage in illegal foraging for food in the National Park.

Malawi

- "Electricity4All" sells and rents solar battery kits and accessories at solar electricity kiosks in rural off grid areas. Each kiosk serves up to 500 customers who can use mobile phones to process payments. By collaborating with international foundations and multinationals, the enterprise helps rural entrepreneurs power their private businesses,

reduces energy expenditures, contributes to forest protection, and eliminates the use of toxic batteries.

- "Honey Products Industries" creates an agribusiness value-chain out of high-quality honey. By training young adults to operate business outlets via a franchise model and providing beekeeping equipment to smallholder farmers, the enterprise increases income generation and improves market access for rural communities in Malawi.
- "Kumudzi Kuwale" provides renewable energy solutions to off grid communities by selling cookstoves, lamps and lanterns, by supplying electricity at village charging stations, and by installing larger-scale solar energy projects. The enterprise thus contributes to forest protection and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- "Powered by Nature" has developed a clean-energy value chain providing quality-proven and affordable clean energy devices to rural households in Malawi. By partnering with community stakeholders the enterprise educates the general public about clean technologies and trains women to construct cookstoves and make biomass briquettes, so becoming clean energy entrepreneurs themselves.

Morocco

- "Recycling for Environmental Recovery" recycles plastic waste to produce secondary raw materials that are used in the lucrative plastics industry. Women waste workers are trained about the health and safety hazards and encouraged to join a co-operative to help regulate waste collection.

Mozambique

- "Baobab Products Mozambique" provides hundreds of women harvesters with a new source of seasonal income from the processing of fruits of the baobab tree. Harvesters are trained in processing techniques and are paid to supply seeds and pulp used to make baobab powder and other products for both national and international markets.
- "Mozambikes" engages in breaking the poverty cycle in Mozambique by selling locally-built custom-designed bikes at low prices. The enterprise enlists the private and public sectors to buy and distribute branded bikes in remote communities for various marketing and employee initiatives. The bikes then act as 'moving billboards', while women are trained how to ride and maintain the bikes.
- "Piratas do Pau Upcycling Centre" employs and trains underprivileged youth in the design and production of modern furniture and other household products made from 90 per cent reclaimed materials. The enterprise reduces waste and teaches Mozambicans about the benefits of up-cycling.
- "Pro-Sofala Verde" uses bees and a reforestation project to show a rural Mozambican community how sustainable living can lead to social, economic and environmental benefits. Families are given beehives and trained in good beekeeping and harvesting techniques. The high-grade honey is sold back to the enterprise, which processes and distributes it in small and affordable portions.

The 2014 SEED Africa Awards in Ethiopia, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda are largely supported by the European Union and the Government of Flanders. The

European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. It is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders. The Government of Flanders is active in Southern Africa.

The 2014 SEED South Africa Award winners are:

- "All Women Recycling" turns discarded plastic bottles into unique gift boxes, called kliketyklikboxes, which are sold internationally. In the production of the gift boxes the enterprise employs young women, primarily previously unemployed single mothers. All Women Recycling also contributes to cleaner townships by strengthening environmental awareness, particularly in schools which, as a result, set up collection points for plastic bottles.
- "Growing the Future" promotes nutritious and organic food production and improves household food security by providing a three-step gardening programme for unemployed people. After receiving an innovative wicking-bed gardening starting kit, households complete a gardening training course and can acquire land for smallholder farms.
- "Khoelife Organic Soap and Oils Co-operative" is a women's co-operative, marketing organic soaps and oils. Through training and a micro-loan scheme its members are enabled to become independent entrepreneurs. Khoelife Manufacturing, the supplier of the organic soaps and oils, uses traditional labour-intensive methods, certified organic ingredients, and renewable energy in its production processes.
- "Waste to Food" recycles food waste from retailers and processes it into pre-compost using industrial technology, which is then converted into high-quality compost with an earthworm vermicomposting system operated under a franchise model. By offering an alternative to landfill disposal, Waste to Food decreases carbon emissions, strengthens soil structure, reduces chemical fertiliser input, and increases income generation for local communities.

These 2014 SEED South Africa Awards are largely supported by the European Union, which is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders. Additional support comes from Hisense.

- "Botanica Natural Products" has developed a method of extracting beneficial substances from *Bulbine frutescens*, a traditional medicinal plant, for the cosmetic industry. The plant is cultivated and processed organically in its indigenous location in rural Limpopo, and its commercial use provides employment opportunities in the marginalised area. The local community further benefits through an Access and Benefit Sharing agreement.
- "greenABLE" has found an innovative solution for recycling empty printer cartridges. The recycled plastic and metals are sold, generating a steady flow of income and employment opportunities for previously unemployed persons with disabilities. Jobs are being created in the enterprise's recycling facility, or as greenAGENTS who run their own home-based cartridge collection business and sell the collected cartridges back to the enterprise.

These 2014 SEED South Africa Awards are supported by the Government of Flanders, which is active in Southern Africa.

Further details about the SEED Winners 2014 can be found on the website of the SEED Initiative at <http://www.seedinit.org/awards/all/2014.html>.

Notes to Editors

2014 SEED International Jury

The 2014 SEED Award Winners were selected by the independent SEED International Jury, which generously dedicated considerable time to selecting the most promising of the applications. The members of the jury are:

- Bert van Nieuwenhuizen: Chief Technical Advisor Africa Biogas Partnership Programme, SNV Kenya.
- Catalina Alvarez Morato: Deputy Chief of Party, Colombia Clean Energy Program, Colombia.
- Crispin Rapinet: Partner, Hogan Lovells, United Kingdom.
- David Sher: Investment Director, Low Carbon Enterprise Fund, United Kingdom.
- Douglas Kativu: Head of Global Reporting Initiative Focal Point South Africa.
- Edward Mungai: CEO, Climate Innovation Center, Kenya.
- François Bonnici: Director, Bertha Centre for Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship, University of Cape Town, Graduate School of Business, South Africa.
- Gisele Yitamben: President, Association for the Support of Women Entrepreneurs, Cameroon.
- Helmy Abouleish: Managing Director, SEKEM Holding, Egypt.
- Ilyas Azzoui: Incubator Manager, National Center for Scientific and Technical Research, Morocco.
- Jane Kisakye: Independent Senior Advisor on Environment Conservation and Community Development, Uganda.
- Jeff Felten: Managing Director Tanzania, Camco Clean Energy, Tanzania.
- Kieu Oanh Pham: Director, Centre for Social Initiatives Promotion (CSIP), Vietnam.
- Kofi Nketsie-Tabiri: Founder and Managing Director, Xpress Gas, Ghana.
- Leticia Greyling: Senior Lecturer, Rhodes Business School, South Africa.
- Lucy Aviles: Independent Senior Advisor on Rural Development, Gender Mainstreaming and Social Impact Assessment, Bolivia / Germany.
- Patricio Sande: President, Scientific Research Association of Mozambique.
- Paul Laird: Corporate Partnerships Manager, Earthwatch, United Kingdom.
- Phillip Bohwasi: Executive Director, Zimbabwe Opportunities Industrialization Center, Zimbabwe.
- Rebecca Harrison: CEO, African Management Initiative, South Africa.
- Saphira Patel: Manager Operations and Evaluation, DBSA, South Africa.
- Sarah Timpson: Senior Adviser on Community-based Initiatives, UNDP, United States.
- Saul Levin: Head of Research and Policy Strategy, TIPS, South Africa.

- Scott Overdyke: Senior Program & Planning Manager, Root Capital, USA.
- Seema Arora: Executive Director, CII-ITC Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development, India.
- Shrashtant Patara: Senior Vice President, Development Alternatives, India.
- Sosten Chiota: Regional Program Director, LEAD Southern Africa, Malawi.
- Tanya Lobel: Director, Actis, United Kingdom.
- Thais Corral: SEED Winner 2008; Director, Adapta Sertão, Brazil.
- Valerie Green: Director Climate and Energy Unit, National Business Initiative, South Africa.

About the SEED Initiative

The SEED Initiative was founded in 2002 by UNEP, UNDP and IUCN to contribute towards the Millennium Development Goals and the commitments made at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development.

SEED identifies, profiles and supports innovative, locally-driven start-up enterprises that integrate social, environmental and economic benefits into their business models at the outset. Based in developing countries, these enterprises work in partnership with stakeholders to improve livelihoods, tackle poverty and marginalisation, and manage natural resources sustainably.

SEED also develops learning resources for the broad community of social and environmental entrepreneurs, informs policy- and decision-makers, and aims to inspire innovative, entrepreneurial approaches to sustainable development.

Partners of the SEED Initiative, in addition to the Founding Partners, are the governments of Flanders, Germany, India, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America; the European Union; Conservation International; Hogan Lovells; UNIDO and UN Women; and SEED's corporate partner, Hisense.

SEED is hosted by Adelphi Research, based in Germany.

For more information, please visit www.seedinit.org or contact:

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<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2796&ArticleID=10977>

September 16, 2014

Religious Groups To Demand Action On Environment At People's Climate March

By Antonia Blumberg
Huffington Post

A coalition of more than 1,000 organizations will take to the streets in New York City on Sunday, September 21, for the [People's Climate March](#) to demand action at the [United Nations Climate Summit](#) taking place the following day.

The [Interfaith Contingent](#) hopes to make up a huge section of the march, with groups from a wide range of religious traditions calling attention to the cause the National Catholic Reporter proclaimed the "[number one pro-life issue](#)" of our time.

In addition to marching in the streets, many faith leaders and scholars will participate in [Religions for the Earth](#), a three-day gathering hosted at Union Theological Seminary that will coincide with the Climate March and Summit. The conference will gather environmentalists from Christian, indigenous, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhism, Baha'i, secular and other traditions. Religions for the Earth, as well as the Interfaith Contingent at the march, highlights the burgeoning movement of faith communities [speaking out on climate change](#) -- and the unique voice they bring to the issue.

Caring for the Sacred

The Union conference will open with [a plenary session](#) entitled "What Moves Us: Values, Narratives & the Climate Crisis." For many religious people involved in climate activism the work is as much about values as it is about science.

"Creation is a gift," Sister Didi Madden of the Dominican Sisters in Committed Collaboration (OPSCC) told HuffPost. "When we destroy creation we are throwing away something that is precious and God-given."

Madden is a "promoter of justice" with the [OPSCC](#), which is comprised of five congregations in the Northeast. Twelve-hundred sisters from the organization are participating in the march in some capacity, Madden said, with nearly 100 actually marching on Sunday.

Climate change is also a sacred issue for many pagans, more than 200 of whom will be participating in the march, according to leader Courtney Weber. Her group, the Pagan Environmental Coalition of NYC, has coordinated rides, housing and a [weekend full of activities](#) for the pagan community leading up to Sunday's march.

"Pagans view the earth as divine," Weber told HuffPost. "Our Gods are in the soil, the rocks, the trees, the air. We recognize that we are of the body of the living earth and to destroy it, destroys our souls."

Katharine Hayhoe, a climate scientist and evangelical Christian, has a different approach to the climate change issue as she explained to HuffPost:

"The Christian faith its based on the idea that we are to love others as Christ loved us. The Christian community already has a heart for people. But climate change has not been presented as a people issue."

More and more, Hayhoe said, people have come to understanding the far-reaching affects of climate change and the very human dilemmas it imposes. If human beings are a part of the "God-given" creation Madden referred to, then climate change poses a threat to them as much as to polar bears, ice caps and the atmosphere.

A shift will happen when faith communities are able to rediscover the sacred in nature, Rev. Ian Mevorach argued. Mevorach founded the Massachusetts-based Common Street Community Church and has heavily promoted the march in addition to organizing climate awareness events in his community.

"I believe that care for the earth will become central to our tradition when we commit to the process of re-sacralizing nature," Mevorach told HuffPost. This will entail shifting from a view of the world as "an inanimate machine" to "a living body animated by God's Spirit. "

The Root of All Justice Issues

Faith communities are not new to the world of activism and social justice. They have been [at the forefront](#) of countless justice movements -- which many faith-based climate activists see as an advantage.

"We see climate change as the issue that drives all other justice issues," Madden said.

Far from an isolated problem, climate change is [deeply connected](#) to issues of hunger, poverty, war, sanitation, disease, access to clean water, and economic crises.

"Climate change has been presented to us as one more issue on the list of things we care about," Hayhoe said. "But climate change is not one more thing to add to the list... It affects nearly every single thing already on that list."

Claire Curran, with Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light, is [organizing a bus tour](#) of 50 Minnesotans from the interfaith community to take part in Sunday's march. Curran told HuffPost that she sees faith as uniquely situated to help people find ways to combat the threat of climate change, which makes the religious community's presence at the Climate March particularly crucial.

"Faith hold us accountable and helps us connect the dots between seemingly disparate issues into an integrated understanding of suffering and what it means to build a just and sustainable world," Curran said.

Inspiring Faith Communities Into Action

“The Islamic tradition has all sorts of wonderful resources to talk about the importance of the environment,” Jerusha Lamptey, assistant professor of Islam at Union Seminary, told HuffPost, “but how do we use them to motivate people to make change?”

What religion provides more than anything, Weber said, is access to people. Twenty-eight different religious faiths and denominations are represented in the [list of organizations](#) endorsing the climate march. These groups have a unique opportunity to activate large populations toward social change.

Karenna Gore, the Director of Union Forum which has played a primary role in organizing the conference, identified materialism as one of the “root causes of climate change” in an interview with HuffPost. Religion, she said, offers an alternative.

“Spirituality can prompt us to make sacrifices and behave in ways that run counter to materialistic short-term self-interest,” Gore said. “Many people experience their sense of moral obligations to others through their religious affiliation. We need the power of religion to affect social change if we are going to counter and reverse what we are doing to the earth.”

Climate change has the added affect of bringing diverse faith communities together in social action. This will come to bear in the Interfaith Contingent of the march, as well as in the [multi-faith and interdisciplinary program](#) of the Union conference.

“In a way, [climate change] is a unique gift to communities of faith,” Weber told HuffPost. “We don’t have time to try to understand each other. We have to work together whether we understand one another or not--and in that, I think we find even greater understanding.”

Hopes for the Summit

The Religions for the Earth conference and People’s Climate March are two ways concerned individuals and groups can take action to promote sustainability -- but the work of climate action will extend beyond the weekend.

Much is resting on Tuesday’s climate summit.

“The overarching hope,” Lamptey said, “is that it will raise the religious voice so that it is heard by the UN and so that it is heard within religious communities, themselves.”

Hosted by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York City, the summit promises to “catalyze ambitious action” by bringing global leaders together to discuss [eight action areas](#): agriculture, cities, energy, financing, forests, petroleum and industry, resilience and transportation.

Hayhoe has followed [the environment’s decline](#) closely, and she knows that there is no time like the present to address the threat it poses.

"The impacts are here and they're getting worse," Hayhoe said. "I know as a scientist it's not too late. The choices we make today will have a profound effect on our future. We still have hope; we can still make choices that make a difference. I hope that some concrete action comes out of [the UN Climate Summit], since the window of opportunity is still ajar but closing fast."

Gore, who is the daughter of politician and climate activist Al Gore, has spent years dedicated to environmental justice and said she is optimistic:

"I think everyone who has been involved in the issues of global warming and the climate crisis for many years is experiencing a strong feeling of hope."

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/16/religious-groups-peoples-climate-march_n_5823266.html?ir=Green

September 18, 2014

Church of England Joins World's Leading Institutional Investors to Call For Carbon Pricing and Ambitious Global Climate Deal

Targeted News Service

LONDON -- The Church of England issued the following news release:

The Church of England's National Investing Bodies, NIBs*, have joined more than 340 global institutional investors calling on governments to provide meaningful carbon pricing to help them to invest to meet the climate change challenge, and asking them to develop plans to phase out subsidies for fossil fuels.

Representing more than \$24 trillion in assets the investors are calling for stable, reliable and economically meaningful carbon pricing in the run up to the United Nations Climate summit on September 23, convened by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

The statement recognizes the role investors play in financing clean energy, outlines the specific steps they are committing to take, and calls on policymakers to take action that supports, rather than limits, investments in clean energy and climate solutions.

It was coordinated by the four investor groups on climate change - Ceres' Investor Network on Climate Risk (INCR) in the United States, the European Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC), the Investors Group on Climate Change (IGCC) in Australia and New Zealand, and the Asia Investor Group on Climate Change (AIGCC) - with the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI) and Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI).

Edward Mason, Head of Responsible Investment for the Church Commissioners, said:

"Church investors are making investments in the low carbon economy and encouraging companies to reduce the carbon emissions associated with their business activities. But without effective public policy there simply will not be the economic incentives that investors and companies require to take all the actions required to prevent dangerous climate change. Calling for better public policy is a vital part of our ethical investment response to climate change. We urge governments involved in the climate change talks to take note of what investors are saying."

In addition, the investor groups have launched a public online database of select low carbon investments made by asset owners such as pension funds and insurance companies. Investments listed by the Church's National Investing Bodies include solar and wind energy, sustainable forestry and green buildings

Notes

The Church of England's national investing bodies are: - the Church Commissioners (<https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchcommissioners.aspx>), the Church of England Pensions Board (<https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/cepb.aspx>) and the CBF Church of England funds (<http://www.ccla.co.uk/>) managed by CCLA.

<http://insurancenewsnet.com/oarticle/2014/09/19/church-oof-england-joins-worlds-leading-institutional-investors-to-call-for-car-a-557523.html>

September 18, 2014

An Appeal from Science Leaders to Religious Leaders on Environmental Protection

Researchers grounded in empirical searches for truth ask those with authority on matters of morality to join a call to protect the planet

By Robert Monroe
Scripps

In an essay to be released Sept. 19 in the journal *Science*, Partha Dasgupta, an economist at St John's College, Cambridge University, and Veerabhadran Ramanathan, a climate and atmospheric scientist at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego, argue that safeguarding the well-being of all individuals, stabilizing climate change, and providing universal access to energy are "central to disrupting destructive feedbacks."

Those feedbacks are caused by the collision of unsustainable consumption of natural resources, poverty, and population stressors around the world. The authors call for all countries to take stock of their inventory of "natural capital" and assess the true value of that capital.

The essay, "Pursuit of the Common Good" appears just days before Ramanathan addresses a United Nations summit on climate change in New York. He will speak at the summit on Sept. 23, touching in part on the transformational role religions can play in mobilizing public

support. Accompanying Dasgupta and Ramanathan's essay is an editorial from *Science* Editor-in-chief and Scripps alumna Marcia McNutt in which she lauds Pope Francis' call for active environmental stewardship from all members of society.

"Over and above institutional reforms and policy changes that are required, there is a need to re-orient our attitude toward nature and thereby toward ourselves," say Dasgupta and Ramanathan in the essay.

"This is a watershed moment," said Naomi Oreskes, a historian of science at Harvard University. "For twenty years, scientists have been reluctant to speak out on the need to change business as usual for fear of being labelled 'political,' and reluctant to address the moral dimensions of climate change for fear of being labelled 'unscientific.' Now, following in the footsteps of great scientific and moral leaders like Niels Bohr and Albert Einstein, Professors Dasgupta and Ramanathan remind us that we are all responsible for the common good."

The essay follows a first-of-its kind workshop co-convened by Ramanathan and Dasgupta of two Vatican academies that provide information to pontiffs on a range of societal and science matters. The workshop, "[Sustainable Humanity, Sustainable Nature, Our Responsibility.](#)" brought together the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences from May 2 to May 6. Since then, Pope Francis has made several calls for the need to protect creation, including a [joint statement](#) with Orthodox Church Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I released on May 25 which interwove affirmations of the need to respect nature and human dignity. It is anticipated that environmental stewardship will be the subject of a future papal encyclical.

"That the intellectual and institutional structures we rely on are bad news for our descendants should not be controversial, but most people think it is someone else's problem," said Dasgupta. "I guess it's a sense of defeat that led Ram and I to seek help from the Vatican."

"I believe that I can speak for all of us who attended the Vatican workshop on sustainability at how inspired we were at the courageous leadership on these issues shown by the Pope, who struck me as a remarkably humble man," said McNutt. "At a time when the globe suffers from a leadership vacuum on sustainability issues, he is a beacon of hope."

Ramanathan's research over 40 years has led to recent study of the climate effects of aerosols, especially pollutants. He has estimated that reducing emissions of several short-lived climate pollutants can bring quick relief to climate change in the coming decades. Replacing solid fuels used by the world's poor for cooking and providing heat and light to their homes with more sustainable alternatives, reducing black carbon and nitrogen oxide emissions from diesel engines, and reducing fugitive methane leaks are among the many practical measures that can reduce the projected near-term warming trends by as much as 50 percent. Drastic reductions in emissions of the short-lived climate pollutants by the rich and the poor would also save as many as 100 million lives during the next four decades and avoid crop losses sufficient to feed the poorest billion people.

Ramanathan has noted in several papers and lectures that the poorest three billion people on Earth still do not have access to the fossil fuels that have met the energy needs of the more affluent four billion inhabitants of Earth for decades. Thus the contribution of the poorest to the planet's greenhouse warming is substantially less. They do, however, face the greatest risks from the consequences of climate change.

Dasgupta is the Frank Ramsey Professor Emeritus of Economics at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge. His research has covered welfare and development economics, the economics of technological change, population, environmental and resource economics, the theory of games, the economics of under-nutrition, and the economics of social capital. His theoretical work on the interface of poverty, population, and the natural environment in rural communities in the world's poor regions has transformed the way rural households are presented in economic models.

In collaboration with professors Kenneth Arrow of Stanford University and Karl-Göran Mäler of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, he has shown that a comprehensive measure of wealth (one that includes natural capital) should be used to judge whether the pattern of economic development being followed in a country is sustainable. In his role as chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the International Human Dimensions Programme at the United Nations University in Bonn, he oversaw the publication of the *Inclusive Wealth Report 2012* which was released at Rio+20. Dasgupta also served as Chairman of an Expert Group convened by the former prime minister of India to produce a report on *Greening India's National Accounts*. The report was released in April 2013.

“It is miraculous that eight decades of research between Dr. Dasgupta and myself on the natural and social science aspects of environmental changes has led us to the doorsteps of moral leaders of religions to rescue humanity from climate change,” said Ramanathan.

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<https://scripps.ucsd.edu/news/appeal-science-leaders-religious-leaders-environmental-protection?hash=2692c6fd7e627bd1543bebaffe375a12>

September 18, 2014

Q&A: One Baptist Minister's Long, Careful Road to Climate Activism

Progressive Baptists' Rev. Dr. Baltimore discusses how climate change became a moral issue not a scientific argument; and the power of the clergy.

By Katherine Bagley
InsideClimate News

When thousands of activists descend on Manhattan this Sunday for the [People's Climate March](#), faith-based groups will be among them. Dozens of religious organizations and churches have signed up to join in demanding action to fight global warming. But as the Rev. Dr. Carroll A. Baltimore, former president of the [Progressive National Baptist Convention](#), says, religious groups' road to the march has been slow and rocky.

Some factions of Christianity, such as evangelicals, have an inherent mistrust of science that for years contributed to widespread denial of climate change. Others—in poverty-stricken, minority communities, for example—put a lower priority on global warming. But as natural disasters fueled by climate change devastated the lives of billions of people, global warming became less a scientific issue and more a moral one. Religious communities across the planet began calling for action.

Baltimore, currently the CEO of Global Alliance Interfaith Networks, plans to walk alongside other religious leaders in Sunday's march. He spoke with InsideClimate News about who within the faith community has led the charge on climate change, the power of America's clergy in shifting the nation's climate conversation, and the impact of moral argument. This conversation has been edited for brevity and clarity.

ICN: When and why did you personally start paying attention to the climate issue?

Baltimore: I've been doing ministry in the Philippines for 30 years. I started noticing about 10 years ago that the weather patterns were changing. The rainy seasons, the typhoons, were becoming more intense and longer. You couldn't predict it anymore. They were taking more lives. It was costing my organization more and more money to keep the ministry in the Philippines going. So I started reading and researching and watching, not just there, but in the U.S., too.

ICN: How did you bring that knowledge and experience back to the U.S.?

Baltimore: In 2010, I became president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention. During that time, we weren't talking about climate change. People were looking at me like, "that's an unknown subject. You don't talk about going green. About environmental change." I got involved with other groups, including Interfaith Power and Light and Earth Day, and began marching and demonstrating to highlight it. I had to do a lot of teaching about being stewards and managers of the earth. It started to catch on. But even today, it is a very slow process in the African American religious neighborhoods.

ICN: What has the evolution of climate change been like in the faith community? Have certain sectors embraced the need for climate action before others?

Baltimore: It has been a very slow process. And it depends on what section of society you're in culturally, what neighborhood you're in, what region of the country you're in. In some churches, people are just trying to survive from day to day. Families are still trying to educate their

children or put food on their table. So when you talk about climate change, that's not even on the agenda.

The Episcopal Church has been leading on climate change for a while. Some Catholic priests as well, such as Father Paul Mayer, who passed last year, but who helped found the group Interfaith Moral Action on Climate. Also, Lutheran groups have been at the forefront.

ICN: One of the strategies I've noticed is that religious groups don't frame climate change as a scientific or environmental issue, but as a moral one. Why is that so impactful?

Baltimore: The moral argument really connects with most people. We can grasp that. We can see it as securing our future, making it safe for the next generation, for our children. No matter whether Christian or non-Christian, all faith traditions teach that we have a moral obligation to take care of creation. We are stewards. That's why the moral argument is so powerful in motivating faith communities to act.

ICN: Studies have shown a correlation between evangelicals and a mistrust in science, causing them to doubt evidence that the world is warming more than the American public in general. Why do you think that mistrust is there?

Baltimore: Very simply, a lack of knowledge. A narrow scope of understanding.

ICN: What impact do you think this doubt by such a large, politically powerful group in the U.S. has had on the progress of climate action nationally?

Baltimore: I think it has had a tremendous negative impact on progress. Propaganda slows down the wheels of progress, and there's been a lot of propaganda [in the climate debate].

ICN: How do you get evangelicals to care about climate change?

Baltimore: With the message that we are Earth's caretaker. We must look at the situation as if we are literally choking the life out of creation itself. If you travel to some of the remote areas of this nation and this world, you can see the devastating impacts of climate change on not just human beings, but wildlife and ecosystems. You can't help but feel the pain in your own life. And you need to realize that you're responsible for what is happening here.

ICN: Historically, the environmental movement has been fairly homogenous: middle class and white, as one historian [told](#) InsideClimate recently. But that seems to have changed in recent years. What role have African American church leaders played in this?

Baltimore: I think we are slowly getting involved, but unfortunately, like with many topics, African American leaders haven't really been invited to the table. We've been left out of most of the meetings and gatherings dealing with religion and climate change. Maybe it is because they think we don't have an expertise on this.

ICN: There are dozens of faith-based groups converging on New York this week, for the Religions of the Earth conference, in which you are participating, and the People's Climate March. What makes this moment so special?

Baltimore: It is a history-making event. I think this is a moment in time where we make an impact, to really get this message over to our leaders, particularly our political leaders. We must seize this moment. If we don't seize it, we are missing the opportunity to bring about powerful change.

ICN: There are wide swaths of the American public who trust their pastors more than the news. Doesn't that put the clergy in an incredibly powerful position in terms of changing the tide of the climate movement?

Baltimore: Yes. They can play a big role. However, there is a spirit of mistrust in America right now between the political sphere and the spiritual sphere. I probably shouldn't say this, but it is what I feel. I've been in ministry a long time—48 years—and you can feel the tension. There's mistrust everywhere. It calls for more responsibility, working to solve that problem, if we're going to get anything done.

ICN: Do you see any change in that mistrust? Have the last few years made any difference?

Baltimore: I think so. I'm looking at my grandchildren and can see that change is on the horizon. That change is part of the reason people are converging on New York this weekend.

<http://insideclimateneews.org/news/20140918/qa-one-baptist-ministers-long-careful-road-climate-activism>

September 19, 2014

Pope Francis: climate evangelist?

By Virginia Gewin
Flux

Overview: Pope Francis is expected to produce the first ever encyclical - the highest level Catholic teaching document - focused solely on the environment and climate change next year. Scientists have made the case that climate change threatens the natural world. Can religious leaders now make the moral case for political action?

One of the most intriguing sessions at the Ecological Society of America conference in August had nothing to do with the science of global warming, glacial melt, or dwindling species—and everything to do with averting climate change. A packed crowd assembled to hear Christian, Jewish, and Interfaith panelists share tips on how to bridge the science-religion divide to spur action on climate change.

For me, it included a revelation. The Pope is preparing the first ever encyclical focused solely on the environment and climate change, said panelist Dan Misleh, executive director of the [Catholic Climate Covenant](#).

An encycli-what? I was raised in the heart of Southern Baptist country and didn't immediately understand the significance of an encyclical. I've since learned that popes write encyclicals on the "highest priority" issues for the church. Over time, the Pope's words are turned into actions and teachings that filter throughout thousands of Catholic churches, schools and universities.

"The upcoming encyclical from Pope Francis is the highest level teaching document in the Catholic Church and will have significant implications for living one's faith in action, not only for the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, but also for the other billion Christians in the world," says Mary Evelyn Tucker, co-director of the [Yale University Forum on Religion and Ecology](#) in New Haven, Conn.

Misleh and Tucker agree this is an exciting development. "An encyclical itself is a big deal. They are rare and one has never been written that focused just on the environment," says Misleh. In addition, it will be the first encyclical written solely by Pope Francis, who has enormous popularity. And few others besides the Pope, this Pope in particular, could wield a moral force that could potentially spark a chain reaction of climate action across a spectrum of religions. "This is a case of the right message and the right messenger at the right time," he adds.

Misleh's simple run of the numbers—and their potential impact on environment action—was stunning. "If just five percent of the US Catholic community was fully engaged, we'd be three times bigger than the US World Wildlife Fund," Misleh said.

The Catholic Church is the largest Christian organization on the planet, with 1.2 billion members worldwide. At a global level, that would be sixty million climate advocates, enough to spur the [kind of political will needed to produce serious action](#) on climate change—the only way to avert disaster.

HEAVENLY EXPECTATIONS

Climate change will likely feature prominently in the encyclical, which could be delivered in late winter or early spring, according to Misleh. He and Tucker expect the encyclical will urge international cooperation and action to solve climate change.

Catholic scholars say the encyclical is meant to be heard by congregants as well as global negotiators and leaders. Insiders suggest the date of the encyclical's release is meant to influence the global climate change accord, details of which will be finalized during meetings in Paris in December 2015 and go into effect by 2020.

The encyclical will be the most significant proclamation in what has become a steady stream of climate change statements by religious leaders. The [Dalai Lama](#) endorsed 350 parts per million as the target for atmospheric carbon dioxide in 2008. The [Hindu Declaration on Climate Change](#)

came out in 2009. And the [Interfaith Declaration on Climate Change](#) was signed in 2011. There are [dozens](#) more.

“All these statements are, cumulatively, creating the conditions where change can happen in a sustained and long term way; that is what the religions can provide that no other institutions can,” says Tucker. The number of religious statements has increased to a steady drumbeat in recent years—growing in large part out of concern for the world’s poor, who will suffer the worst consequences even though they have contributed the least to the problem.

Tucker says, it was the [Rerum Novarum](#), an encyclical released by Pope Leo in 1891, in reaction to the exploitive labor conditions in the 19th century, that created the basis for much of the Catholic social justice teachings throughout the 20th century. “That sensibility of justice for the poor has been the lens through which Christians view inequities in the world,” she says. Eco-justice for climate change, she notes, stems from these historical roots.

•••

Earlier this month, [Catholic bishops from all over the world called for a global climate treaty](#) and to reduce climate change-induced poverty. Social well-being is, arguably, an issue that could unite religions around the world.

Still, I wonder, how will science factor into the encyclical?

Misleh says it’s hardly likely that the encyclical will be policy prescriptive. The Pope, he says, isn’t going to come down in favor of a carbon tax or cap-and-trade approaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But a number of scholars feel that the Pope will most probably highlight the scientific consensus regarding the fact of climate change. This will inevitably have an important, if varied, impact on those in the US who are still denying the science as reported from the IPCC and the national academies of science around the world, says Tucker.

POLITICAL WILL

“The narrative on religion and science has been, largely, one of conflict,” says Gregory Hitzhusen, a religion-ecology scholar at Ohio State University in Columbus and organizer of the ESA session. Indeed, 54 percent of Americans agree that conflict exists, according to a [poll](#) conducted by the [Public Religion Research Institute](#) (PRRI), a non-profit, non-partisan research organization in Washington, DC. I was surprised, however, to see the same poll indicate that 59 percent of Americans don’t think science conflicts with their own religious beliefs.

In my experience, growing up in the conservative South, it was difficult to parse whether beliefs were governed by religion or politics. But politics seemed to trump both religion and science. And dominion over Earth often trumps stewardship.

But the PRRI poll results suggest the latter may be changing. While 57 percent of Americans say God gave humans the task of living responsibly with animals and plants, only 35 percent believe that God gave humans to right to exploit the planet’s resources for their own benefit.

Still, the poll found that partisan affiliation, not religion, is the biggest predictor of someone's views on climate and God's role. Interestingly, the poll shows that over 60 percent of respondents say their clergy leader rarely (29 percent) or never (33 percent) references climate change.

"In the United States, the sad truth is that, when it comes to climate change, our politics still trumps our faith," says Katharine Hayhoe, director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. She has become a go-to climate communicator, in no small part due to her religious beliefs. "It is pretty clear that, for most of us, we are still basing our opinions about climate change, creation care, and what it means to love our neighbors more strongly on the news bites we get from our favorite media than from reading our Bibles," she adds.

But there is also a fundamental truth that scientists are realizing, according to Hitzhusen. "Neither science nor faith alone is adequate to address climate change," he says. "The Pope's encyclical is symbolic of a moment—religious leaders are making clear values statements, ones that show we have common ground across wildly different religious traditions."

Tucker suggests that religion has the potential to alter behavior, even political behavior, in a way science hasn't yet been able to achieve—by offering a spiritual, ethical base on which people can sustain long-term change.

To that end, Hayhoe shared a bold vision with me. What if it wasn't just our presidents, ministers, and secretaries at these meetings? What if our religious leaders—the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Patriarchs of the Russian and Greek Orthodox churches—were the ones pressuring the leaders of the world to make the right decision?

It would be an interesting experiment. Dare we hope that since talks takes place in Paris—where 90 percent of the French identify as Roman Catholic—a new age of climate enlightenment could launch in 2015?

Editor: Hannah Hoag

<https://www.beaconreader.com/flux/pope-francis-climate-evangelist>

September 19, 2014

Climate Justice: World Council of Church's Interfaith Summit on Climate Change

By Grace Ji-Sun Kim
Huffington Post

I am in New York this week to help in the preparations of the World Council of Church's (WCC) Interfaith Summit of Climate Change. Having breakfast in a hotel before a meeting is always a rush. This morning, some of the European WCC staff members kept asking me if the Styrofoam

plates, plastic utensils and paper cups are "normal" in the U.S. hotels. I told them that it was "normal" and their response was, "That is a lot of garbage".

Our disposable lives have become too "normal" in our day-to-day living that we do not think twice about the environment as we eat breakfast, drink from plastic bottles and throw away our unwanted goods. We are becoming complacent in our ways of living that is slowly destroying the environment and causing climate change.

This week in New York City, there are a lot of climate change activities as churches, religious groups and governments are recognizing the devastating affects of climate change for people around the globe. A heightened awareness of how climate change affects the lives of everyone is growing. We need to be able to move toward climate justice for all. The most vulnerable are suffering far more greatly due to the damages caused by climate change. Climate change is becoming a matter of social and economic injustice.

Religious leaders are recognizing that they cannot remain silent on this pertinent issue as it is damaging the earth and causing too many problems globally. The World Council of Churches is taking this matter seriously and will be holding an Interfaith Summit on Climate Change to address this matter.

This Interfaith Summit on Climate Change will take place September 21-22, 2014 in New York City. It will gather 30 faith leaders such as Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslims, Sikh and Indigenous religious leaders to discuss how people of faith need to take this issue of climate change seriously and at the forefront of their agenda. Part of the statement from 30 faith leaders of the [Interfaith Summit on Climate Change](#) reads:

"... share the conviction that the threats of climate change cannot be curbed effectively by a single State alone but only by the enhanced co-operation of the community of States, based on principles of mutual trust, fairness and equity, precaution, intergenerational justice and common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities. We urge the rich to support the poor and the vulnerable significantly and everywhere, especially in Least Developed Countries, Small Island States and Sub-Saharan Africa. Significant support would include generous financial resources, capacity building, technology transfer and other forms of co-operation."

In conjunction with the WCC events is the "[Religions for the Earth](#)" conference held by Union Theological Seminary where more than 200 religious leaders from around the world will gather to discuss climate change:

"This is no ordinary conference: as the world's political leaders prepare to address an unprecedented moral crisis, Union will offer a unique platform for the world's ethical leaders to voice the concerns and commitments of the spiritual and faith traditions. Participants are prepared to use their reach and influence to galvanize faith-based action. This action will be in support of a just climate treaty and the new measures within nations, regions and cultures that will be necessary to support the treaty and protect the most vulnerable among us in this time when profits are prioritized over the wellbeing of people, and the effects of pollution are being

felt in extreme weather patterns, exacerbated social instability and a decrease in the quality of food, air and water."

The *Vartland* newspaper in Norway quoted Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit who is the WCC General Secretary. Dr. Fykse Tveit believes:

"If one should create the large changes in both attitudes and actions required in order to meet climate change there needs to be deep and strong convictions. Knowledge and political action alternative is required, but you also need a sustainable motivation for a change. The belief, rituals, symbols, sacred texts and prayers of faith give meaning and direction for a large portion of the world's population. In these resources, we get a great reverence for the author of Creation. It is therefore important to see how this deep dimension of the human experience can strengthen the conviction that now is the time for change come. The WCC was asked to arrange an inter-religious summit to mobilize believers of all religions to stand together with us in the fight for a common future for all people and for the world."

Dr. Agnes Abuom from the Anglican Church of Kenya who is the Moderator of the WCC Central Committee and one of the signatories of the WCC statement claims: "We encourage the heads of state meeting at the UN to join with all people to take decisive steps to reverse climate change. Let us move together to rebuild, restore and reclaim a life-giving and life-empowering world where all live in dignity, peace and justice."

The WCC events are happening just before the [United Nations Climate Summit 2014](#). [Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu](#) "called on delegates attending the upcoming United Nations climate summit in New York to take the first tangible steps to move humanity beyond the fossil fuel era." He states, "We are on the cusp of a global transition to a new safe energy economy, a transition that unites people in common purpose, advances collective wellbeing and ensures the survival of our species."

We must prioritize the issue of climate change. We cannot "normalize" our disposable lifestyle that is hurting the environment. This is not only an environmental issue, but also an economic and social issue. Communities, churches and individuals need to become and involved in working towards climate justice. The time to act is now. Tomorrow is already too late.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/grace-jisun-kim/climate-justice-world-cou_b_5844926.html

September 19, 2014

Green Spirit vs Climate Change: 'All Together' Podcast Hosted By Rev. Paul Raushenbush

Huffington Post

Welcome to the weekly Podcast called *All Together* hosted by Executive Religion Editor Rev.

Paul Raushenbush. *All Together* strives to offer a unique perspective into spiritual and religious individuals, communities and ideas that are shaping our world.

This week's *All Together* segment is called Green Spirit in honor of the giant [People's Climate March](#) happening in New York City and around the world the weekend of September 20th and 21st; and the UN Climate Summit the following week. Raushenbush speaks with environmentalist [Bill McKibben](#), [Karenn Gore](#), and [Rabbi Lawrence Troster](#) about the spiritual significance of environmental activism and how religious communities are rallying to help save the environment before it is too late. Plus Raushenbush offers a quick round up of the religious news of the week and picks this week's Saints and Sinners.

At the opening of the show Rev. Raushenbush references a prayer written by his great grandfather Walter Rauschenbusch 100 years ago called Prayer for Nature. The powerful environmentalist message of this prayer shows that there is a tradition of care for the earth that goes deep in religious traditions that needs to be called upon now that climate change has become such a life and death issue.

O God, we thank you for this universe, our home; and for its vastness and richness, the exuberance of life which fills it and of which we are part. We praise you for the vault of heaven and for the winds, pregnant with blessings, for the clouds which navigate and for the constellations, there so high. We praise you for the oceans and for the fresh streams, for the endless mountains, the trees, the grass under our feet. We praise you for our senses, to be able to see the moving splendour, to hear the songs of lovers, to smell the beautiful fragrance of the spring flowers.

Give us, we pray you, a heart that is open to all this joy and all this beauty, and free our souls of the blindness that comes from preoccupation with the things of life, and of the shadows of passions, to the point that we no longer see nor hear, not even when the bush at the roadside is afire with the glory of God. Give us a broader sense of communion with all living things, our sisters, to whom you gave this world as a home along with us.

We remember with shame that in the past we took advantage of our greater power and used it with unlimited cruelty, so much so that the voice of the earth, which should have arisen to you as a song was turned into a moan of suffering.

May we learn that living things do not live just for us, that they live for themselves and for you, and that they love the sweetness of life as much as we do, and serve you, in their place, better than we do in ours.

When our end arrives and we can no longer make use of this world, and when we have to give way to others, may we leave nothing destroyed by our ambition or deformed by our ignorance, but may we pass along our common heritage more beautiful and more sweet, without having removed from it any of its fertility and joy, and so may our bodies return in peace to the womb of the great mother who nourished us and our spirits enjoy perfect life in you.

Listen to this podcast at:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/19/religion-climate-change-n_5850582.html?utm_hp_ref=religion

September 19, 2014

People's Climate March this Sunday

SAFCEI - South African Faith Communities Institute

<http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=10669b65fc&e=d85b57a294>

September 19, 2014

Oceania voices on environment loud and strong - Caritas

Voxy

While money and energy continues to be spent on global talks about climate change, Pacific islanders are scrambling to build sea walls out of sticks, stones, shells and coral, to protect their lands and homes from erosion and rising sea levels.

This is one of the findings of a Caritas report, Small yet strong: Voices from Oceania on the environment, to be launched at St Peter Chanel Catholic Church, Clover Park, Auckland on October 4 (St Francis Day).

"Vulnerable people throughout Oceania are living every day with and adapting to environmental changes and challenges. They are actively striving to overcome environmental problems not of their making and beyond their control," says Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand director Julianne Hickey.

"We need to support their efforts. All of us living in this region need to protect the precious environment of Oceania for present and future generations. And we need global fora such as the upcoming United Nations Climate Summit on 23 September in New York to find agreement on ways to limit further environmental damage.

"The people most affected - at grass roots level and on the coastal edge - must be part of those discussions," says Mrs Hickey.

The report draws from interviews conducted by Caritas with people across Oceania at grass roots and coastal edge level on the environmental challenges they face. It explores what people are experiencing, how they are responding and what they want to happen.

Keynote speakers at the launch include Amelia Ma'afu from Tonga, who has seen firsthand rising sea levels eating away at homes and coconut palms on the low-lying islands of Ha'apai. As Programmes Coordinator and Climate Change Officer for Caritas Tonga, she will also speak about innovative climate change adaptation in Tonga that combines traditional local knowledge of plants and weather warnings with scientific observations.

"This report gives a voice to those affected by environmental changes in Oceania, and looks at how people are responding to those challenges and what solutions are needed," says Mrs Hickey.

"It's a people's voice perspective -not a scientific or economic assessment. It also touches on environmental experiences in Australia and New Zealand."

A second keynote speaker, Tihikura Hohaia, will detail how the Parihaka community in Taranaki struggles to exercise its kaitiakitanga (environmental guardianship) to protect traditional food sources and waterways from resource management decisions.

Other stories and experiences in the report show people in Oceania facing large-scale industrial mining, forestry and commercial plantations, and the loss of food crops, water supplies and stunning landscapes.

"Oceania is a priority region for our work to promote justice, peace and truly human development," says Mrs Hickey, "and environmental issues are at the forefront of people's concerns in the communities with whom we work - in advocacy, development and humanitarian aid programmes."

"This report raises community awareness of environmental issues and climate change in our region, and will help us promote sustainability of natural resources and advocate against environmental injustice, to protect our world for present and future generations."

The report recommends action by local and central governments, communities and individuals, including: ensuring resources are available for the most poor and vulnerable communities, and they can participate in decision making about their future; limiting the impact of extractive industries, while encouraging investment in renewable sources of energy; and promoting integrated thinking and action for a comprehensive response.

Copies of the report will be available online or from the Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand office in Wellington from 4 October, 2014.

Event: Launch of "Small yet strong: Voices from Oceania on the environment" report

Date: Saturday, 4 October, 2014

Times: 11am - 4:15pm

Location: St Peter Chanel Catholic Church, Clover Park

44 Boundary Road, Auckland, New Zealand 2023

<http://www.voxy.co.nz/national/oceania-voices-environment-loud-and-strong-caritas/5/202673>

September 19, 2014

Religion and climate change: Competing to save the earth

By B.C.
The Economist

WHEN heads of government from across the world convene in New York next week to consider ways of cooling the planet, a crescendo of religiously-inspired voices, as well as secular green rallying cries, will be resounding in their ears. During the 48 hours before the big meeting opens on September 23rd, two worthy inter-faith organisations—the World Council of Churches and Religions for Peace—will host a "[summit](#)" of their own, backed by 30 prominent faith leaders. Meanwhile, it is hoped that millions of people of "faith and moral belief" from across the world will have signed up to an e-petition, [ourvoices.net](#), which urges the world's political leaders to act boldly on climate change, both in New York and at next year's "make-or-break" session in Paris.

The petition, organised by the British pioneer of green investment, Tessa Tennant, has won backing from a series of "ambassadors" who are already familiar figures in the world of faith and religion. They include: Sally Bingham, a California-based Episcopal cleric whose energy-saving initiatives have drawn in 15,000 communities and parishes; Mary Evelyn Tucker, who runs the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University; Seraphim Kykkotis, an Orthodox archbishop based in southern Africa; and Martin Palmer, secretary-general of the [Alliance of Religions and Conservation](#), which co-ordinates the environmental activities of a dozen faith groups round the world.

If this sounds like a "Pope is Catholic" story, it is nothing of the kind. Getting to the point where secular and religious players with the declared aim of "saving the planet" can appear on the same page—or website or e-petition—has been more difficult than usual in recent months. Perhaps harder than at any time since religions began to began to pay public attention to the physical fate of the earth, a quarter of a century ago.

To understand why, consider the surreal condescension with which [Christiana Figueres](#), the UN bureaucrat who is steering the global climate negotiations, [addressed](#) the religions of the world, as recently as May. "Many forward-looking cities, progressive companies and concerned citizens are urging their governments to ink in a new climate agreement in 2015. It is time for faith groups and religious institutions to find their voice and set their moral compass on one of the great humanitarian issues of our time...." she declared, disclosing her (or her speech-writer's) lamentable ignorance of what religious leaders from the Dalai Lama to the Patriarch of Constantinople have been doing and saying since the early 1990s.

In fairness to Ms Figueres, she is equally lofty in the way she addresses everybody else, taking every opportunity to propagate her view that investors should simply withdraw all funds from the fossil fuel industry. That is certainly an opinion to which she is entitled as a concerned global citizen, but it is not clear how her job as executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change entitles her to lobby for the virtual destruction of a sector of the world economy which, whatever its misdeeds, will have a part to play in any rational approach to the planet's future.

Behind the scenes, say insiders, some hard but productive conversations have taken place between UN bureaucrats, the French organisers of next year's climate summit, and people whose labours for the good of the planet are inspired by faith. These conversations started against a heavy background. The disastrous outcome of an earlier "make-or-break" summit on climate change, in Copenhagen in 2009, has made all environmental campaigners, both spiritual and secular, wary of investing too much moral capital in a single diplomatic event. On the other hand, according to people familiar with the process, secular bureaucrats have realised recently that they need something other than endless statistics to galvanise the conscience of the world.

What the secular bureaucrats found to harder to grasp is the fact that religious groups hate being hauled in to "tick a box" or discharge some public duty as providers of moral education. Religions have their own distinctive world view, expressed through rites, stories and self-limiting rules, and their own understanding of time, space and utility. For many a religious person, "prayer" is not another sort of e-petition, but rather a state of mind or soul that involves walking humbly and cautiously before the Creator, something which is seen as desirable regardless of what the statistics may be saying. Moreover, you cannot have a dialogue with a religious person unless you have some respect for the integrity of that person's world-view.

Still, the good news is that there has apparently been learning on both sides. It would still be fanciful to talk of an emerging global consensus on the need to cool the world. But perhaps the mood will have changed by the time the Paris summit comes round in December 2015, whether or not humanity's mind has been concentrated by some fresh catastrophe.

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/erasmus/2014/09/religion-and-climate-change>

September 22, 2014

These Inspiring Faith Leaders Have A Message For The UN's Climate Summit

By Antonia Blumberg
Huffington Post

Union Theological Seminary hosted the [Religions for the Earth](#) conference over the weekend -- and there was no shortage of inspiring faith leaders.

Religions from around the globe were represented at the conference as leaders, scholars and activists gathered to address the [perils of climate change](#). The conference preceded the People's Climate March, which took place on Sunday, and many of the conference attendees joined the [Interfaith Contingent of the march](#).

The conference and march highlight a growing critical mass of global citizens who are urging the United Nations to take concrete action for the environment at its [Climate Summit](#) on Tuesday. Faith leaders at the conference used their wisdom traditions to address moral, social, economic and political implications of climate change -- which affects each and every human being on the planet.

For the full article, see:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/22/faith-leaders-un-climate-summit_n_5861754.html

September 23, 2014

Mountaintop Experience and a Prophetic Call for Climate Change

By Grace Ji-Sun Kim
Huffington Post

The joy and excitement of being part of the [Religions for the Earth](#) and [World Council of Churches](#) (WCC) and Religions for Peace's Interfaith Summit on Climate Change, the People's Climate March and other climate change meetings was amazing for me and beyond the expectations of many people who attended.

Many of the climate change events in New York City were mountaintop experiences. There were so many events and opportunities for listening to legends, leaders, and politicians concerned about saving the planet. Among the special speakers were Bill McKibben (co-founder of 350.org), Chris Hedges (American journalist), former Vice-President Al Gore, Jan Eliasson (Deputy Secretary-General at the UN), Iriama Margaret Lokawua (Indigenous Women Environmental Conservation Project), James Forbes (Senior Minister Emeritus of the Riverside Church), Vandana Shiva (board member of the International Forum on Globalization), Serene Jones (president of Union Theological Seminary), and Jim Wallis (founder and editor of *Sojourners* magazine). All these people were prophetic in their call to change our ways, live lovingly and think about saving the planet.

Of course after a mountaintop experience, we must come down from the mountain. The presenters will continue their activism. Many who marched and participated will return to their homes energized to do something about sustainability and climate justice. For all of us, the question will be, "What will we do differently to help save this planet?"

The WCC and Religions for Peace, who co-organized the [Interfaith Summit on Climate Change](#), had 30 signatories a statement that was presented to the United Nations to urge them to continue

the effort to address climate change. The statement reads in part: "We acknowledge the overwhelming scientific evidence that climate change is human-induced and that, without global and inclusive action towards mitigation and unless fully addressing its fundamental causes, its impacts will continue to grow in intensity and frequency. At the same time, we are ready to dialogue with those who remain skeptical."

Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, the WCC General Secretary, has a great vision on how the World Council of Churches can continue to be a prophetic voice at the forefront of those working on our urgent topic of climate justice. Dr. Fykse Tveit challenges us with his words:

"The interfaith movement is also a people's movement. Our 'Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in the WCC' belongs to this people's movement, as we saw on the streets of New York and in many other cities of the world this weekend. We as churches are part of this people's movement. We will bring our specific contribution to this movement from our Christian faith perspective."

A Multifaith Service held on Sunday Sept. 21, 2014 at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine sounded the call to work for justice. Each person shared a deep, powerful statement; each speaker urged us to act and save God's wonderful creation. It was one of the most inspirational services I have ever attended.

As we come down from the mountaintop, let us join in action and reflection. Without a sustainable planet, we stand without food or energy, as if we stood beside a burnt down house in the desert. The earth groans and calls to us out of pain. We need to act. But our action should be inspired by a profound reflection And act now.

The urgency to help save the planet is already serious, and constantly grows. We cannot stop after one week in New York, but we need to be continually motivated and act. Christiana Figueres (Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) spoke at the Interfaith Summit on Climate Change. Figueres stated,

"We must be at net zero emissions over the next 50 years...we will have many ups and downs. We cannot let all the downs bring us down. We have the responsibility to remind ourselves, we human beings know what is right. We will act on what is right. We need the courage to act on what is right."

I am not a scientist and do not know everything about the scientific data on climate change. But I do know the effects it has on the people, animals, and the earth. My reflections about climate change give me deep concern about the devastating consequences it has had, and will have, on my children and their children. Youth at the Interfaith Summit stressed the intergenerational justice dimension of the climate crisis. We have scientific data and people do not change their ways. We need to make a moral plea, as Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit reminded us at the opening of the Interfaith Summit.

We need to be prophetic and proclaim to the people of the world that our behavior must change. It is not just Christians, but followers of all religions and beliefs who need to commit to love one another and love the earth. We must accept each other in order to share this great imperative. We

must work together and work hard. We must live in unison with each other. We need to hold hands together and take concrete steps to save one another and save God's creation.

God's creation can sustain itself. We are destroying it. As we come down from the mountaintop, let us remember: we are all interconnected and therefore we need to learn to live in harmony with one another and with creation. Let us remember and let us act: act in love for one another and for God's creation.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/grace-jisun-kim/mountaintop-experience-an_b_5868524.html

September 23, 2014

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund Gives Up on Oil

By Vauhini Vara
The New Yorker

On Monday, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund [posted](#) a carefully worded message on its Web site, which announced that it was “committing to a two-step process to address its desire to divest from investments in fossil fuels.” The organization, established in 1940 by Rockefeller heirs, is smaller than the better-known Rockefeller Foundation. But because of the timing of the announcement—following several large [environmental marches](#) held around the world, and before the United Nations hosts a climate summit in New York—and because the fund carries the name of the Rockefellers, whose fortune came from Standard Oil, the announcement attracted [outsized attention](#).

This wasn't, however, like the heirs to the McDonald's fortune suddenly giving up meat. In fact, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund has been moving in this direction for years. In 2010, its board of trustees committed to investing up to ten per cent of its endowment in companies that meet sustainable-development goals. This year, the fund plans to cut its investments in coal and the petroleum-rich material known as tar sands to less than one per cent of its portfolio. Beyond that, the fund is more circumspect. It is “undertaking a comprehensive analysis” of its remaining fossil-fuel investments, which could include traditional petroleum and natural gas, to “determine an appropriate strategy for further divestment over the next few years.”

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund made headlines, but it became one of at least seventy philanthropic foundations that have committed to selling some fossil-fuel investments, according to a [report](#) from Arabella Advisors. (Several universities, including [Stanford](#), have made similar commitments, as have other organizations, like churches and nonprofits.) Another foundation, the Wallace Global Fund, has led the charge. The fund, named after Franklin D. Roosevelt's Vice-President [Henry Wallace](#), started divesting in 2009 and has since urged other foundations to do the same, according to Ellen Dorsey, who is its executive director. Dorsey said that while traditional environmental groups have been pushing for divestment for years, inspired by the anti-apartheid movement of the eighties, they weren't in a good position to get foundations to listen. After all, many of them depend on foundations for funding.

“Peers organize their peers better,” Dorsey told me. So she went out and started telling other foundations about her experience divesting the Wallace Global Fund from fossil fuels. “It’s not difficult, and it’s beneficial,” she said. “We’re not losing our shirts—and are actually doing quite well in the market.”

People like Dorsey have been honing that aspect of their pitches—that divestment can make good financial sense in addition to sending a strong message—for the past couple of years. Dorsey said that they have been helped by an argument that began making the rounds in academic circles a couple of years ago, and which was introduced into the mainstream by Bill McKibben, an environmentalist and journalist, in a 2012 [article](#) in *Rolling Stone*. (McKibben, a former *New Yorker* staff writer, wrote about the [climate-change marches](#) that were held around the world on Sunday.) Environmentalists and some scholars have pointed out that investors value energy companies based largely on the reserves of coal, gas, and oil that remain underground. They argue that as climate change gets more intense, governments will increasingly enact laws that make it difficult—even illegal—for companies to extract all those resources. Those fossil fuels could become, in other words, “stranded assets” that are, for all intents and purposes, useless. That could lower the stock prices of the energy companies that have made money by taking them out of the ground.

This argument had gained enough traction by May, 2014, that an executive at Shell, facing questions from investors, felt compelled to write a twenty-page [letter](#) dismissing it. In it, the company argued that growing populations and economic development in places like China and India would send energy demand higher, with “fossil fuels continuing to play a major role in the energy system.” The letter went on, “Shell does not believe that any of its proven reserves will become ‘stranded’ as a result of current or reasonably foreseeable future legislation concerning carbon.”

Still, the stranded-asset notion has intrigued some foundations and other investors, Dorsey told me. “The anti-apartheid movement was based on ethical issues,” she said. “It was saying, ‘It’s not O.K. to invest in companies that do business with South Africa.’ This movement is saying, ‘It’s not O.K. to invest in the fossil-fuel companies who refuse to orchestrate the energy transition—but it’s also stupid, because they’re not going to be good investments over the long term.’”

It’s too early to know how the stranded-asset theory might play out; it depends, in part, on how aggressively governments move to enact climate-change laws. In the U.S., the Environmental Protection Agency has proposed requiring a thirty-per-cent cut in carbon emissions from power plants by 2030 (compared with 2005 emissions levels). Next year, the U.N. will hold an important climate-change summit. But, at the moment, strong laws remain merely hypothetical. For now, the new focus on the financial implications of fossil-fuel investments seems like a sign of the growing practical-mindedness of environmental activists: those seeking to address climate change realize that they need to show investors that divestment doesn’t just make you good—it can also make you rich.

Vauhini Vara, the former business editor of newyorker.com, lives in San Francisco and reports regularly on business and technology.

September 23, 2014

United Nations and Leading Investors Launch Coalition to Decarbonize Institutional Investment Worldwide at UN Summit

Commitment to decarbonize \$100 billion of investment

United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi / New York - UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has invited leaders from government, finance, business and civil society to bring bold announcements and actions on climate change to the Summit. In response, a group of leading institutional investors - including two of the largest asset managers, and pension funds in Europe - have joined forces with the United Nations Environment Programme and its Finance Initiative (UNEP FI), to substantially reduce the carbon footprint of US\$100 billion of institutional investment worldwide. Institutional investors are owners of large segments of the global economy. Therefore, it is expected that having a critical mass of them decarbonize their portfolios will send a strong and unequivocal signal to carbon-intensive companies that carbon-efficiency is now center-stage.

Co-founded by the UNEP and its Finance Initiative (UNEP FI), the fourth National pension fund of Sweden AP4, Europe's largest asset manager Amundi and CDP, the most important mechanism for climate disclosure worldwide, the Portfolio Decarbonization Coalition (PDC) was announced today by AP4 CEO Mats Andersson during UN Secretary-General Bank Ki-moon's Climate Summit.

A growing number of investors from around the world recognize that GHG emissions are an unprecedented threat to economic stability and, therefore, to their portfolios and ultimate beneficiaries. In response, the PDC will convene a critical mass of investors committed to measuring and disclosing the carbon footprint of a minimum of \$500 billion of investment. Subsequently investors will commit to the PDC to substantially reduce their carbon footprint with an intermediate target of \$100 billion by December 2015. As a result investors who join the Coalition will lessen their carbon exposure with regards to current annual emissions and potential emissions from current fossil fuel reserves.

The Coalition will reach out to institutional investors worldwide and it will be aided by the largest global network of investors focused on sustainable development - the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) - as well as other relevant networks.

Mats Andersson, CEO of AP4, said: "We are both proud and honored to receive the trust of the UN Secretary General to take the lead of this Coalition to support our peers in taking climate action. Climate change is more and more recognized as a financial risk and it is our duty, as trustees, to take concrete steps to reduce this risk.

"USD 100 billion is a significant amount but it is absolutely feasible. And we hope that by reaching this target, investors can show that a different course of action is possible, where institutional investors' goals are aligned with, and support the common good," he added.

"Institutional investors often have long-term investment horizons and are diversified across the economy. They have an interest in the long-term stability of the whole system rather than the short-term performance of individual market actors. That is why avoiding disruptive climate change, a truly systemic threat, is of such intrinsic interest to them," said Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UNEP.

"For long institutional investors have been consistent advocates of ambitious climate-change policies. This Coalition, established by UNEP FI and key partners, now enables them to take concerted and ambitious action themselves, through their own portfolios," he continued.

Yves Perrier, CEO of Amundi, commented, "Amundi is honored to be part of this coalition which reflects its commitment to come up with practical advices to make sustainable finance a reality." He added, "Finance can work for the good. And this association of climate leaders is an excellent illustration of our will to consistently support our clients interest, and take full responsibility in our role in society as a global financial entity."

The PDC is also supported by the China International Capital Corporation whose Chairman, Jin Liqun, declared "CICC is committed to promote the decarbonization of investment portfolios and the use of low carbon indexes, particularly in Asia and in China."

Also in attendance of the launch was Paul Dickinson, Executive Chairman, CDP, who said.: "For over ten years, CDP has been working with the world's largest institutional investors to engage with companies on reducing emissions. This coalition represents the next logical step for investors as they look to reduce their carbon impact at a portfolio level. We fully support the initiative and look forward to equipping investors with our rigorous data to make the best decisions when managing the carbon footprint of their investments."

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About UNEP

Created in 1972, UNEP's mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. Visit: www.unep.org

About UNEP FI

UNEP FI is a global partnership between UNEP and the financial sector. Over 230 institutions, including banks, insurers and fund managers, work with UNEP to understand the impacts of environmental and social considerations on financial performance. Through its Climate Change Advisory Group (CCAG), UNEP FI aims to understand the roles, potentials and needs of the finance sector in addressing climate change, and to advance the integration of climate change factors - both risks and opportunities - into financial decision-making.

About AP4

The Fourth Swedish National Pension Fund's (AP4) brief is to contribute to the stability of the national pension system through managing Fund capital with the aim of generating the best possible return over time. AP4 is one of five buffer funds in the national pension system. AP4 is managing about SEK 276 billion in assets. More information about AP4 is available at www.ap4.se.

About Amundi

Amundi ranks first in Europe and in the Top 10 worldwide in the asset management industry with AUM of more than 800 billion Euros worldwide. Located at the heart of the main investment regions in more than 30 countries, Amundi offers a comprehensive range of products covering all asset classes and major currencies. Amundi has developed savings solutions to meet the needs of more than 100 million retail clients worldwide and designs innovative, high-performing products for institutional clients which are tailored specifically to their requirements and risk profile. The Group contributes to funding the economy by orienting savings towards company development.

About CDP

CDP is an international, not-for-profit organization providing the only global system for companies and cities to measure, disclose, manage and share vital environmental information. CDP works with market forces, including 767 institutional investors with assets of US\$92 trillion, to motivate companies to disclose their impacts on the environment and natural resources and take action to reduce them. CDP now holds the largest collection globally of primary climate change, water and forest risk commodities information and puts these insights at the heart of strategic business, investment and policy decisions. Please visit www.cdp.net or follow us @CDP to find out more.

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2796&ArticleID=10991&l=en>

September 24, 2014

Church of Sweden ditches assets in fossil fuel companies

Operation Noah

As hundreds of thousands of people marched in New York, London, and cities across the globe this weekend to call for a global deal on climate change, the Church of Sweden has become the latest national Church to eliminate fossil fuels from its investment portfolio. The Church announced this week that it has removed gas companies from its portfolio to make its \$691 million of assets fossil free.

One of the first institutions to take up divestment, the Church of Sweden now believes investments in fossil fuel companies are a risk. Gunnela Hahn, Head of Responsible Investment at the Church of Sweden said, 'We see a financial risk in owning fossil fuel companies. Their value consists to a large extent of fossil fuel reserves that risk losing value since they cannot be extracted if we are to have a liveable planet.'

This decision came as world faith leaders gathered in New York for an Interfaith Summit on Climate Change. Representatives from 21 countries on six continents delivered a letter to the Deputy Secretary-General of the UN at the UN Climate Summit calling on governments to phase out fossil fuels subsidies and divest from or cap coal immediately.

Ellie Roberts, Operation Noah divestment campaigner, says, 'The Church of Sweden's decision to disinvest increases the pressure on the Methodist Church and Church of England, both of which retain large holdings in fossil fuel companies, to join the growing list of fossil free Churches.' This list now includes the Uniting Church in Australia, the United Church of Christ in the US, six New Zealand Anglican dioceses and the Quakers in Britain. This announcement will also resonate with local churches and dioceses in the UK that support Operation Noah's call for the Church of England and the Methodist Church to disinvest from fossil fuel companies.

Speaking shortly after the announcement the Revd Dr Darrell Hannah, Rector from All Saints Church, Ascot Heath and an Operation Noah trustee said, 'I hope the Church of England and other denominations in the UK will heed the call of the Swedish Church and the World Council of Churches.

'In particular, I call on the General Synod of the Church of England to disinvest from fossil fuels as soon as possible. If the Church is to be faithful to its calling, it really needs to be in the vanguard of this movement.'

<http://operationnoah.org/news-events/press-release-church-sweden-ditches-assets-fossil-fuel-companies/>

September 27, 2014

A Group Shout on Climate Change

By the Editorial Board
New York Times

The marchers and mayors, the ministers and presidents, have come and gone. So what is the verdict on Climate Week, the summit meeting on global warming convened by the United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, in New York?

The meeting was not intended to reach a global agreement or to extract tangible commitments from individual nations to reduce the greenhouse gases that are changing the world's ecosystems and could well spin out of control. Its purpose was to build momentum for a new global deal to be completed in December 2015, in Paris.

In that respect, it clearly moved the ball forward, not so much in the official speeches but on the streets and in the meeting rooms where corporate leaders, investors, Silicon Valley entrepreneurs and state and local officials pressed the case for stronger action.

It was important to put climate change back on the radar screen of world leaders, whose last effort to strike a deal, in Copenhagen five years ago, ended in acrimonious disaster. President Obama, for one, was as eloquent as he has ever been on the subject: "For all the immediate challenges that we gather to address this week — terrorism, instability, inequality, disease — there's one issue that will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other, and that is the urgent and growing threat of a changing climate."

But most of the positive energy at this gathering came from people closer to the ground, like the 300,000 activists who [marched](#) last Sunday. They included mayors like New York's Michael Bloomberg and his successor, Bill de Blasio, who both spoke of the critical role that cities can play in reducing emissions. They included governors like California's Jerry Brown, who is justly proud of his state's pathbreaking efforts to control automobile and power plant pollution. And they included institutions like Bank of America, which said it would invest in renewable energy, and companies like Kellogg and Nestle, which pledged to help stem the destruction of tropical forests by changing the way they buy commodities like soybeans and palm oil.

Underlying all these declarations was a palpable conviction that tackling climate change could be an opportunity and not a burden, that the way to approach the task of harnessing greenhouse gas emissions was not to ask how much it would cost but how much nations stood to gain by investing in new technologies and energy efficiency.

This burst of activity comes at a crucial time. A tracking initiative called the Global Carbon Project [recently reported](#) that greenhouse gas emissions jumped 2.3 percent in 2013, mainly because of big increases in China and India. This means it is becoming increasingly difficult to limit global warming to an upper boundary of 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit above preindustrial levels.

Beyond that point, scientists say, a world already suffering from disappearing glaciers, rising seas and persistent droughts could face even more alarming consequences.

Avoiding such a fate is going to require a revolution in the way the world produces and consumes energy, which clearly has to involve national governments, no matter how much commitment there is on the streets and in the boardrooms. The odds are long that a legally binding treaty will emerge from Paris. Congress is unlikely to ratify one anyway. The smart money now is on a softer agreement that brings all the big polluters on board with national emissions caps, and there are reasons for hope that this can be done.

Mr. Obama is in a much stronger leadership position than he was at Copenhagen, having engineered a huge increase in automobile fuel efficiency and proposed rules that will greatly reduce the United States' reliance on dirty coal. The Chinese, in part because their own air is so dirty, have been investing heavily in alternative energy sources like wind and solar, and they are giving serious consideration to a national [cap on coal](#) consumption. The cooperation of these two countries could by itself create the conditions for a breakthrough agreement. But what might really do the trick — if Climate Week is any guide — is the emergence of a growing bottom-up movement for change.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/28/opinion/sunday/a-group-shout-on-climate-change.html?emc=edit_th_20140928&nl=todaysheadlines&nlid=52687480

September 30, 2014

‘Good Energy and Hope All Around’: Reflections on the People’s Climate March

By Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim
Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies

The watershed People’s Climate March, held in New York on Sept. 21, demonstrated that people and planet are one force, and that climate justice and ecosystems preservation are part of a holistic way forward.

The People’s Climate March on September 21 in New York was an amazing event.

So many people — over 310,000 with some estimates at 400,000.

So many groups — environmentalists, scientists, religious leaders, teachers, ordinary folk, and over 1,500 sponsors.

So many ages — mostly under 35 including 50,000 college students. But there were also people in wheel chairs and grandparents pushing strollers, marching for the next generation.

So much good energy and hope all around.

It was electrifying and hard to describe the emotions that washed over us during the day. We waited for an hour and a half for the march to begin as there were so many people who had assembled. We talked with the students from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies with whom we marched. They were filled with excitement, overflowing with a sense of solidarity, as were we. As we began to march we were all called to a collective moment of silence. And then from behind a vast roar, like a wave of unstoppable energy, swept over us.

We were buoyed by pictures along the route of those marching with us around the world in 160 countries where climate marches were taking place. The realization of the suffering already being caused by climate change was evident — from the Pacific Island nations, to those who weathered Sandy and Katrina, to those dealing with extreme droughts and floods.

This climate march, the largest in human history, was indeed a watershed moment. It demonstrated that people and planet are one force; and that climate justice and ecosystems preservation are part of a holistic way forward. The Earth community was visible there with such variety of humans and such boundless determination for protecting the Earth.

The religions were also present in a major way and it was deeply encouraging to witness their deepening commitment to the cause. There was a two day conference titled “[Religions for the Earth](#)” that preceded the march at Union Theological Seminary in New York. It was organized by Karenna Gore and supported by the president of the seminary, Serene Jones. Terry Tempest Williams orchestrated a rich and inclusive final session.

Other organizations involved were the Parliament of World Religions, the Interfaith Center of New York, Green Faith, Interfaith Power and Light, the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, and the [Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale](#).

Several key foundations contributed to the conference, including the Wallace Global Fund, which has divested from fossil fuels and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, which [announced their divestment plans](#) the day after the march. Both institutions are encouraging other foundations to follow suit saying climate change is a moral issue.

On Sunday evening after the march we participated in a celebration at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine with Paul Winter playing and Al Gore speaking. There religious leaders and laity pledged to make a difference on the climate change challenge. It was wonderful to see so many colleagues from this work over the years going all the way back to the Harvard conferences in the mid-90s, to those who supported the Earth Charter, to those at Yale Divinity School now.

The march began a week of meetings at the United Nations and elsewhere on the climate challenge. At the end of the week, on Sept. 28, the *New York Times* [ran an editorial](#) in full support of the march, saying:

“It was important to put climate change back on the radar screen of world leaders, whose last effort to strike a deal, in Copenhagen five years ago, ended in acrimonious disaster. President Obama, for one, was as eloquent as he has ever been on the subject: ‘For all the immediate challenges that we gather to address this week — terrorism, instability, inequality, disease —

there's one issue that will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other, and that is the urgent and growing threat of a changing climate.'"

This urgency captures the feeling at the march and with the religious leaders and academics at the Union Seminary conference and at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. The hopes over several decades of the Forum on Religion and Ecology to become a dynamic field within academia and a transforming force within society [were realized last weekend](#) in New York. Now to determine the ways forward to build collaboratively on the remarkable energies visible there!

See photos:

<http://environment.yale.edu/news/article/reflections-on-the-peoples-climate-march/>

September 30, 2014

Religious communities are concerned about the climate

DW

Religious leaders met at the Interfaith Climate Summit to discuss how to tackle climate challenges from a faith-based perspective. After all, there is no such thing as believing in climate change, says Guillermo Kerber.

DW: What was the purpose of the Interfaith Climate Summit in New York ?

Guillermo Kerber: The purpose was to show how religious communities are concerned about the climate, how they accept the scientific consensus that is showing the consequences of climate change today and for the coming years. Another purpose was to ask the international community to effectively react to climate change. We are especially calling for this legally binding, ambitious and fair treaty in Paris next year. Participants commit themselves as religious leaders to do what is in their power to address climate change.

Who attended? What faiths were represented?

We had Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and then Christians from the different denominations and representatives of indigenous peoples. There were two cardinals from the Roman Catholic Church and the archbishop emeritus from Sweden, who is the president of the World Council of Churches. Different sheiks from Africa and from the Middle East, different rabbis and significant Evangelical leaders from the US like Jim Wallis attended. So I think it was quite representative of top leaders in different religions.

Why was the Interfaith Climate Summit organized now?

This is actually not the first step we've taken. There have been interfaith meetings or declarations for many years already. What's new with this [the Interfaith Climate Summit] is that more and more, the threat of climate change is considered something where we have a very small window

of opportunity to react. And this is why there is such a sense of urgency in the declaration of religious leaders, in their call to the international community to react and in their commitment to what they can do in their own communities.

How have religious groups around the world been taking action to prevent increased climate change?

Well, in the case of the World Council of Churches, there was a decision last July to explicitly say that the World Council of Churches is not investing in fossil fuels. And this divestment from fossil fuels is something that has been gaining momentum in different areas. The Lutheran Church of Sweden has decided to diverse completely from fossil fuels. This is also the case for instance with the United Church of Christ in the United States, of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

What are the interfaith community's concerns about climate change?

Religious communities in different parts of the world are turning to the churches, because the communities are already suffering the consequences of climate change in the Pacific, in Africa, in Asia, in Latin America, in the Caribbean. And they're asking for their leaders to also have a voice in the global arena. And they have asked the World Council of Churches and other religious organizations to speak out at this level when there are international conferences [like the UN Climate Summit].

What specific contributions can faith groups bring to the climate change negotiations?

I think the negotiations in Copenhagen and the ones after that weren't able to deliver, because there is still all this political struggle that from the religious perspective is not helping. What religious communities can bring to this debate is their moral and spiritual voice. The moral and spiritual voice can unblock the negotiations that have not delivered for 20 years. And there's an urgent need, especially looking towards Paris next year where a new agreement must be signed, that the negotiations deliver what is necessary to protect the vulnerable populations.

Why do you think it's necessary to have a religious climate summit?

The idea of our summit is to try to convince negotiators that the threat is so important that it does not have a one-stage solution. Leaders cannot look only to their own countries' interest. They need to look beyond this and be able to enter into a multilateral negotiation not only looking at what is needed today, but also taking into consideration what will be the situation of future generations in relation to climate change.

There's a perception that a large number of religious people don't believe in climate change. What role do the faith groups have in changing those perspectives?

I always say "I don't believe in climate change" - it's not a matter of faith, it's a matter of science. And we have very clear scientific data proving that climate change is occurring and that it is

human induced. But as you rightly said, there are many people who are against climate change. They say that religion has nothing to do with this.

But I think that faith leaders for all religions clearly established that the protection of the nature, of the environment is part of their core values, expressed with different terminologies. Christians, Jews and Muslims will speak about care of creation, because they believe in one God who has created the whole world. Buddhists and Hindus will speak more of harmony with the environment or nature. Indigenous peoples will speak of the relationship with Mother Earth - this came out very strongly in the Interfaith Summit, because we had one seminar on indigenous peoples and climate change. All this is why religions have a voice and a role to play in relationship to this.

Guillermo Kerber works for the World Council of Churches in Geneva and focuses on climate issues. The theologian hails from Uruguay and was one of the main organizers of the Interfaith Climate Summit.

The interview was conducted by Charlotta Lomas.

<http://www.dw.de/religious-communities-are-concerned-about-the-climate/a-17966092>

October 2014

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=54&key=5219c0ee0e13e0cf2748dc0c73c5fd8a&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

October 2014

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI) Newsletter

<http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=20dd2aeb64&e=d85b57a294>

October 2014

Eco-Congregation Scotland Newsletter

<http://us9.campaign-archive1.com/?u=a37b4ff760ffcc7fd1c3611b4&id=5565a0d4da&e=709fe41ec4>

October 2014

Sacred Sites Research Newsletter (SSIREN)

<http://sacrednaturalsites.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SSIREN-October-2014.pdf>

October 1, 2014

Investing in Our Children's Future: Divestment, Sustainability and Climate Justice

By Grace Ji-Sun Kim
Huffington Post

Having three children usually means that I take one of them to conferences or meetings with me. My children are now getting used to "tagging along". I started taking my oldest to religion conferences when he was three months old. Because our home in the Lehigh Valley is located close to the venues for the [Union Theological Seminary's Religions for the Earth and Religions for Peace's](#) Interfaith Summit on Climate Change, my oldest teenage son joined me for one day of the meetings.

As we were rushing to get ready to leave the hotel for the conference, my son quickly asked, "What has religion got to do with climate change?" to which I quickly responded, "Everything!"

My son's quick question keeps haunting me even after the meetings have ended. His question provoked me to realize that many of our church members may be asking the same question. Many local churches are not be addressing issues about the environment and climate change. It feels like a scientific or a governmental issue and not something that the church needs to tackle.

However, we are slowly seeing more and more religious and church groups who take climate change seriously. Union Theological Seminary held their "Religions for the Earth" meeting and the World Council of Churches (WCC) held their [Interfaith Summit on Climate Change](#). Local, national, and international churches and organizations now recognize that climate change and religion have everything to do with each other. The People's Climate March in New York, the related events held in [162 countries](#) around the world and the interfaith service held on 21 September at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine provide the invocation as people of faith seek to live justly and work towards sustainability. [The Reverend Anders Wejryd](#) the former archbishop of the [Church of Sweden](#) says,

"Religions involve a longer term perspective than today's politics does. That is why our voice is so important to show our responsibility and the need for a just distribution that also crosses generational borders."

Climate change affects all people but it especially endangers the lives of our sisters and brothers who live in poverty around the world. Because of this, climate justice is an economic, social, and political as well as environmental issue. As Christians, if we are to respond faithfully to Jesus' command in Matthew 25:35, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in", then we must take climate change seriously. The poor, the least of our brothers and sisters are at grave risk. And Jesus expects us to act. There are many things that we can do to help save the earth. We need to invest in ways that protect the earth and support sustainable development. The Reverend Henrik Grape, Officer of Sustainable Development at the Church of Sweden, states,

"If you are serious about the climate as an important issue, you can't work with climate justice and at the same time have investments pushing development in the opposite direction. This is why it's important that churches and faith communities allow their words to translate into action in order to turn development in a more sustainable direction. To us, divestment is given. The next step is to direct investments that build the new sustainable society."

These are not only words but it is "faith in action". The Church of Sweden decided to divest from fossil fuels. Other churches have done the same, like the United Church of Christ in the US or the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. At the global level, the World Council of Churches, in its last Central Committee decided to explicitly exclude fossil fuels from its investment portfolios. This request came from younger Central Committee members who, according to Dr Guillermo Kerber, WCC Programme Executive for Care from Creation and Climate justice, recognized the general ethical guidelines for investment that the WCC follows, but wanted to see fossil fuels explicitly mentioned. Kerber says,

"There are strong intergenerational aspects to climate justice, and it is encouraging to see that young people all over the world are taking a stand."

At the UN Climate Summit, [UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#) "asked leaders from government, business, finance and civil society to crystallize a global vision for low-carbon economic growth and to advance climate action on five fronts: cutting emissions; mobilizing money and markets; pricing carbon; strengthening resilience; and mobilizing new coalitions."

Our actions, or lack of actions, will affect generations to come. But we must continue pushing the news of our agenda onto the public stage. Over three hundred thousand people participated in the People's Climate March in New York City on 21 September, but the major broadcast news stations [did not feel the need to cover the historic march](#).

Maybe this is a reason why my son and the younger generation do not see the relevance of religion to climate change: people's mobilizations and religious denominations and organizations' efforts to care for creation and address climate change are not in the headlines. As a result, people fail to hear the urgent cry to do something about the damage we are doing to this earth.

Hopefully our mistakes and assaults on the earth, the waters, and the sky will not be left for our children to fix. Hopefully we can take steps to make a safer, cleaner and more sustainable future

for our children. Our investments will affect our future. Let's invest in our children's future of a bright and clean world.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/grace-jisun-kim/investing-in-our-children_1_b_5906588.html

October 1, 2014

Mary Evelyn Tucker: the flourishing of people and planet

By Ray Waddle
Yale University - Notes from the Quad

For decades Mary Evelyn Tucker has been trying to draw the world's religions into engagement with the moral dimensions of ecological issues. She has also been birthing with others a story of science and religion for the future of a flourishing Earth community – both people and planet.

Our current ecological challenges are such that they require the insights of the world's religions to awaken moral passion and concern, she says. And these voices are needed now.

“If we as people of faith really care about suffering, then our institutions and seminaries need to become more global in their thinking, with a better understanding of the challenges ahead,” says Tucker, who, with her husband, John Grim, is co-director of the Forum for Religion and Ecology at Yale. They are also senior lecturers and research scholars at Yale.

“We have profound spiritual resources that can hold people together in the midst of future suffering—the immense challenge of environmental refugees, rising seas, more Katrinas and Sandys,” she said. “The moment has arrived for an emerging Earth community, a deep-time perspective that evokes beauty and awe along with compassion and responsibility for our shared planetary future. It's now in our hands.”

Tucker is immersed in far-flung projects on different fronts to enlist the moral commitment of the religions east and west. She is trying to create an academic field in religion and ecology along with a popular force for change.

- The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale bridges this field and force with research, education, and outreach. Tucker and Grim are involved with the Forum in a broad spectrum of publications, teaching, and conferences. Some 10,000 people receive the Forum's monthly e-newsletter. Sign up at www.fore.research.yale.edu.
- They teach together in the joint religion and ecology M.A. program with Yale Divinity School and the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies (F&ES). They recently launched the program's first online courses. During the spring semester, they will offer the introductory course and East Asian Religions and Ecology online. For info see <http://environment.yale.edu/news/article/fes-launches-first-online-course-in-religion-and-ecology>.

- A new book by Tucker and Grim, *Religion and Ecology* (Island Press, 2014), is being used in these courses. It explores the relationship of the environment to the history of religions—Native American traditions, Christian denominations, Hinduism, and Confucianism, their promotion of sustainability and sometimes their resistance.
- Tucker is a specialist in Asian religions and Grim in Native American traditions. They have appointments in the Divinity School, the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and the Department of Religious Studies.
- Tucker is also a co-author of the Emmy award-winning “Journey of the Universe” PBS film (available on Netflix) and companion book (published by Yale University Press), which crafts a narrative about the origins of the universe and the prospect of an emerging Earth community. She and Grim were the executive producers of the film.
- Tucker was on the drafting committee of the Earth Charter, an international declaration that promotes a sustainable, interdependent future through the global efforts of businesses, governments, civil society, educators, and religious communities. See www.emergingeearthcommunity.org for more on all these activities.

Over a 40-year career as scholar and advocate, Tucker has sometimes despaired at the reluctance of religious institutions to participate in environmental movements. Lately, though, she is seeing encouraging signs of religious interaction on the issues of environmental ruin and risk. She hopes it’s not too late.

“We’re in a decisive moment,” she says. “On the one hand, religion has lagged behind, not seeing the connection between social justice and environmental degradation, its effect on people and all species. But there’s evidence of new openings. I see change emerging. It’s essential to have the contributions of religions to the long-term flourishing of the Earth community.”

She cited the Sept. 21 People’s Climate March in New York City, which attracted more than 300,000 people. She listed a growing number of theologians and scholars who are retrieving and reevaluating teachings of religious traditions on the subject of Earth care and ethics.

She pointed to the upcoming encyclical on the environment by Pope Francis, who will likely release it next spring. The science-based Ecological Society of America is taking the unusual step of planning a dialogue next summer around the encyclical’s meaning and impact.

“We’ve seen a huge leap in environmental awareness in the last 20 years,” she says. “At this point, this is the most religious interaction I’ve seen in 40 years.”

Tucker’s search for synergies between religion and ecology can be traced back to encounters with distant cultures and visionary mentors as a young scholar. She grew up Roman Catholic in New York, with early exposure to social justice concerns. In the 1960s, she was a vocal opponent of the Vietnam war and racial segregation.

By the early 70s, though, she became disillusioned with the slow progress of peace and civil rights. So she packed up and moved to Japan to teach in a women's college. Exposure to Buddhism and Confucianism across East Asia awakened new possibilities for academic study and ethical vision.

Two years later, in 1974, she returned to the U.S. to try and understand her experience through studying Asian religions at Fordham. There, she fatefully met two people, historian of religions Thomas Berry and Ph.D. student John Grim.

Berry (1914-2009), an inspired teacher and visionary thinker, introduced students to the world's diverse religious traditions with a "profound empathetic feel for the pulse of their spiritual dynamics," Tucker and Grim have written.

Berry was also in search of a buoyant new story of civilization, one that could weave the findings of evolutionary science and the revelations of religion for a sustainable future. He wrote in "The New Story" in 1978: "The basic mood of the future might well be one of confidence in the continuing revelation that takes place in and through the Earth. If the dynamics of the Universe from the beginning shaped the course of the heavens, lighted the sun, and formed the Earth, if this same dynamism brought forth the continents and the seas and atmosphere, if it awakened life in the primordial cell and then brought into being the unnumbered variety of living beings, and finally brought us into being and guided us safely through the turbulent centuries, there is reason to believe that this same guiding process is precisely what has awakened in us our present understanding of ourselves and our relation to this stupendous process."

Berry's vision resonated deeply with Tucker—as it did with John Grim. They were eventually married by Berry and became closely associated with his work endeavoring to move it forward in a time of planetary crisis, especially by editing his books.

Tucker completed her PhD at Columbia with Berry's close colleague, Ted de Bary, a leading scholar of Confucianism. Then the couple taught at Bucknell from 1989-2007, undertaking initiatives elsewhere as well—notably at Harvard, where, in the mid-90s, they organized a series of 10 conferences on world religions and ecology at the Center for the Study of World Religions. Tucker and Grim are series editors for the 10 volumes from the conferences, distributed by Harvard University Press.

At Yale since 2006, Tucker is eager to talk about the YDS-FES joint M.A. degree, a program that symbolizes the pressing need for 21st century collaboration.

"This is the only program in the world that brings together two schools of excellence in these areas, attracting students who are both committed to the study of religious traditions and deeply interested in environmental problems and solutions," she says.

Her work recently took her to China, where she spoke at an international ecology conference. Amid much environmental devastation in the wake of China's dramatic economic boom, there's greater attention in China now to finding sustainable solutions and looking to spiritual traditions for guidance.

“Why here? Why now?” Tucker writes in the upcoming Fall 2014 issue of *Reflections*, the YDS theological journal.

“The pressing answer is that pervasive pollution across China is putting the entire nation at risk. In the last decade some Chinese have begun to reflect on the need to create not just a technologically sophisticated society but an ‘ecological civilization.’ A revival of China’s religious traditions is underway—Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, all of which have significance for environmental awareness.”

So signs exist of a religious awakening to the ecological urgency of the moment and its importance for the fate of future generations. Religions can also leaven a new story of the universe in ways that other disciplines cannot, she says. Indeed, that is the intention of the conference at YDS November 7-9 titled “Living Cosmology: Christian Responses to Journey of the Universe.” For more information on the conference, visit www.journeyoftheuniverse.org

The time is now for ministers, laypeople, and their institutions to join the storytelling. “We can bring insights as no other group can—a moral passion for long-term change, the power to move with a shared sensibility from ego to eco.”

<http://notesfromthequad.yale.edu/notes/2014-10-01-123000/mary-evelyn-tucker-flourishing-people-and-planet#sthash.wcovcLY5.dpuf>

October 1, 2014

Eco-Congregation Scotland Newsletter

<http://us9.campaign-archive1.com/?u=a37b4ff760ffcc7fd1c3611b4&id=c5320f75b9&e=709fe41ec4>

October 5, 2014

In India, The World's First Vegetarian City

Worldcruch

After monks went on a hunger strike to push for a citywide ban on animal slaughter, the local government declared Palitana a meat-free zone. But the city's Muslims are not happy.

PALITANA — Jainism is one of the oldest religions in the world and preaches a path of non-violence towards all living beings. In India, about 5 million people practice it.

"Everyone in this world — whether animal or human being or a very small creature — has all been given the right to live by God," says Virat Sagar Maharaj, a Jain monk. "So who are we to

take away that right from them? This has been [written in the holy books](#) of every religion, particularly in [Jainism](#)."

The mountainous town of Palitana in the state of Gujarat is home to one of Jain's holiest sites, and many residents don't want any kind of killing happening here. Recently, 200 Jain monks began a hunger strike, threatening to fast until death until the town was declared an entirely [vegetarian zone](#).

"Meat has always been easily available in this city, but it's against the teaching of our religion," says Sadhar Sagar, a Jain believer. "We always wanted a complete ban on non-vegetarian food in this holy site."

They have gotten their wish. On Aug. 14, the Gujarat government declared Palitana a "meat-free zone." They instituted a complete ban on the sale of meat and eggs and have also outlawed the slaughter of animals within the town's limits.

It's a [victory for vegetarians](#), but bad for business for others. Fishermen such as Nishit Mehru have had to stop working entirely. "We have been stopped from selling anything in Palitana," he says. "They shouldn't have taken this one-sided decision. How will we survive if we are not allowed to sell fish? The government should not make decisions under pressure."

On behalf of other fishermen, Valjibhai Mithapura took the issue to the state's high court, which has called on the state government to explain the ban put in place locally. It will then make a decision about whether this regulation is legal. Gujarat is ruled by the Hindu nationalist BJP party, [whose leader is Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#).

The population of Palitana is 65,000 and about 25% of them are Muslim. Local Muslim religious scholar Syed Jehangir Miyan disagrees with the ban. "There are so many people living in this city, and the [majority of them are non-vegetarian](#)," he says. "Stopping them from eating a non-vegetarian diet is a violation of their rights. We have been living in this city for decades. It is wrong to suddenly put a ban on the whole city now."

<http://www.worldcrunch.com/culture-society/in-india-the-world-039-s-first-vegetarian-city/india-palitana-food-meat-fish-gujarat/c3s17132/#.VDlsjxbCfKf>

October 8, 2014

Todd Stern, U.S. Lead Climate Negotiator, Visits Yale to Talk Global Warming

By Kevin Dennehy
Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies

U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern, who has led the United States in global climate talks since 2009, will address domestic and international efforts to mitigate the threat of global climate change during a public speech at Yale on Tuesday, Oct. 14.

The event, which [will be held at 4:30 p.m.](#) in Levinson Auditorium at the Yale Law School, 127 Wall St., is open to the public. It is hosted by the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES) and Yale Law School. The speech comes just weeks before the 20th meeting of the annual UN climate conference in Lima, Peru — a meeting that many leaders hope will help set a constructive course toward a successful international climate agreement to be reached at the 2015 climate conference in Paris.

[Watch a video of the speech.](#) [Read a transcript of the speech.](#)

Stern comes to New Haven just weeks after the United Nations Climate Summit, held in New York on Sept. 23, where more than 100 heads of state plus business and civil society leaders came together to call for ambitious action on climate change. At the Summit, President Obama touted U.S. progress on the [Climate Action Plan](#), reaffirmed a U.S. commitment to reach a global climate agreement, and announced several new climate change initiatives. Stern played an active role at the summit, which he called an opportunity for international leaders to build momentum toward a new global climate treaty before the 2015 meeting in Paris.

“Todd Stern plays a central role in developing U.S. climate policy and toward achieving a meaningful global strategy for tackling this critical challenge,” said Yale President Peter Salovey. “Climate change is an issue that will have profound global impacts, and has implications on every field of study covered at Yale. It’s fitting that people from all corners of the university are part of this event.”

“This is a rare opportunity to hear from one of the leading players in global climate policy at a critical stage of international discussions,” said F&ES Dean Peter Crane. “We’re very pleased that we are able to share this important event with the entire Yale community — and with an online audience worldwide.”

“Climate change is the single most important issue for the coming generation,” said Robert C. Post, dean of the Yale Law School. “It is an issue demanding legal response. We are pleased to host Todd Stern, one of the shapers of our national perspective.”

As U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change, Stern represents the Obama Administration at the ministerial level during all bilateral and multilateral negotiations related to climate issues. He also participates in the development of domestic climate and clean energy policy.

As staff secretary to President Bill Clinton from 1997 to 1999, Stern coordinated the Administration's climate change initiatives, acting as the senior White House negotiator during the Kyoto climate talks. Prior to joining the Clinton administration, he was a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, where he worked primarily on environmental and climate-related issues.

During his Oct. 14 visit, Stern will hold a lunchtime discussion at F&ES for students and faculty.

– Kevin Dennehy kevin.dennehy@yale.edu 203 436-4842

<http://environment.yale.edu/news/article/todd-stern-us-lead-climate-negotiator-visiting-yale-to-talk-global-warming/>

October 9, 2014

Experts Debate Moral, Religious Case for Climate Action

By Bobby Magill
Climate Central

When members of the [Society of Environmental Journalists](#) (SEJ) meet each year at the organization's annual conference, reporters are updated on the latest advancements in climate science from leading climatologists and government scientists.

Extreme weather, disappearing Western snowpack, wildfires, [sea level rise](#), withering crops and vanishing wildlife habitat are all typically on the docket for discussion.

But with the science [becoming overwhelmingly clear](#) that human greenhouse gas emissions are fueling climate change, a discussion at last weekend's [SEJ conference](#) in Chattanooga, Tenn., veered toward the philosophy of action and personal responsibility to do something — anything at all — to reduce our impact on the climate.

In other words, if we can do something about climate change, do each of us have a personal responsibility to act? On what philosophical ground should we take individual action?

Or, what would Jesus do about CO2?

That's a tough question for a lot of conservative Christians to answer, particularly those who are uncomfortable with some scientific theories as well as uncertainty about the future that climate science implies, said Dawn Coppock, a Christian environmentalist and co-founder of the Christian environmental group LEAF, said Saturday at SEJ.

A [new study](#) by researchers at the University College of London and Yale University shows that evangelicals are less likely than non-evangelicals to believe that climate change is real, is causing harm and is caused by humans. Even so, the study shows that evangelicals are concerned about climate change and support a variety of policy measures to address it. In addition to LEAF, the Evangelical Environmental Network and other groups try to make the case to evangelicals for moral action on climate change.

It's not that conservative churchgoers who don't believe in climate change are uncaring about their environment, Coppock said. They have serious doubts about science in general, requiring Christian environmentalists to be creative in inspiring people to action.

Many conservative Christians feel estranged and alienated by science, she said.

“At LEAF, we don’t talk about climate change, we talk about Earth stewardship,” Coppock said. “We’re also drinking the Jesus Kool-Aid. Scientific arguments are persuasive to a whole lot of learning styles. We already have those people in the tent. You’re not going to convert those people (in the churches) by pummeling them with more science. Spiritual and moral concern does not require you to believe there’s global warming.”

According to Coppock, Christians in the South who doubt the reality of manmade climate change may be convinced action is necessary by showing them the environmental challenges posed by something very clear: mountaintop-removal coal mining and the dramatic effects it has on the landscape, or East Tennessee’s high asthma rates caused in part by coal-fired power plant emissions, she said.

“From a Christian frame, I would say love my neighbor, and I was commanded to care for creation,” she said.

LEAF has been successful in reaching out to congregations about how they can be less wasteful and more energy efficient, leading to greater support for greener cities in the Bible Belt.

“When you’ve got green cities, which Knoxville and Chattanooga and Nashville are working hard to be, then sooner or later, the state legislature has to listen,” she said. “That to me is how we get a hold of this problem. We do what we can do and we look at the people that can do more and we support and encourage those efforts.”

University of Tennessee philosophy lecturer Alex Feldt, who also spoke at SEJ, said any moral argument for action on climate change is complex and problematic because of the “collective action problem.”

But if humans have the power to mitigate climate change, he said they have a moral obligation to do so because much human suffering is at stake. Climate change threatens food and water supplies for millions across the globe, something studies show [could lead to a much more violent world](#).

“Because climate change is collective, they look at it and say it doesn’t matter what I do,” Feldt said. It is important to find “moral arguments that can break through that and say, no, you actually have a responsibility ... You’re morally responsible because other people are being significantly harmed.”

According to Feldt, a useful moral argument for action is to appeal to fairness and justice, because climate change will violate the human rights of a lot of people who can never be compensated.

“Information (about climate change) is part of the moral argument: We have an obligation to share this information and do this,” he said. “That’s the way to inspire without feeling paralyzed. You don’t have to go crazy green, live off the grid. You just need to talk.”

<http://www.climatecentral.org/blogs/experts-debate-moral-religious-case-for-climate-action-16586>

October 10, 2014

Nuttall: 'Religious groups are taking action on climate change'

DW

Nick Nuttall, spokesperson for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, tells DW how religious groups are increasingly fighting climate change and how that might have a bigger impact than you'd think.

DW: Mr. Nuttall, in the lead up to the climate negotiations in Paris in 2015, the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) has called upon religious groups around the world to combat climate change. Why are religious leaders asked to address climate change?

Nick Nuttall: Right now there is quite an interesting groundswell of interest among all sorts of sections of society to try and address climate change. The faith groups have been emerging in the last few months because I think they have internalized the science that has been coming out and have determined that it's actually a very moral and ethical central issue that they feel needs addressing.

Christiane Figueres, the head of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, has urged faith groups to "find their voice" and "set their moral compass" on climate change. What does this mean exactly?

Christiane Figueres was actually in London a few months ago addressing a group of faith leaders and business leaders from the city of London at St. Paul's Cathedral. And I think she was basically expressing to them: now is the time. There needs to be a lot more energy towards a really meaningful agreement in 2015.

And this setting of the moral compass was her way of expressing to them that this is your moment, this is your time to actually stand up and basically say to your leaders: "We would like a meaningful agreement on climate change to protect not only the people but the whole concept of stewardship of this one planet that we have."

Why should religious groups care about climate change? Why have they been specifically targeted by the UN?

With every new report that is brought out by the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), the IPCC, the science gets ever more sobering and the risk assessment gets ever more clear. The churches are very aware that they have within their own midst members of the communities who

are vulnerable and marginalized and that climate change presents an ever increasing risk to those very vulnerable people.

There may be people within the developed countries, but certainly in the developing world, where many are at a very high risk from [extreme weather](#), the spreads of diseases, shortages of water, and all the other [impacts](#) that are likely to come with a more intense climatic change.

So I believe that many of the churches have accepted that this is unacceptable and they must do something about it because climate change threatens to undermine several decades of development gains in the developing world. It's part of looking after their flock in the near term but also the extended family of humanity across the globe.

How successful has the campaign been to divest investment in the fossil fuel industry?

Divesting from fossil fuel sends a very clear signal to the investment community as well as to leaders across the world that these kinds of fuels that we are burning right now, that contain high amounts of carbon, isn't the way to go. And the Quakers in the UK were one of the church groups that have actually done this on ethical grounds.

There are other faith groups looking at it right now, for example the World Council of Churches. They have called on member churches to actually divest from fossil fuels. They represent about half a billion of Christians and there is a huge [interfaith meeting](#) happening in New York, which is bringing together not just the Christians but also Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews who are coming from around the world and also from within the United States to basically sign statements and a declaration of what they want world leaders to do in respect of climate change.

Apart from urging faith groups and followers not to invest in fossil fuel companies, is the UN encouraging religious institutions to address climate change in other ways?

There are already many initiatives by churches and religious and faith groups across the world who actually incorporate climate friendly, energy efficient and clean energy technologies in their buildings. And only the other day, a mosque in Dubai announced eco-friendly measures that it was incorporating into its buildings and structures. There is actually an interfaith movement in the United States which is installing renewable energy solar panels in churches, mosques and other places of religious worship.

With religious groups around the globe taking action on climate change, how big of an effect could this have?

I think it could make a huge impact. Climate change is often talked about through the economic lens. It's often discussed through the lens of science and other quite cerebral ways. But through the lens of religion one speaks to the spirit and sometimes it's the spirit and the heart that you need to move - as much as the head - to actually get progress in this world.

How can religious leaders convince the climate change skeptics out there?

I think there is maybe a chance that religious leaders work with the scientists to bring home the risk assessments because in the end it is a risk assessment. And the risk assessment points to some very sobering future for us all if we don't act.

Nick Nuttall is an environment and technology journalist from England who is currently living in Bonn, Germany, where he works as the spokesperson for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Before joining the United Nations Environment Program in 2001, he won several awards for his reports about technology and environment.

<http://www.dw.de/nuttall-religious-groups-are-taking-action-on-climate-change/a-17918398>

October 13, 2014

Evangelical clergy say addressing climate change is pro-life

Florida Times-Union

For us, being pro-life includes not only defending our unborn children but also the biblical mandate to care for all life.

While the threats may be different, the injunction to protect life is the same.

We are called to protect this seamless garment of life.

Toxins and other pollutants foul our water, air and soil, impacting the purity of life God intends.

FLORIDA IS GROUND ZERO

Children are especially vulnerable to many of these pollutants because their small bodies are still developing.

A few years ago, pro-life evangelicals spoke out on the impact of mercury on the unborn.

One in six children in the U.S. was born with too high levels of mercury in their blood.

Because of the efforts of pro-life evangelicals, the United States is taking a leadership role in reducing the impact of mercury on the unborn.

Another important issue is water.

As a recent USA Today op-ed put it, if you care about life, pay attention to what's happening with water.

We believe climate change to be a profound pro-life issue.

And Florida is ground zero when it comes to climate change.

Cities across the state are already spending millions in taxpayer dollars to install new sea level pumps, bolster sea walls and protect from salt water intrusion.

While it is good to respond to current challenges, it is even more cost effective to spend funds ahead of time to prepare for present changes in the climate, including extreme weather events.

Let's upgrade Florida's water pumps and building codes today before we have to clean up a bigger mess tomorrow.

WE MUST BE GOOD STEWARDS

Given the dollars already being spent and the scale of the cost, if you care about taxpayer money and limited government, you should care about climate change.

We are also concerned about worsening air pollution under climate change.

Duval County alone has almost 18,000 cases of pediatric asthma.

That number would be dramatically lower if we were better stewards of God's world.

When we see the present impacts, our pro-life ethic kicks in.

Let's empower individuals to take the lead when it comes to entrepreneurial business solutions that create a cleaner environment.

We need to see climate not as an issue about politics or partisanship but as a moral concern.

God has given us all the tools to be good stewards of God's creation.

TIME FOR A REAL PLAN

It's time for Florida to come together to come up with a plan to address climate change.

The church in Florida is already starting to take the lead.

As the church starts to take on climate change more directly, it's also time for clean businesses to take the lead.

The cost of solar has plummeted, yet Florida is still well behind where it could be when it comes to clean energy.

We need to do what we can to transition away from expensive fossil fuels and toward cheaper and healthier technologies.

These actions should include putting together a plan to play Florida's part in achieving the Clean Power Plan.

And finding conservative solutions to addressing carbon pollution.

Our poor stewardship of God's world is a reflection of how seriously we take God's teaching.

That's why creation-care remains integral to being pro-life.

- The Rev. Joel Hunter is senior pastor of Northland, A Church Distributed, Longwood, FL.
- The Rev. Mitch Hescoc is CEO of the Evangelical Environmental Network.
- Alexei Laushkin is vice president of the Evangelical Environmental Network.

<http://jacksonville.com/business/columnists/2014-10-13/story/guest-column-evangelical-clergy-say-addressing-climate-change>

October 15, 2014

Bhakti divide in Brajbhoomi

By Soma Basu
Down to Earth

Disagreement is brewing among Krishna's devotees in Vrindavan. While some want to show their love for the god by building temples, others serve Krishna by restoring the forests that were intrinsic to his life

*“Neither the cities, the cultured lands nor the villages or their houses are ours.
We are the forest people, dear father, and will always live in the forests and the hills”
— Sri Krishna (Srimad Bhagvatam, Chapter 10, Canto 24, Verse 24)*

KRISHNA, the god in Hindu mythology, is said to have lived a simple life. He danced with peacocks, splashed in the rivers, played the flute that mesmerised humans and animals alike and spent his time in the forests herding cows. Srivatsa Goswami, a Vaishnava scholar, considers Krishna's life to be “the greatest chapter in environmental history”. “One who is devoted to Krishna can never be callous towards the environment, because Krishna himself loves nature,” writes British author Ranchor Prime in his book, *Hinduism and Ecology: Seeds of Truth*.

Today, Krishna's devotees are divided in their bhakti. While one camp wants to glorify their master through magnificent temples, the other believes in reviving the very forests where Krishna grew up, now lost to urbanisation. The former thinks erecting monuments dedicated to Krishna is the best way to spread his message; the latter says the right way to honour him is

following in his footsteps and caring for the environment. What emerges from these differences of opinion is polarisation in Krishna worship and a debate on the idea of bhakti.

Does devotion demand temples?

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), a global Vaishnava spiritual institution with temples all over the world, believes architecture is one of the ways to propagate Krishna's mission. During a lecture in Mumbai on February 25, 1974, Srila Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON, said, "Oh, there are so many skyscrapers. Why not construct a nice skyscraper temple of Krishna? That is Krishna consciousness."

Taking inspiration from his words, ISKCON plans to build a large and swanky temple in Vrindavan dedicated to Krishna. "An imposing temple would proclaim the status of Vrindavan as one of India's spiritual capitals and attract global attention towards Krishna and his message," explains Suvyakta NarasimhaDasa, president of the Vrindavan unit of Akshaya Patra Foundation, a charitable body set up by ISKCON to look after the new temple.

On the other hand, Braj Foundation, a non-profit led by senior journalist Vineet Narain, focuses on rejuvenating the forests associated with Krishna's life. "Krishna was a primordial environmentalist. This is my way of worshiping him. One who serves Braj serves Krishna," Narain says.

Braj, spread across 5,000 square kilometres around Mathura-Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh, is Krishna's own body, claim vedic texts. Once upon a time, the region had 137 forests and 1,000 kunds or water bodies. Today, only three of the 137 groves, associated with the legend of Radha Krishna, remain, while the rest have been lost to rapid urbanisation. Most of the kunds have either silted up, been encroached upon or have become garbage dumps. Braj Foundation aims to rejuvenate the water bodies, forest groves and hills in Braj, in what it considers is the best form of Krishna bhakti.

If Braj is abundant in forests and kunds that find mention in vedic texts, it also houses brick monuments dedicated to Krishna. Vrindavan, where Krishna spent his childhood and adolescence, is called the "heart of Braj". Today, the town has at least 5,500 temples and hundreds of dharamshalas (shelters) and hotels to cater to more than six million tourists who visit the town every year.

A swanky building for God

ISKCON's proposed temple will be another addition to Vrindavan's concrete jungle. The Chandrodaya Mandir is being built on the outskirts of the town in collaboration with the Kolkata-based Infinity Group. The glass-and-steel temple, spread over 2.2 hectares, is set to be the world's tallest, measuring 210 metres with 70 floors. This is taller than the Qutub Minar in Delhi, which is 70 metres tall. The foundation stone for the proposed temple was laid in March this year and construction is expected to be completed in five years.

According to the project brief of Chandrodaya Mandir, the grand temple will be surrounded by 12 hectares of forest area to recreate the forests of Braj, including the 12 verdant forests, mentioned in Srimad Bhagvatam, where Lord Krishna is believed to perform his raasleelas (love plays). A Yamuna creek that will be recreated in the forests will provide boating opportunity to visitors. The building will also house a helipad, an amphitheatre, a hi-speed lift and a 4D theatre. The entire project area spreads across 60 hectares, equivalent to the size of six Akshardham temples in Delhi, and will also comprise residential villas and apartments with modern facilities.

In its eagerness to serve Krishna, ISKCON seems to be indifferent to the troubles Brajwasis (people of Braj) might face from a grand temple in their vicinity. The water for the temple, toilets, kunds and the creek would be extracted from the ground. “The Yamuna is 5 km away from the project site. As it is difficult to lay a pipeline for such a long distance, we have identified a groundwater source 3 km away from the temple. Soon, boring will be done and pipelines will be laid,” Dasa says. He claims that the Foundation has already acquired environmental clearance for the project from the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority.

Manoj Mishra, convenor of Yamuna Jiye Abhiyan, a non-profit in Delhi, says, “This is another Akshardham temple in the making. In the name of God, natural resources are being plundered. Groundwater is already scarce in Vrindavan and its overextraction may further harm the environment.”

Dasa estimates that the temple will consume 5-6 megawatt (MW) of electricity per day, of which 2 MW would be generated from the solar panels in the temple’s parking lot, which can hold 2,000 cars, while the rest would be bought from electricity grids.

Reviving Krishna's forests

Jagannath Poddar, head of Friends of Vrindavan, an environment non-profit, says that urbanisation and prolonged negligence have pushed the kunds, also known as sarovars, in Braj to extinction. These kunds once served as perennial sources of freshwater. “It is sad to see the resources of Vrindavan being destroyed by people who are promoting real estate business here in the name of Krishna,” he adds.

Braj Foundation has been striving to restore the ecological, architectural and cultural heritage of Braj, which it says reflects the “intertwined relationship between environment, people and the Supreme Lord”. Since its formation in 2005, the non-profit has restored 46 water bodies, three heritage buildings and two forests in Braj. The foundation has also been campaigning against mining on the hills. It plans to restore all 1,000 kunds in Braj associated with Krishna.

In 2006, it took up work to desilt the Rudra Kund in Jatipura village in Braj, remove encroachments and restore the water body. But it faced opposition from encroachers, who went to the Allahabad High Court and got a stay order against the renovation of the kund.

The order was lifted after five years of legal battle. In June 2011, the Braj Foundation resumed its work and with the help of the district administration and police, demolished unauthorised

construction around the kund. Once dry and filled with garbage, Rudra Kund now sparkles with clean water. “After we desilt the kunds and declog their recharge wells, we start working on their beautification so that people know the religious and historical significance of the place,” Narain says. He adds that the funding for their work comes from private sponsorships. The non-profit also focuses on planting trees like kadamba, radha and krishnachura associated with the legend of Radha Krishna. It promotes cow-based agriculture and organic farming too. “Butchers are stealing cows and killing them for meat. Most of the charitable gaushalas (cow shelters) do not have very good standards of care. We aim to reestablish the economic viability of the desi cow,” he adds.

What is bhakti?

Several retired engineers and officials have joined the Braj Foundation to show their love for Krishna. “To seek God, one needs eyes bereft of any worldly attachment. God does not need memorials,” says a monk in Chaitanya Gauriya Mutt in Vrindavan. On Srila Prabhupad’s message to build a skyscraper for Krishna, he says that Prabhupad’s words must have a deeper meaning. When this reporter tried to verify the same from Dasa, he said, “Religious texts are interpreted in two ways; symbolic and literal. We are literalists.”

Swami Sivananda of Matri Sadan Ashram in Haridwar believes people have misinterpreted Hinduism. “While temples and memorials to mark sacred places are necessary, building a 70-storey temple in a place where there are a thousand others is showing off,” he adds.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/bhakti-divide-brajbhoomi>

October 15, 2014

Pervasive and powerful: Nonviolence

By Rachel Myslivy
Global Sisters Report

Anyone who works for social change can tell you, it’s not an easy road. Like all grand-scale, emotionally and morally charged issues, environmental activism can be frustrating. Playing the blame game has been a primary tactic for many, including myself, in the environmental movement.

“If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem,” may be true, but it may not be the best way to gain new converts. Of the many things I learned from the women I interviewed for the [Green Sisters in Kansas Oral History Project](#), the all-encompassing approach to nonviolence has easily had the most lasting and dramatic impacts on my life and activism.

I began the Green Sisters in Kansas Oral History Project as a project to document the environmental activities of Catholic sisters in Kansas but in the end, I was radically changed by

the experience. I went to the first interviews with the Sisters of St. Joseph in Concordia, Kan., with a preconceived notion of who the sisters were and a pretty solid understanding of who I was. Now, three years later, I still find seeds of wisdom in my memories of those interviews. The organizational style, systems for social change, understanding of the Gospel call, and the profound reflections on ecology still percolate in my brain and encourage me to continue working for the Earth. Many ideas challenged me and helped me on my way. However, the most surprising of all was the ethic of nonviolence. I had considered myself a nonviolent person but quickly realized that I was barely skimming the surface. Little did I know how pervasive and how powerful nonviolence could be.

While the theme of the Green Sisters interviews was environmentalism, on many occasions, an interview would veer off into discussions of nonviolence and – initially – I tried to redirect the conversation back to the topic at hand. This was an oral history about environmental activism, after all, not nonviolence. Like any thick-skulled, know-it-all student, it took me a while to realize that the two concepts were intricately connected.

During those early interviews, I tried to coax out the dark side of the story – “Are all sisters supportive of environmental initiatives? Do you get frustrated by people’s lack of enthusiasm?” In truth, I probably wanted some gossip. In retrospect, it took me forever to make the connection between nonviolence and the responses I got to these types of questions. The community-wide focus on nonviolence encompasses anything that denigrates the dignity of others. Gossip about other sisters simply did not happen in my presence.

One of the sisters related a story in response to my queries about frustration. She had met a priest from another country who cooked her dinner. In the meal preparation, she noticed that he used all of the red pepper – seeds and all. Ever-mindful of waste, she took to this same method of preparation, incorporating the whole pepper into dishes. She prepared a soup for the community using the whole pepper. One of her fellow sisters got very upset that she used all those parts that should have been thrown out. Instead of arguing her point, the cook continued to use the whole pepper in meal preparations but did not make the offending soup again. Herein lies a win-win situation for non-violence and environmental activism. The sister-cook was able to embrace a waste-reducing food preparation technique in a way that avoided direct confrontation. This story exemplifies the non-violent approach heard over and over in interviews. Embracing nonviolence can direct actions in such a way that respects the dignity of others while still achieving the overall goal.

Instead of direct confrontation, even within their community, sisters chose to stand as a witness to the right behavior. If some thought recycling was too much effort, others would handle it all. In many ways, they would take on additional tasks to make up for the lack of interest or commitment in others. The sisters acknowledge that the lack of commitment to sustainability issues can be frustrating but acceptance and support are ways to address it. As Sr. Bernadine Pachta related, “Not all people are at the same place. I think it’s grace. I think it’s something that God showed me somewhere along the line that this is our Earth.”

Embracing nonviolence goes far beyond side-stepping direct confrontations. It spills over into all interactions, all behaviors, and even language. In many situations, nonviolent communication can change negative dynamics into productive, mutually beneficial relationships.

Everyday language is riddled with violent imagery. I proudly showed off an article written about me and my project by my university. It was entitled, “Fighting the Good Fight.” I grimace to think of how many times I said something like, “That really struck me,” or times when I pressed an interviewee to talk about frustrations with those who were less environmentally aware. The most moving example of adopting the language of nonviolence was Sr. Jeanette Wasinger. When diagnosed with cancer, Sr. Jeanette declined to adopt the violent language of cancer: fighting cancer, killing cancer, etc. She had no intention of “fighting the battle” but rather chose to see her cancer as her “sacred guest” that would help her transition past this life into what lies beyond. She is one of the most peaceful souls I have ever met.

Taking it a step further than I was comfortable with at the time, several sisters explained to me that competition is a form of violence. Sure, there is a winner, and the winner is the best at what she does, but in any competition there is a loser. In most competitive situations the losers far outnumber the winners. Like many seeds that were planted during my time with the Sisters of St. Joseph, this one grew into a clear realization as I paid attention to the language used in sporting. The thing that crystallized it all for me was an image that was passed around social media after “our team *beat* their team.” After a high stakes game, one of the players was photographed sitting on the bench weeping. This exceptional athlete was devastated by the loss after doing his best and ultimately falling short. The caption read something like, “Keep crying, loser.” People loved it. How can we reconcile that sort of directed disrespect with Jesus’ call to love one another? Let’s just say that was a game changer for me.

After many years on the environmental scene, I was more than comfortable pointing fingers, bad vibing people who weren’t “doing enough” or who just didn’t “get it.” It is so easy to become self-righteous when you feel you are working for a good cause and even easier to be angry and nasty when you feel like others are hindering progress. Yet, is it effective activism to discount huge swaths of the population because they don’t see the problems as clearly as you do? Or, is it more effective to continue working alongside those folks, using positive reinforcement, and gradually bringing them along?

If the sisters taught me anything, it is that change takes time and we are all in this together. While it isn’t always easy to turn the other cheek and pick up the slack, nonviolent activism respects the dignity of all while working steadily towards the ultimate goal. As Sr. Janet Lander assured me:

“Part of living in community is seeing difference not as a problem, but as a richness. Each person doing her best in her own way is fine.” She later reflected, “the best counter to apathy is to – by your own example – spark a new flame. So, rather than grumble, it’s much more productive to just redouble your efforts.”

Amen, Sister.

[Rachel Myslivy, MA, conducted the Green Sisters in Kansas Oral History Project documenting the environmental activism of Catholic sisters in Kansas. She is involved in a number of Catholic and environmental organizations and runs a family farm.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/column/capital-e-earth/environment/pervasive-and-powerful-nonviolence-12861>

October 15, 2014

Churches Go Green by Shedding Fossil Fuel Holdings

New York Times

SAN FRANCISCO — In 2008, when the archbishop of the Church of Sweden convened a conference on the threats posed by [climate change](#), the church's investment managers took notice. The next year, they began removing fossil fuel companies from the church's financial portfolio — a process that was completed last month with the removal of several [natural gas](#) companies.

Climate change “is an important issue for the church and its members,” said Anders Thorendal, the chief investment officer of the Church of Sweden. It did not make sense, he added, to keep fossil fuel companies — whose products result in climate-warming emissions — in the church's portfolio.

The movement to end investments in fossil fuel companies began with universities, but religious institutions are joining as well. Just this month, the Anglican Diocese of Perth, Australia, announced plans to divest itself of holdings in fossil fuels, and the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand [said it would consider](#) doing the same.

The sums that many churches control can be modest: The Church of Sweden's central portfolio, for example, is about \$830 million, far less than the endowments of major universities. Over all, groups controlling more than \$50 billion in assets have pledged to divest themselves of investments in fossil fuels, according to [a study](#) last month by Arabella Advisors.

But churches can lend a powerful moral sway to the movement, said Marion Maddox, an expert in religion and politics at Macquarie University in Australia.

“The amount of money we're talking about isn't going to bankrupt any fossil fuel companies,” Dr. Maddox said. Divestment by the churches, however, “has the effect of getting people to stop and think, ‘Is this respectable to be involved with?’ ”

Religious institutions were in the vanguard of the movement to divest themselves of holdings in apartheid-riven South Africa a few decades ago, according to [a recent study of divestment](#) by Oxford academics. Now, climate change has come into the spotlight as an issue poised to affect

some of the world's poorest communities, and groups from all faiths have pushed for action. But it is youthful and idealistic students who have largely taken the lead in urging the removal of fossil fuel investments from endowments. Last week, the University of Glasgow said it had become the first British university to [announce plans for full divestment](#). Philanthropies and local governments have also joined the movement.

But many institutions, including churches, have been cautious. The Church of England, for example, debated the issue this year but has so far resisted pressure from activists to divest itself of investments in fossil fuels. The church is still reviewing the matter, and a new policy on climate change and investment is scheduled to be published next year. Edward Mason, the head of responsible investment for the church's commissioners, said in a statement that the Church of England continued to engage with companies "on matters such as their carbon emissions management, deployment of capital to fossil-fuel extraction and lobbying activities."

Michael Northcott, a professor of ethics at the University of Edinburgh's School of Divinity, [who has urged](#) the Church of England and other institutions to divest themselves of holdings in fossil fuels, said, "Churches in the main are not accustomed to standing apart from Western culture on big issues like where they put their money

The World Council of Churches, an umbrella group in Geneva, is one of the most significant religious bodies to divest so far, though it does not dictate the actions of its member churches. The Uniting Church in Australia, one of that country's largest Christian denominations, has announced divestment plans, as has the Anglican Church in New Zealand. In the United States, the United Church of Christ [said last year](#) that it would move toward fossil-fuel divestment.

So far, Christian churches seem to have embraced the divestment movement most strongly, though other religious groups are also concerned about climate change. Jewish groups tend to feel "conflicted" about divesting, said Jonathan Crane, a scholar of bioethics and Jewish thought at Emory University's Center for Ethics.

"Many of these Jewish organizations would certainly resonate with climate change concerns and take them seriously and think that actions should be done," he said. "But they would raise an eyebrow, have some anxieties or ambivalences, about the actual strategy of divestment," because of a perception that similar strategies can get used against Israel. (Some institutions have used a separate divestment movement to pressure Israel over its policies toward the [Palestinians](#).)

The Shalom Center, a Jewish group in Philadelphia that is active on environmental issues, [has embraced a concept](#) akin to fossil fuel divestment but calls it instead "move our money/protect our planet."

Smaller or independent religious groups may have an easier time divesting, according to experts. Mr. Thorendal, of the Church of Sweden, said that his church's modest size made it easier to find financial managers in tune with sustainability-oriented investing. The church ran an analysis of how past investments would have fared without fossil fuels and found that eliminating such companies left both annual and long-term returns about the same. "We didn't really see a large financial risk," Mr. Thorendal said.

The Church of Sweden got rid of coal and [oil](#) companies in its portfolio in 2009, and more recently decided to end its few investments in natural gas companies as well, as the environmental impacts of gas came under increasing scrutiny.

Mr. Thorendal emphasized that it is important not only to divest from fossil fuels, but to invest in companies whose work benefits the environment.

“Divesting is not really what’s driving us,” he said. “What’s driving us is to find the best solutions, the best companies.”

To that end, the Church of Sweden invests in several sustainability-oriented funds managed by Generation Investment Management, a firm co-founded by Al Gore, the climate change campaigner and former United States vice president. The church also [seeks out niche opportunities](#): Last year, for example, it began investing in a [microfinance](#) fund as well as another fund dedicated to sustainable agriculture that avoids deforestation. Finding such opportunities has gotten easier in recent years, Mr. Thorendal said.

Religious officials are closely watching a few large groups that would be especially influential if they chose to divest. A move by the Lutheran church in Germany would carry symbolic weight, Dr. Northcott said, because it is the largest national church in the European Union.

But the ultimate prize for anti-fossil-fuel campaigners would be the [Vatican](#), which is powerful both morally and financially. A “divest the Vatican” movement has sprung up.

Dr. Northcott rated the chances of Pope Francis’s “significantly shifting the Vatican line” as minimal, although the pope has often urged his followers in the Roman Catholic Church to care for creation.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/16/business/international/churches-go-green-by-shedding-holdings-of-carbon-emitters.html?emc=edit_tnt_20141015&nid=1099394&tntemail0=y&r=1

October 18, 2014

Evangelical Christian pastors frame environmentalism in religious terms

By Kelsey Dallas
Desert News National

For the past five years, Mitch Hescox has served as president and CEO of the [Evangelical Environmental Network](#). For 18 years before that, he served as a local church pastor. And for 14 years before that, he worked in America's coal industry.

Vocationally speaking, he's undergone quite a transformation from designing equipment to grind coal for use in power plants to his current role raising awareness of faith-based environmental

activism. But Hescoc is much more concerned with the parts of himself that have stayed the same.

Hescoc explained that the common thread throughout his life has been "following Jesus' commandment to care for the least of these" and sharing his faith with others. As his latest job title lets on, he currently lives out those principles by advocating for "creation care," or faith-centered efforts to care for the environment.

"I believe creation care is the greatest cause in the world today," he said. "And it's the easiest way to tell the story of God to new generations of young people."

Hescoc is among a growing number of evangelical Christian pastors who are making headway with their followers on the topic of environmental stewardship. A [new study](#) (paywall) examining the "Greening of Christianity" thesis among Americans states only evangelical Protestants showed significant growth in environmental concern from 1993 to 2010. Other Christians were relatively unfazed by reports of climate change and high-profile calls from within their denominations to go green.

The key to these counterintuitive results, explained Katharine Wilkinson, author of "[Between God and Green: How Evangelicals Are Cultivating a Middle Ground on Climate Change](#)" is that evangelical leaders like Hescoc have found a way to bring religious values into a conversation once dominated by secular, political claims. And in doing so, they've paved the way for other religious leaders to do the same.

"Most of the discourse around climate change is around science and economics and policy. It's not often cloaked in religious terms or even really in values terms," she said. "That, I think, is one of the things that evangelical leaders have done really well. They've reframed it."

Most Christians aren't getting greener

The "Greening of Christianity" study, co-authored by John Clements and Aaron McCright of Michigan State University and Chenyang Xiao of American University, used data from the 1993 and 2010 General Social Surveys to detail the faith community's ongoing struggle to get rank-and-file Christians involved in efforts to improve the environment.

By tracking respondents' reported awareness of environmental dangers, willingness to pay for "green" initiatives and private pro-environmental efforts, the researchers concluded there's been little change in Christian attitudes toward the environment over the last 20 years.

Among all Christian respondents, 44.4 percent reported being concerned by air pollution caused by cars in 2010, a 6.1 percent drop from 1993. Similarly, there was a 6.7 percent drop in willingness to pay higher prices to improve the environment and a 7.9 percent drop in willingness to pay higher taxes.

However, Christians did report higher levels of concern about the pesticides and chemicals used in farming (from 37.7 percent in 1993 to 51.7 percent in 2010), a stronger proclivity to buy

produce grown without chemicals (from 27 percent to 33.5 percent) and a willingness to cut back on driving a car (from 8.1 percent to 16.1 percent.)

The study's brightest spot for environmental activists was evangelical Protestants. Although the group still showed lower levels of concern than Catholics and other Protestants, evangelical opinions shifted the most from 1993 to 2010. The group showed statistically significant increases in four of the 10 pro-environmental categories.

Overall, the results were less positive than predicted, explained Clements, who now works at Central Michigan University, given that many denominational leaders have been actively engaged in environmental efforts since the early 1990s.

The study's main takeaway was that denomination-wide pro-environment proclamations do little to impact the lives of everyday Christians, Clements said. Instead, success comes from consistent discussions of the issue at the congregational level.

"If the environment is not already an important issue (for Christians) and they're not hearing about it from the pulpit," then high-profile decisions like divesting from fossil fuels will completely miss them, he said.

Finding faith in the movement

While working for the Tennessee Department of Environmental Conservation in the mid-2000s, Wilkinson witnessed firsthand the strained relationship between environmental activists and Christians.

"I was struck by how often the environmental movement just seemed to speak right past folks it ostensibly should have been trying to engage," she said. "That megachurch-, NASCAR-, country music-part of the world couldn't have been farther away from the minds of most environmental leaders on the secular side."

Further complicating the relationship was the movement's close association with liberal politics. Symbols of environmentalism like "riding bikes, local gardening and driving a Prius" were psychologically affiliated with the Democratic Party, Wilkinson explained. Al Gore's documentary, "[An Inconvenient Truth](#)," solidified that association.

Ministries like the Evangelical Environmental Network, however, gradually carved out a space for faith-based engagement with the issue over the past 21 years by invoking the teachings of Jesus Christ in their calls for Christians to be involved in environmental initiatives.

"Our job was to translate that it's not about Al Gore; it's about Jesus Christ. It's not about polar bears; it's about our children," Hescox said.

As the "Greening of Christianity" study illustrates, the shift didn't happen overnight. But growing concern for the environment among conservative evangelicals shows that it is possible to reimagine the role of religion in the environmental movement.

Stewardship over partisanship

In a 2010 study on religion and politics, [Pew Research Center reported](#) that few Americans credited their faith with influencing their stance on the environment.

"Nearly half (47 percent) say their clergy speak out on the environment, almost always to encourage environmental protection. But just 6 percent say their own views on the environment are shaped primarily by their religious beliefs," Pew reported.

To change that and to improve the results of a study like Clements' "Greening of Christianity," Christians need to be convinced that caring for the environment is part of living a faithful life, Hescoc said.

"What we teach congregations and pastors is that caring for God's creation is an act of discipleship. If the Earth belongs to God, we cannot have a complete relationship with God unless we care for what God takes care of," he said.

Hescoc's transformation into an "evangelical environmentalist" was inspired by his becoming aware through articles and conversations about possible links between environmental degradation and health disorders like breast cancer and asthma. Additionally, he said he was struck by how the issue enlivened young people and realized that he could lead people to a life in faith through their connection with the environmental movement.

Hescoc and other EEN representatives now travel across the country meeting with congregations to talk to them about small steps individuals can take to serve as stewards for the environment.

"It's about helping people understand that (the environment) is not a political issue. It's a biblical issue," he said. "We have a moral responsibility to deal with it as Christians."

One of Hescoc's favorite examples of a small step individual congregations can take is the "Light Up the World in the Name of the Light of the World" project, which encourages churches to switch to energy-efficient technologies and use the money they save on energy bills to fund renewable energy sources in the developing world.

Church members who don't consider themselves part of the environmental movement get excited about saving money and expanding mission work.

Taking action

Wilkinson believes that the strength of organizations like EEN is that its leaders don't just talk about getting involved with the environmental movement. They actually take action.

"Mindsets don't actually lead to behavior changes," she said. "It's beginning to engage in things that can actually change your mindset."

Wilkinson said local pastors have a crucial role to play as they can organize activities to help men and women understand their individual ability to make a difference. She said that growth of environmental concern in the evangelical community can be traced to small steps taken by individual Christians.

"If somebody can get you onto a bike, you might have a different perspective about that bike at the end of the ride," Wilkinson said.

Additionally, projects like a church-owned community garden can get people excited about evangelistic opportunities even if they aren't excited by the local food movement. It's easier to talk to someone about Christ when you're gardening next to them than approaching them at random, she said.

"I think when you can find these sort of win-win scenarios that let you take some action," you should, Wilkinson said.

Success comes when you convince people they can make a difference in a bigger movement, Hescoc said. "It's going to take all of us together to reach these goals of caring for the Earth."

Email: kdallas@deseretnews.com Twitter: @kelsey_dallas

<http://national.deseretnews.com/article/2560/evangelical-christian-pastors-frame-environmentalism-in-religious-terms.html>

October 21, 2014

Prayer movement launched for a just global climate agreement

Independent Catholic News

Christian organisations in the UK are coming together to launch a year of prayer and fasting for the climate at special services across the country on 1 November 2014. This initiative calls on Christians to pray and fast on the first day of every month to make a stand for climate justice. The coming year is a crucial time for faith communities to act in response to the climate crisis, as momentum builds towards a new international climate agreement to be signed in Paris in December 2015 to stop dangerous climate change.

In London, the main launch service – taking place at St John's Waterloo, at 11am on 1 November – is hosted by Christian charity Operation Noah with support from other members of the Faith for the Climate network, including A Rocha, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Christian Concern for One World, Christian Ecology Link, OurVoices, Hope for the Future and Shrinking the Footprint.

The main speaker, Revd Steve Chalke, Oasis Trust founder, will speak about the political and spiritual significance of prayer and fasting as a powerful platform for change. Responding to

climate change is one of the most pressing moral issues of our day and goes right to the heart of the Christian faith. Through coming together to pray and fast we bring our deepest hopes and fears before God.

Canon Giles Goddard, priest at St John's Waterloo and board member of Operation Noah said: "The need for change is urgent and everyone can help bring it about. This is an initiative about hope. Praying and fasting for the climate will inspire action and encourage people to think about what needs to happen. We are calling for justice for all those impacted by climate change now and in the future, and for an ambitious outcome at next year's climate talks in Paris. We hope people across the country will support the initiative and tell others about it."

Other services will be taking place across the UK, including Brighton, Coventry, Lancaster and Southwell. People will be encouraged to spread the movement far and wide by hosting monthly prayer and fasting events.

This prayer movement builds upon the 'Fast for the Climate' initiative begun at the 2013 UN climate talks by Yeb Sano, the Filipino delegate, in the wake of the devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan. Yeb has continued to fast on the first of every month, joined by people from all around the world.

Prayer resources and information about events can be found at:

www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk

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

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=25806>

October 23, 2014

Can Chinese Culture Save China's Environment?

Pulitzer Center

The Chinese government and people, confronted with colossal environmental challenges, are turning to cultural traditions that under Communism had long been suppressed.

In the midst of a worsening environmental crisis, with constant reports of contaminated soil and water and record levels of air pollution, China's government is appealing to traditional religions for help. The country needs to construct an "ecological civilization," officials say, and traditional culture has a key role to play.

The Communist Party's appeal for help comes at a time when millions of Chinese are returning to traditional faiths, and to temples and monasteries that were once banned. Only 40 years ago

China was convulsed by a cultural revolution that defaced or destroyed symbols of religious faith across the country.

When investigative journalist and environmental activist Liu Jianqiang let it be known that he was becoming a Tibetan Buddhist, his friend, filmmaker Shi Lihong, was shocked. Both of them are part of a generation born in the 1970s during the cultural revolution and raised as atheists. Jianqiang, the respected editor of the international online journal *chinadialogue* is known for his hard hitting stories. But now, he said, he's burning out and is looking for some spiritual support. Of all the possible choices, Tibetan Buddhism is one of the more complex and demanding branches of Buddhism. While anyone can decide on their own to be a Han Buddhist, only those who have a Tibetan lama for a teacher can become Tibetan Buddhists.

Sinologist Martin Palmer, the executive director of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, says the national trend toward religion is fueled by the desire for something more rewarding than a bigger salary and more consumer goods. Shi Lihong suspects that Liu Jianqiang has found something more than that. His conversion came after a year of traveling in the Tibetan plateau of China. Shi Lihong decided to travel there herself, with a film crew, to see if she could capture on camera what it is that inspired Jianqiang and others to take up ancient faiths such as Buddhism—and what it means for China's future.

<http://pulitzercenter.org/projects/asia-china-tibet-plateau-environment-ecology-green-buddhist>

October 28, 2014

International Worship Service for the Climate

The National Council of Churches in Denmark, Dan Church Aid, and the Cathedral for Copenhagen celebrated an International Worship Service for the Climate on October 28, 2014. The Worship Service took place to mark the release of the report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The service included greetings and prayers from:

- [The Vatican \(PDF\)](#)
- [Archbishop of Polynesia \(PDF\)](#)
- [Desmond Tutu preached the sermon \(PDF\)](#)
- [Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople \(PDF\)](#)

[Download the full liturgy here \(PDF\)](#)

<http://www.gronkirke.dk/index.php?id=1473>

October 29, 2014

Event in Brief: 'Journey of the Universe' Executive Producer Speaks, Film Screened

By Bill Cessato

Georgetown University School of Nursing & Health Studies

An executive producer of the Emmy Award-winning documentary “Journey of the Universe” spoke at Georgetown today as part of a film screening hosted by the School of Nursing & Health Studies and the university’s Environment Initiative.

Mary Evelyn Tucker, PhD, a historian of religions who is a senior lecturer and research scholar at [Yale University](#), says a purpose of the documentary and related book is to help identify a “flourishing future for all life on the planet.”

Tucker, who is pictured at right, co-wrote the documentary with host and narrator Brian Thomas Swimme, PhD, a professor at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco.

‘Flourish Together’

“*Journey* creates an integrating narrative of the development of the universe, Earth, and humans – one that inspires hope for a way in which Earth and its human civilizations can flourish together into the future,” Tucker notes in a press release about the film.

Laura Anderko, PhD, RN, the Robert and Kathleen Scanlon Chair in Values Based Health Care at NHS and a part of the Environment Initiative, introduced Tucker, who spoke in Lohrfink Auditorium.

Anderko says she was looking forward to hosting an event after learning about the film and “was doubly excited after watching it.”

Nursing alumna Sara Tucker (NHS’82), the executive producer’s sister-in-law and a member of the school’s Board of Advisors, helped organize this opportunity for Georgetown.

<http://nhs.georgetown.edu/news/mary-evelyn-tucker-journey-of-the-universe-event>

October 29, 2014

Desmond Tutu: Rejoice in opportunities for a cleaner planet

Archbishop leads church service in Copenhagen to mark the release of the UN’s IPCC science report

By Sophie Yeo

Responding to Climate Change (RTCC)

The opportunities to tackle climate change are cause for “hope and rejoicing”, says Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

The Nobel peace prize winner and retired Anglican bishop led a [service](#) at Copenhagen Cathedral on Tuesday to mark the release of the final instalment of the UN’s IPCC climate science report.

Speaking via video link, he told a congregation of scientists, dignitaries and politicians that God had provided new ways of generating electricity, which could replace the dirty fossil fuels mainly responsible for warming the planet.

“We know that if we turn to making all things new, we can get our energy needs from today’s energy resources, like the sun and the wind and ocean currents,” he said.

“Just imagine a new world without smog in the air, pollution and the noise of the internal combustion engine. Just imagine again experiencing fresh air, clean rivers and springs of water and mountains that have not had their tops taking of for coal.

“Just imagine the beautiful world that our hearts know is possible. God will enable us to bring it about if we follow God’s universal laws for all of life.”

Boycott

Tutu recommended a four-point plan to “nudge” the fossil fuel industry, which he said will “probably be reluctant to change.”

This included freezing fossil fuel exploration, making polluters pay, encourage governments to reject fossil fuel funding, and divesting from the industry.

He said South Africa, his home country, provided an example of what can happen when a tightly controlled bubble of wealth is burst open.

It is not the first time he has referenced the need for apartheid-style tactics to tackle climate change.

The archbishop has previously called for a [boycott of fossil fuels](#) in the same way countries divested from South Africa to pressure the country to stop racial segregation.

The UN’s science report has been released in instalments over the past year – the culmination of six years of voluntary work by 830 scientists.

The synthesis report, which will be released on 2 November after a week of negotiations by governments, brings the findings of the three major instalments together in a 100-page document.

The timing is crucial, with governments hoping to sign off a new deal to tackle climate change in December 2015 in Paris.

Rajendra Pachauri, the chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which produces the reports, said that it would provide a [“road map” to this agreement](#).

At the religious service in Copenhagen, prayers were also read by the Archbishop of Polynesia, one of the most climate-vulnerable regions of the planet, alongside a message from the Vatican.

Watch the video here:

<http://www.rtcc.org/2014/10/29/desmond-tutu-rejoice-in-opportunities-for-a-cleaner-planet/>

October 30, 2014

Faith community learning about climate change

By Arlene Edmonds
Philadelphia Tribune

Since the ramifications of climate change affects those in lower, working class or moderate income communities, one would think that more African Americans of faith would be at the discussion table. That is one of the goals of Jacqueline Patterson, director of the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program, when she addressed the “Climate Justice: Faith in Action” annual conference hosted by Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light. The event was hosted at the Summit Presbyterian Church, 6757 Greene St. on Oct. 26.

“Building the Communities in Which We Live: Advancing Systems Change from the Ground Up” was Patterson’s workshop theme. She discussed how coal burning in New Castle, Del. and flooding in Eastwick drive home the need for climate change policies that work. She gave an overview of how to encourage those wary of climate change conversations. Many, including communities of faith, see it as an elitist, far-left and older white agenda. Since economically challenged communities are hardest hit, this is something that needs to be addressed in Philadelphia’s local neighborhoods, according to Patterson.

“It is very clear that this is a message for people of color,” said Lou Bey of Mount Airy. “We need to address it because it affects us and it is going to affect our kids. Our communities are the targets of all this coal and other climate changes. It’s about making plans now.”

“I enjoyed the lecture because Jacqui Patterson brought her expertise from a faith based perspective,” said Katera Y. Moore, an executive committee member with the Philadelphia Council on American-Islam Relations. “We know that we cannot perpetuate the cycle that we are on now. When I was studying at the CUNY Grad Center, where I just earned my doctorate, I saw how environmental justice and climate change is so important.

“It’s good to have scholars and researchers discuss this, but we have to start on the ground. To make the changes necessary it can’t just come from our leaders speaking from the top down. That’s why I liked how she gave great concrete examples of how to talk to those on the ground in a way that makes it tangible for John Blow,” Moore said.

During a video presentation Patterson showed footage of actually going to rural communities in southern states like Mississippi. She and other organizers discussed sometimes complex environmental issues to local residents ranging from youth to seniors. The organizers explained the impact climate change was having on their utility bills, coastal erosion, and weather that often resulted in flooding.

Marguerite Spencer, a member of Summit, said that she would be talking to those in the African American faith community about what she heard.

“I liked how Ms. Paterson said it was not just an environmental issues but people of faith have a moral imperative to care for our environment. I think that will [resonate] more with this community that it’s not just about science, but a faith and moral issue,” Spencer said.

Karen Reeve of the Unitarian Universalist fellowship said that she found the presentation helpful. She readily admitted that she often receives “mixed success” in discussing ways her faith community could become part of the movement.

Barb Ballenger, who relocated to Mount Airy from State College last July, said that she has seen resistance to climate change organizing across the state. When she was volunteering with a Power & Light chapter in the State College area, many were wary of the issue, particularly in the faith community.

“Jacqui Patterson gave examples of reaching the years of people by maybe talking about the negative effects of heat or how asthma is increasing in Germantown and those type of examples. This showed us ways to raise the awareness about climate change in a gentle way,” Ballenger said.

http://www.phillytrib.com/article_8ceb1a9a-24d9-5eb3-82e9-6d2cea2b0427.html

November 2014

South African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI) Newsletter

<http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=c0fac3221d&e=a758405790>

November 2014

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=55&key=bc2fd044f8e70fc5653b2cffe7bfdb82&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

November 2014

Giving Thanks

By Laleh
Submitters Perspective

<http://www.masjiduntucson.org/publications/books/sp/2014/nov/page1.html>

November 2014

Eco-Congregation Scotland Newsletter

<http://us9.campaign-archive1.com/?u=a37b4ff760ffcc7fd1c3611b4&id=03601bfd0c&e=709fe41ec4>

November 2, 2014

Catholics and Climate Divestment: An Update

By Nathan Schneider
America – The National Catholic Review

We may be learning to see, and to value, our commons again.

In [my last print column for America](#), I wrote about the intersection between Catholic tradition and the notion of the commons—a kind of economy in which shared treasures are governed by those who depend on them, not by a state or market. Since then, I had the chance to attend “[Building the Collaborative Commons](#),” at the Omega Institute in New York’s Hudson Valley, where more than 500 people participated in the largest U.S. meeting on the commons in recent memory. This was a major event. I [wrote about its significance](#) for Al Jazeera America.

You guessed it; “Omega” is a reference to [the work](#) of the French Jesuit philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. The Omega Institute is not a Catholic organization—it was founded on the teachings of a Sufi meditation teacher—but like many Catholics its leaders appreciate the vital intersections of spirituality, a vibrant commons and environmental stewardship. The [Omega Center for Sustainable Living](#), for instance, is one of the “greenest” modern buildings in the

world. It treats the wastewater from throughout the Omega campus with just the plants and bacteria that live in its several cascading wetlands.

One of the highlights of the conference was a talk by Bill McKibben—once the author of [the first book on climate change](#), now [one of the leading climate activists in the world](#). (He also [reads his Bible](#).) Mr. McKibben talked about his efforts to organize campaigns among university students and religious communities across the country to pressure their institutions to divest from [the fossil fuel companies that are doing the most](#) to make the planet that we all hold in common less inhabitable. He celebrated this summer's divestment by the World Council of Churches (of which the Catholic Church is not a part), and it piqued my curiosity about how we Catholics are doing on that front. The progress is pretty lackluster, as it is for [colleges around the country](#). Here are some recent milestones:

- As a kind of spiritual divestment, the Archdiocese of Washington published a “[Lenten Caring for Creation Calendar](#),” which suggests simple ways of improving one's impact on the environment, from abstaining from meat to carpooling.
- Doug Demeo of GreenFaith made an eloquent case [in these pages](#) in April for Catholic universities to join the fossil-fuel divestment movement as an expression of their Catholic identity. “Catholic mission,” he argued, “requires that financial returns not foster or exacerbate climate change.” Mr. Demeo was also part of a GreenFaith webinar, “Catholic Perspectives on Divestment and Reinvestment.”
- Dayton University, a Marianist school in Ohio, [announced](#) that it would divest from fossil fuels on June 23. It was the first, and so far the only, Catholic institution of its kind to make such an announcement. President Daniel J. Curran said, “This action, which is a significant step in a long-term process, is consistent with Catholic social teachings, our Marianist values, and comprehensive campuswide sustainability initiatives.”
- Catholic campuses across the country have divestment campaigns underway. For instance, the four largest Jesuit colleges: [Georgetown](#), [Loyola Chicago](#), [Fordham](#), and [Boston College](#). These efforts have stirred up an important debate, as evidenced by [this critique of divestment](#) by a Loyola Chicago student.
- In September, Pax Christi USA [joined](#) a petition created by Mr. McKibben's organization, 350.org, calling on the Vatican to [divest from the fossil fuel industry](#).
- As part of an [address to the United Nations](#) on Sept. 23 calling for action on climate change, Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin said, “Vatican City State, though small, is undertaking significant efforts to reduce its consumption of fossil fuels, through diversification and energy efficiency projects.” He didn't mention the Vatican's investment portfolio.

Pope Francis, who is reportedly [working on an encyclical on the environment](#), follows his predecessor in speaking of environmental destruction as a sin. He [has evoked](#) the ancient logic of the commons when he said, “Creation is not a property, which we can rule over at will; or, even less, is the property of only a few: Creation is a gift, it is a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude.”

If we are called to be good stewards of what we cannot own, surely we should also be of our own wealth.

<http://americamagazine.org/content/all-things/catholics-and-climate-divestment-update>

November 3, 2014

China: Searching for Sacred Mountain

By Gary Marcuse and Shi Lihong
Pulitzer Center

The Tibetan monastery at Baiyu rests in the brilliant Nianbaoyuze mountain range, a sacred and nationally protected park. The Nianbaoyuze mountain range is the epitome of intersections between religion and environment and China—and a key element in *Searching for Sacred Mountain*, the video documentary by filmmakers Gary Marcuse and Shi Lihong that captures one of the most surprising contemporary trends in China.

The documentary tells the story of Liu Jianqiang, an investigative environmental journalist and Beijing editor of ChinaDialogue who has recently converted to Buddhism. The documentary includes footage of senior Chinese government officials declaring their commitment to an "ecological civilization" that draws on Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, and other Chinese cultural traditions as a means of addressing the country's growing environmental challenges. It also shows that leading Chinese academics are making the connection between such traditions and the protection of vulnerable lands and habitats.

An abridged version of Gary's film recently aired on [Religion and Ethics Weekly](#) and was featured in a [panel discussion](#) at the University of Chicago that was sponsored by the Pulitzer Center. Watch the full version at:

<http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/searching-sacred-mountain-religion-environment-gary-marcuse-shi-lihong>

November 10, 2014

Fossil Free SA

South African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI)

<http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=8af61503fe&e=d85b57a294>

November 11, 2014

A new vision of life after death

By Rachel Myslivy
Global Sisters Report

“If I know so little about my family four generations ago, the assumption follows that in four generations, they will know little about me. It changes the way you think about your life.”

On the first day of 2014, my dad made that comment in a casual discussion. I expect he was thinking more about wanting to be personally remembered by his descendants, but the comment resonated differently for me. Envisioning future generations dramatically reframes the question, “Is there life after death?” The answer is most definitively, “Yes.” There is life after we die, and our actions now impact all future life.

While ideas of life after death have changed over the years, the desire to make one’s mark on the world and be remembered has remained a constant. From the pyramids in Egypt to the plaques remembering fallen soldiers on main streets across America, we want to leave a legacy. We hope to make an impact beyond our short time on Earth, one that is forever remembered by those who follow.

We want them to remember us, but do *we remember them*? The idea may sound crazy; how can I remember someone who has not yet been born? In the same way that we expect that our great grandchildren will honor and respect our memory, we must recognize and reverence their potential. More important than monuments, we must leave a legacy that allows future generations to thrive and flourish upon Earth.

We should not ask, “When I die, how will I be remembered?” but rather, “What will life be like after I am gone? How are my current actions impacting the lives of those that live after my death?”

We are changing the face of Earth in many ways: mountaintop removal, acidification of the oceans, depletion of groundwater, air pollution, increased greenhouse gas emissions, trash mountains and garbage islands. Will future generations benefit from our current behaviors or are we slowly rendering the earth uninhabitable for human life? In a recently published interview, [Pope Francis](#) takes this theme one step further, asking: “Isn’t humanity committing suicide with this indiscriminate and tyrannical use of nature?”

Responsible use of natural resources will positively impact life for generations to come. As wise and reverent stewards of creation, we can honor and respect future generations in our daily lives by asking two simple questions: “What do I use?” and “What do I waste?” These questions can be applied to every single thing we do.

An easy first step is to think about future generations every time I use water because one thing is certain: They will need water. Ask yourself, “Do I use water wisely? Am I conscious of my daily water use?” [Water as a commodity](#) is quickly becoming an acceptable concept, even though water is essential to all life and, according to the United Nations, a [human right](#). Consider that [at least every minute one child dies from a water-related illness](#), largely due to the lack of access to clean water. I can’t save the world, but I can sure be more mindful of the way I use this precious

resource. Start first with simple conservation measures that will increase your awareness of water. Turn the water off while you wash your hands and brush your teeth. Fix leaky faucets. [Drop the bottled water habit](#). According to [Food and Water Watch](#):

Bottled water production in the United States used the energy equivalent of 32 and 54 million barrels of oil to produce and transport plastic water bottles in 2007 – enough to fuel about 1.5 million cars for a year. Rather than being recycled, about 75 percent of the empty plastic bottles end up in our landfills, lakes, streams and oceans, where they may never fully decompose.

This leads to the second question: What do I waste?

About 35 million tons of food ends up in landfills every year, accounting for 21 percent of the waste in landfills. According to a [recent report by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization](#), each year about one-third of the food produced for human consumption worldwide is wasted. Reducing the amount of food grown and wasted could [decrease the need to raise food production by 60 percent](#) in order to meet the 2050 population's demand. When this food rots in the landfills, it becomes a significant source of [methane](#) – a potent greenhouse gas with [21 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide](#). Shockingly, food waste is the [third largest emitter](#) of greenhouse gas emissions. Wasting food does not just take food from the mouths of the poor, it has lasting impacts on the future of life on Earth.

We will be forever remembered by the trash we leave behind. Does that sound extreme? Consider the questions, “What do I use?” and “What do I waste?” in a new context: Cities of trash like [La Chureca](#) and [Catuera, Paraguay](#), where families make a meager living digging through trash to find food and items for resale. We are changing the face of the Earth on land and sea with [trash mountains](#) and [garbage islands](#). If we don't change our habits, there will be a [new world floating in our oceans](#).

This is our reality.

Taking a critical look at what I use and what I waste can be overwhelming. I try to take it one step at a time. If I go to a buffet, am I taking more than I will eat? Am I throwing away items that can be reused or recycled? When I wash my hands, am I using water in a way that values the precious resource or am I simply letting the water run *without a second thought*? Our seemingly abundant natural resources are also finite. Are we being wise stewards of the resources that bless the Earth or are we taking more than we need and wasting more than we ought?

Looking back four generations, it is hard to imagine how my ancestors lived – without running water, raising most of their own food, building their homes and making all their clothes. It is even harder to imagine a conversation with my great-grandma about trash mountains and bottled water. Looking forward, I try to imagine what the world will look like for my great-granddaughter. Can I justify my behaviors now to this future innocent child? When I die, will the Earth remain a paradise or will I leave it a degraded and hellish place? We must find our connections to the past, evaluate our present choices and envision future generations. Let us prepare a way for our grandchildren that contains not just monuments to the past but investments in the future of all life on earth.

Is there life after death? Yes. And every single thing I do impacts life after my death.

[Rachel Myslivy, M.A., conducted the Green Sisters in Kansas Oral History Project documenting the environmental activism of Catholic sisters in Kansas. She is involved in a number of Catholic and environmental organizations and runs a family farm.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/environment/new-vision-life-after-death-14676>

November 12, 2014

Reimagining How the World is Fed

By Mark Batten
Wake Forest University School of Divinity

“Rejuvenating the earth should be the outcome of the food system.” Vandana Shiva made this call for awareness and action last week during her visit to Wake Forest University. On Tuesday, Nov. 4, Shiva lectured as a part of the “Make Every Bite Count” speaker series, organized by the university’s Office of Sustainability and co-sponsored by the School of Divinity’s Food, Faith, and Religious Leadership Initiative. On Wednesday, Nov. 5, Shiva led a community forum with students, faculty, and staff at the School of Divinity.

The “Make Every Bite Count” series featured other events including a panel discussion and film screening of *GMO OMG* with filmmaker Jeremy Seifert. The series aimed to investigate the role of agricultural biodiversity in our local, regional, and global food systems. The final keynote lecture by Shiva highlighted the challenges and opportunities of feeding the world with sustainable agriculture.

Shiva is the author of *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* and the founder of Navdanya, a national movement to protect the diversity and integrity of living resources – especially native seed – and to promote sustainable farming and fair trade. Her newest book, *Who Really Feeds the World?*, will be available next year.

During her lecture and in the community forum, Shiva consistently referred to the “patenting of life,” in relation to the patents held on seeds by industrial food producers. “Ecosystems produce food, not companies,” she said. “Destroying seeds destroys life. Saving seeds is an ethical duty.” The world is at a point where the diversity of creation needs to be reclaimed and valued for that diversity. Saving seeds is one way to preserve and continue the variety of life forms around us.

“We are not masters of the earth, we are a part of the earth family,” Shiva said during Tuesday’s lecture. “The process of commercial agriculture displaces diversity and people. There is a division in labor and knowledge.”

Shiva has concerns not only for the production methods of agriculture, but also the impact of food on health and wellbeing. “How we grow food is related to disease,” she said. She gave examples on how malnutrition occurs because food lacks essential minerals and the ways toxins from the chemicals used impact bodies in negative and life-threatening ways.

“Rejuvenating the earth should be the outcome of the food system.” This call echoed as Shiva gave glimpses of hope about the work that is being done and the work religious leaders are called to do on food issues. She recalled the abolition movements in the U.S. and India as a historical framework of resistance movements that changed social practices. She encouraged faith communities to plant “gardens of hope” as a beginning point of resistance. “Faith communities throughout the world already are responsible for feeding communities through soup kitchens and food pantries,” Shiva said. “Let’s link the feeding and outreach to the growing of food.”

Shiva’s call to action resounded with many. Fred Bahnson, director of the School of Divinity’s Food, Faith, and Religious Leadership Initiative, said it was encouraging to have her on campus. “She inspired us, challenged us, and made us laugh. To hear this global food leader talk about the importance of faith communities working to create food justice and ecological healing was especially encouraging, because it means we’re on the right track.”

Second-year divinity student Pia Diggs is interested in learning more about holistic health and how the food industry is impacting the food she consumes. “After hearing Shiva speak, I have an increased awareness to be more cognizant about my intake of food and a greater concern for how it is being produced,” she said. Diggs worked in a community health center last summer in a low-income area of Greensboro, NC that has been designated as a food desert. “What you eat effects your mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional states, so if you are not eating well-prepared food, it will directly affect your entire being.”

Links of Interest

[Focus on food in the forest](#) (WFU News Center)

[Make Every Bite Count Fall Speaker Series](#)

[Food, Faith, and Religious Leadership Initiative](#)

[Thrive: Wellbeing at Wake Forest University](#)

<http://divinity.wfu.edu/news/reimagining-how-the-world-is-fed/>

November 21, 2014

Yale conference continues 'Journey of the Universe'

By Jamie Manson
National Catholic Reporter

"What is the creativity that brought forth a trillion galaxies?"

It is a daunting question asked by evolutionary cosmologist Brian Swimme in the film "[Journey of the Universe](#)." His line echoed throughout the halls at Yale Divinity School, where hundreds gathered for the Nov. 7-9 conference "Living Cosmology: Christian Responses to 'Journey of the Universe.' "

The conference was a historic gathering of many of the finest theologians, ethicists and activists in North America, all of whom joined together to contemplate the ways in which the Christian tradition can open up more fully to a sense of the sacredness of the universe and the flourishing of the Earth community.

"We have invited these scholars and advocates with the fundamental hope that they will help us see how deeply we are connected to the epic story of evolution," said Mary Evelyn Tucker, a senior lecturer and research scholar at Yale University and one of the conference's organizers. Tucker and her husband, John Grim, co-direct the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale.

"We want to continue to connect the language of Christianity to cosmology," she said.

Judging from the response to the program, it is a connection many in the Christian community are eager to make. More than 400 people signed up for the conference, and it had a lengthy waiting list. Sessions were held in the school's chapel. Three overflow rooms were also set up with a live-stream of the proceedings.

There was much for the crowd to absorb: 11 different panels, each featuring three to four scholars and engaged in conversations on the theological understanding God's relationship to creation, the influence of scientist and Jesuit Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, ecofeminism, agriculture, water, racial justice, environmental ethics, eco-justice, and spirituality. Evening sessions were highlighted with musical programs and liturgies. All meals were vegetarian, and all cups, plates and utensils were compostable.

Each of these many activities orbited around one central figure: Passionist Fr. Thomas Berry, whose work on the universe story and the environmental crisis has deeply influenced generations of students, including Tucker and Grim. Berry, who died in 2009 at age 94, would have celebrated his 100th birthday on Nov. 9.

Throughout the conference, many panelists spoke of "the great work," a phrase Berry used to describe our need to work with nature's creativity. (It is also the title of [his 1999 book](#).) He believed that if we could see the cosmos as a symphony and Earth as a living planet, we would discover our own role in these unfolding processes. It was Berry's deepest hope that we were shifting out of the Cenozoic era and into what he called the "Eozoic" period; that is, a time when human beings would reclaim their creative orientation to our planet.

Berry described himself as a "geologist," or "a human being who emerged out of the eons of Earth's geological and biological evolution and was now reflecting on our world," Tucker and

Grim write in their introduction to the new book [*Thomas Berry: Selected Writings on the Earth Community*](#) (Orbis, 2014).

Born William Nathan Berry, he chose his religious name after St. Thomas Aquinas, whose belief that all beings participate in the being of God was deeply influential in Berry's early thought. Also influential later in his career was Teilhard de Chardin's grand vision of the role of human beings in cosmic evolution. Teilhard's belief in "dynamizing" human action for transformation inspired Berry's own hope that all human people would participate in the transformation of a healthy Earth community.

But Berry was also realistic about the growing degradation of Earth, and, in the 1970s, was one of the earliest thinkers to foresee the magnitude of destruction that would result from our unbridled consumption of Earth's resources.

The diversity of sessions at the conference was a testimony not only to the breadth of Berry's own great work, but to the ongoing evolution of his ideas.

Teilhard's legacy could be heard in the opening panel on Saturday morning, which featured, among others, John Haught and Franciscan Sr. Iliia Delio, two of the finest interpreters of Teilhard's thought in contemporary times. This was followed by a panel called "Views of the Divine," which considered the ways in which we might understand God's presence in all of creation.

Speaking out of the Greek Orthodox tradition, John Chryssavgis, a theologian and adviser to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I on environmental issues, reflected, "It has always been a source of great comfort to me that Orthodox spirituality retains a sacramental view of the world, proclaiming a world imbued by God and a God involved in the world -- a sacrament of communion." (Bartholomew has been nicknamed "the Green Patriarch" because of his efforts to protect the environment.)

"We should respond to nature with the same delicacy, sensitivity, and tenderness with which we respond to a person in a relationship," Chryssavgis continued, "and our failure to do so is the fundamental source of pollution."

Themes related to pollution and the scarcity of natural resources was the focus of Saturday afternoon, beginning with a panel called "Seeds, Soil and Food." Dominican Sr. Miriam MacGillis, who is often credited with bringing Berry's ideas to women religious decades ago, offered a powerful reflection on the sacredness of seeds, a topic that has become crucial as the integrity of seeds continues to be threatened by Monsanto, a leviathan-like agrochemical corporation. In 1980, MacGillis worked with Berry to found Genesis Farm, community-supported farm and eco-learning center in New Jersey.

Women religious were well represented throughout the weekend, with other members of the Dominicans and members of the Immaculate Heart of Mary community and the Sisters of Charity in the audience.

"Women religious have been key to this entire movement," Tucker said. "They have been some of our strongest allies from the beginning."

An entire panel was devoted to the looming water crisis throughout the world and the ethics of water rights.

"Water is a right-to-life issue," panelist Christiana Peppard said. "It would be very, very good if we were to associate the right to life with a human right of access to clean, fresh water and sufficient sanitation."

Both panels, Tucker believes, have ramifications for the church's sacramental life. "What does it mean to baptize with polluted water or to give Eucharist altered with GMOs?" she asked in an interview with *NCR* leading up to the conference.

A session on eco-justice concluded the day, with panelists detailing their faith-based ecological activism. Carl Anthony and Paloma Pavel spoke of their efforts to organize within religious communities, particularly urban communities of color.

"Historic moments of excessive abuse -- slave trade, colonization, genocide -- developed in tandem with humanity's unsustainable relationship to the environment," Anthony said. The movement to reconsider our relationship to the Earth also offers an "opportunity to reconfigure the legacy of racism and build just cities for everyone."

Themes related to justice pervaded many of Sunday's sessions, which saw panels on feminism, ethics, and jurisprudence. In one of the conference's most inventive moments, theologian Mary Hunt drew parallels between the life and work of Berry and feminist scholar Mary Daly, calling both "Catholic outliers who championed the cosmos."

Although they differed sharply in some ways, Hunt said, "Berry offered the outline of a story capable of communicating the historical scaffolding of the universe. Daly provided the early and strong foundations for ecofeminist religious thinking. Both did so with a commitment to Earth's survival and thriving that has become even more urgent after their natural deaths."

For the flourishing of the planet to become a reality once more, conference participants believe, both our social justice ethics and our legal theories must broaden to accommodate the needs of the planet's fragile eco-system.

"If social justice is not also creation justice, it will fail," ethicist Larry Rasmussen said. Three elements are necessary for this new vision of creation justice to take hold, he continued: "creation deemed sacred, God-talk worthy of the uncontained God, and a 'fearfully and wonderfully made' understanding of ourselves."

Rasmussen's theory found a rich application in a subsequent session on Earth jurisprudence featuring legal experts Patricia Siemen, Brian Brown and Paul Waldau, who suggested that our approach to legal theory and practice must be based on the needs of the universe, not on the insatiable desires of human beings.

Berry believed that the law was inadequate in its attempt to address the harms wrought by humans upon the Earth. He argued that "a new legal system was needed that would respect the Earth's evolutionary processes and inner dynamics," Siemen said.

"It is important to understand that prevailing U.S. laws provide very little protection for the integrity of the natural world," she continued.

True to Berry's own spirit, the conference concluded with afternoon sessions on cosmological spirituality and a final panel called "Visions for an Evolving Christianity," which featured speakers from eight different Christian denominations.

Tucker, who chaired the final session, said although the cosmos is vast and the conference's approach to ecological issues was complex, the goal of her and Grim's continuing work is simple: "The most important thing we can offer is to create a larger opportunity for everyone to participate in the flourishing of the Earth community."

Tucker said the stark realities of ecological devastation often leave people feeling hopeless, despairing and disempowered.

"With Teilhard's optimism and Berry's robust sense of life, we want to awaken hope and empowerment. We want people to have a sense that they are participating in the journey of the universe," she said.

Education, she believes, is crucial to inspiring and motivating people of faith, especially in the milieu of the science and religion debate, which is often fraught by divisiveness. "Journey of the Universe," which opened the conference, is the product of Tucker's 10 years of work with Swimme and Grim. The film is one component of a three-part multimedia project that includes a book from Yale University Press (also titled *Journey of the Universe*) and a two-DVD set of conversations with both scientists and ecological activists.

In addition to developing these educational tools, Tucker and Grim have devised strategies for educating faith-based communities. She and Grim have also created a Journey of the Universe website featuring articles and bibliographies for teaching. With the help of research associate Matthew Riley, they have [designed a curriculum for use in undergraduate and high school classrooms](#), learning centers, places of worship, and conferences that can be downloaded free of charge.

"We want people to have access to this material. We don't want them thinking that this was a one-time conference that took place here and that they are not a part of it," Tucker said. Eventually, the videos from the conference will also be made available online, and Orbis Books will publish the panelists' papers.

Those who do take the opportunity to listen to the meetings' proceedings will quickly find that it was an event unlike most academic conferences. In a time when arguments over creationism, climate change denial and the Keystone XL pipeline make headlines each week, the conference

opened up new, imaginative ways to find God and ourselves in the cosmos. Most importantly, it offered a clear mandate to all believers who claim justice is an essential part of their faith.

"Our whole point is that this is a sacred universe. Cosmology without ecology is empty," Tucker said. "Our future is at stake. Is there anything more important?"

Rarely these days is theology done so creatively and with such a sense of urgency.

Learn more at journeyoftheuniverse.org.

[Jamie L. Manson is NCR books editor. She received her Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, where she studied Catholic theology and sexual ethics. Her email address is jmanson@ncronline.org.]

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/grace-margins/yale-conference-continues-journey-universe>

November 21, 2014

Faith groups divided over God's role in climate change, natural disasters

By Michelle Boorstein
Washington Post

Americans largely concur that [God created the Earth](#). But when it comes to how he wants its environment treated, and how much he's willing to intercede — the agreement ends.

[A new poll released Friday](#) shows major differences between faith groups on topics including concern over climate change, whether natural disasters are a sign of biblical end times and how deeply connected they feel to nature.

White evangelicals are the most skeptical of climate change and the most likely to say recent natural disasters are a sign of "biblical end times." Hispanic Catholics are, by faith affiliation, the most concerned about climate change, along with religiously unaffiliated Americans and black Protestants.

The poll on religion and the environment was done by Public Religion Research Institute and the American Academy of Religion. The academy, the major U.S. academic group for those who study religion, hosts its annual meeting this week and for the first time picked the focus of climate.

The topic of God's involvement in the environment is complicated, and people's views can at times seem contradictory. For example, the PRRI poll shows that 62 percent of Americans responding think recent natural disasters are evidence of global climate change while 49 percent say such disasters are evidence of biblical end times.

Fifty-three percent of Americans say God would allow humans to destroy the Earth, compared with 39 percent who think God would not. Fifty-seven percent say God “gave humans the task of living responsibly with animals, plants and other resources, which are not just for human benefit,” while 35 percent say God gave humans all that “solely for their own benefit.”

Those numbers obviously suggest a very present God when it comes to the environment. However, in another place the poll asks respondents it labels “skeptics” — for their hesitance to believe the Earth is warming — to pick among a list of reasons for their disbelief. Only 2 percent said “God is in control,” while respondents were most likely to cite the weather they see themselves.

But the biggest predictor of someone’s views on climate and God’s role, said PRRI chief executive Robert Jones, is his or her partisan affiliation.

“There is a stronger correlation between partisanship here than among many religious variables,” Jones said. “If I didn’t tell you what the question is, and you just saw the data, you’d think I was talking about the midterm elections.”

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For example, the three most GOP-leaning affiliations — white Catholics, white evangelicals and white Mainliners — are clumped together as the least concerned with climate change. And that doesn’t change between older and younger people, Jones said.

Researchers for years have been seeing more explicit partisan divisions in the faith world — where and how people worship, what they believe.

Nearly two-thirds (66 percent) of Jewish Americans and approximately six in 10 Hispanic Catholics (61 percent) and religiously unaffiliated Americans (57 percent) are climate change “believers,” a term PRRI pollsters adopted.

Faith-based views on climate and climate change have been pretty steady since at least 2011, Jones said, adding that a lot of activism around the environment among younger evangelicals doesn’t seem to have made their views any different from those of older generations of evangelicals.

Laurie Zoloth, president of the academy, said she was concerned that so many Americans were skeptical about scientific research on climate change.

“While there is a growing consensus among scientists about the urgency of addressing climate change, this landmark survey shows that many in faith communities have not yet heard or understood that message,” she said.

Pollsters also created a “spiritual experiences index” made up of four enviro-spiritual benchmarks. More than half of Americans said they “feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe,” while 64 percent said they “feel a deep connection with nature and the Earth” every day or most days.

Generally, Protestants reported more spiritual experiences than Catholics, Jews and the unaffiliated. Forty percent of white and black evangelicals said they felt “a deep connection to nature and the earth” — much higher than most other faith groups.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2014/11/21/faith-groups-divided-over-gods-role-in-climate-change-natural-disasters/>

November 29, 2014

The Science of Sacred Mountain: An Extended Interview with Dr. Lü Zhi

By Shi Lihong and Gary Marcuse
Pulitzer Center

Buddhism's approach to the concept of protection is through an act of self-discipline. We've often wondered which would work best: laws which are based on punishment or economic incentives which are based on financial rewards. The Buddhist system is different. It comes from the heart of the people. - Dr. Lü Zhi

Dr. Lü Zhi is a professor of conservation biology at Peking University where she is also executive director of the interdisciplinary Center for Nature and Society. She is considered a world expert on the giant panda which she studied as part of her PhD in animal ecology and conservation at Peking University.

In 2007 Dr Lü founded the Shan Shui Conservation Center, an NGO focusing on developing community-based, grassroots solutions to conservation in western China. In addition to her role as chief scientist for Shan Shui, Lü Zhi has led programs for WWF and Conservation International. Her work has included field projects on the snow leopard, Przewalski's gazelle and Tibetan brown bear, along with the giant panda and other endangered species. An active participant at international conferences on conservation, Dr Lü has written and edited five books and dozens of articles, including a cover story in *National Geographic* about the giant panda and conservation in China.

Her research on the giant panda took her to the Tibetan region for the first time in the 1990s. What she found led to a deeper study of the Sacred Lakes and Mountains and a greater appreciation for the conservation practices of the Tibetan Buddhists. Excerpts from this conversation with film director Shi Lihong were included in the 20 minute video Searching for Sacred Mountain, co-directed by Gary Marcuse.

In this more complete transcript of the interview Dr. Lü describes her first visits to the Tibetan area and how that led to the research on sacred lakes and mountains that she and her students carried out and published in 2013. This interview was translated by Yang Yueqing and edited by Gary Marcuse. Links to Dr. Lü's research, available in English, are found at the end of this interview.

Finding Sacred Mountain

Dr. Lü Zhi : When I first visited the Tibetan region in the 1990s I was surprised by what I found. At that time there was a lot of logging going on, but in some areas the original forest was preserved. There were huge trees 600 and 700 years old. In some of these areas the animals were not afraid of people. I thought this was very strange; why were these areas preserved? I asked the local people how this happened and they said "Oh, this is our sacred mountain." But what did that mean? How could this be possible?

I asked local forestry officials about this and they said that they did try to cut some of these trees but the local people strongly opposed them. So the officials said they would cut other areas first. This delayed the logging past 1998 when China halted logging throughout the country. [Editors note: logging was halted in the wake of disastrous floods when it became clear that logging in the upper watersheds was increasing the speed of the runoff and the frequency and severity of the flooding especially on the Yangtze and Yellow rivers.]

So the concept of Sacred Mountain alone was enough to preserve the resources. It seemed like it had the power of a law. That was a very big shock to me. It was far more effective than the slogan that we came up with, as scientists, to persuade people to protect the pandas. At the time we promoted the idea that "to protect pandas is to protect humans." Compared to our efforts as scientists this belief in sacred mountains was far more powerful and effective. Later, when we were conducting a more careful investigation, I also noticed that Tibetan people never asked why we were trying to protect wild animals. For them it was obvious. Within their culture they already had this concept of non-killing, of not harming any life. To them, respecting all life and showing compassion was a good thing. These are part of their values.

That was very eye-opening to me because I had believed that for people to pursue profit or self-interest was a basic instinct and there was nothing wrong with saying "We want development, development and more development." At that time no one said development was wrong.

In economics there were many debates about this. We often heard it said that economic progress has distinct stages: at first, when people are poor, environmental protection would not be a concern. Only later, after we satisfied our own needs for food, clothing, shelter and heat would

we look after other things like environmental protection and make them part of our daily life. In the West, this was the path of development as well.

So according to our economists the general understanding came down to this: develop and pollute first, clean up after. That would be the path. In Tibetan areas, in fact what I saw was the opposite of our experience and the experience of Western countries because the Tibetans held different cultural values.

Today people are beginning to reflect on how much and what kind of development we should have. But in the 1990s, when China was starting to develop, people were very excited about it and if anyone tried to object to development it could be a very difficult for them. But even then in the Tibetan region people were very much in favor of protection because of their cultural values.

So the cultural values of Buddhism are a great comfort to a scholar of conservation. Even though the Tibetan people were not rich, they could still think of taking care of other creatures. This is a kind of altruistic behavior. While they are not wealthy, they can still take other living beings into account. Not just other people, other creatures. In my case this gave me fresh confidence in humanity. If they can do it there is hope that other people could do this as well, isn't there? I felt all the way to the bottom of my heart that finally I had found a way. I think if this is possible what we called 'sustainable development' or 'green development' or achieving harmony between humans and nature may also be possible. Maybe there is hope for mankind.

Exploring Sacred Mountain

That experience opened my eyes and broadened my vision. It was a very profound education for me. It made me realize that we really did not understand anything about the sacred mountain system and the values that support it. I was brought up as an atheist. In the environment of my upbringing religion had no influence. After growing up I studied science and I intuitively resisted the idea of religion.

So it was time to be modest and to learn more about Tibetan Buddhism. I have studied it for many years now and while I would not say that I am a Buddhist, I have learned to respect it. This is enough for me, I think. If there is enough respect between people, the world would be a lot more peaceful.

In order to better understand the sacred lakes and sacred mountains we studied the relationship between the sacred mountains and biodiversity conservation. We wanted to use a very scientific approach that would include quantitative research. I think this was the first time this research has been done anywhere in the world.

One of my graduate students, Shen Xiaoli, spent five or six years investigating more than 200 sacred mountains [in the Ganzi Prefecture in western Sichuan province]. She wanted to answer a series of questions: How does the system work? Is it still functioning? What percentage of sacred mountains are still functioning? What is the impact? What difference does it make? Who was

actively involved in protecting them? What is their relevance today? Could these efforts be incorporated into the institutional model of environmental protection?

Near the beginning of our research I also learned more about it from some local officials. I once went to Chamdo [just outside of Ganzi in the Tibetan Autonomous Region]. I asked the local director of the forestry bureau how many protected areas were in his district? He told me that they have more than 50 protected zones. I said I knew that the entire Tibetan Autonomous Region only had around a dozen protected areas [These Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserves were established in the headwaters of the Yellow, Yangtze and Mekong rivers starting around 2001].

So I asked the official how he could have 50 protected areas in his region? He said "there are more than 50 sacred mountains nearby so we contracted all of the mountains to the local people. We signed agreements to allow them to protect the mountains and therefore they all became protected areas." This was the chief of the state forestry bureau. He was in charge of a major department of the state government and he accepted this sacred mountain system.

So that was encouraging and we began to wonder about the possibilities. If Chamdo was able to do this, were other districts doing the same?

Collaborating with Monasteries

Gradually we discovered that a number of other local governments had also taken this approach. They were collaborating with the monasteries and the local people to enforce the protection. In one case a number of local lamas signed agreements with the local forestry bureau which gave the lamas responsibility for forest fire prevention.

In another case a number of temples signed formal protection agreements with the local forestry bureau and the local governments that gave the monasteries the authority to protect 13 holy mountains in their vicinity. So it was clear that some local governments had long been aware that the religious culture had played a very important role in the protection of the environment. Allowing them to take care of the protected areas was effective. These kinds of arrangements were not high profile but they do exist. This was encouraging.

The Science of Sacred Mountain

Having mapped a significant number of sacred mountains the research team then set out to test whether areas described as sacred were actively protected, and whether there were qualitative differences between sacred mountains and neighboring regions that were not described as sacred.

Lü Zhi: On closer examination, we found that the majority of sacred mountains were still functioning. Of course in some cases the system broke down but the majority were still working. In practice some areas of a sacred mountain are very strictly protected, very much like our scientific approach to protecting ecosystems. Around the mountain there is a core area where nothing was allowed to be touched. Around this was a broader area —usually the transition areas

between mountains — where killing was not allowed. No living beings should be harmed, these sort of rules. So their system was very similar to our ecological protection system.

At a deeper level, the belief in cause and effect in Buddhism is similar to the reasoning of ecology. Ecology is the study of relationships: i.e. the things you do today will have consequences tomorrow. This is central to ecological studies and to Buddhism. So I think there are a lot of similarities here. The difference is that science speaks with evidence and Buddhism speaks with philosophy.

On the social level, the rules associated with sacred mountains were supported by an educational system that advised people not to do anything against the rules. Hunting, for example, was completely prohibited. If someone did violate the rules they could be punished. One form of punishment involved baking animal-shaped pastries. If you killed an animal, you would have to take a wooden mold, press it into barley flour paste, and make ten thousand pastries in the shape of the animal. Each time you made one you would have to apologize by saying "I'm sorry, I made a mistake, I made the mistake of killing, and I won't ever do it again."

I thought if a person repeated that 10 thousand times maybe they would really be convinced. At least it would leave a deep impression. Another punishment included taking part in patrolling the mountains. In many places the temples and the local people collaborated on these patrols, especially during the Chinese Lunar New Year season when there a lot of people in the mountains.

In addition we compared the impact of the sacred mountains on biodiversity. Within the study area we examined areas where the traditional culture was still relatively strong and compared them with other places where there was more contact with the outside world and the traditional culture was slowly fading out. The difference in biological diversity was very obvious. Our bird survey demonstrated that in areas where the local cultural tradition is strong there is greater biodiversity and a greater abundance of wildlife. So the impact of the sacred mountain protection system was demonstrated scientifically.

Combining tradition and modern conservation: Hiring the Protectors

Our next step was to contact local government and to pass on our research and scientific evidence. We felt that due to language problems and other issues that this information may not be well understood and so we should encourage more communication between the local people and the authorities. And we could act as a bridge. We knew that the local governments were tasked with protecting the national nature reserves and the local people had already demonstrated their ability to protect. So how could we encourage more formal arrangements between local people and the government?

In some places we helped to arrange a formal collaboration. Our Shan Shui NGO, the local governments, the temples, and local people all came together to form a multi-party agreement. For example, in Ganzi Prefecture we initiated a cooperative protection agreement. According to the agreement the government authorized the local people to carry out the monitoring and protection in keeping with existing cultural practices. These kind of arrangement also

demonstrated that the formal system of government and institutions recognized, respected and permitted the traditional practice of protection conducted by the local people.

Sharing evidence of Green Tibetan Buddhism

The Shan Shui NGO also provided training for monks and local people in the use of video equipment to document their work, and the use of infrared cameras to monitor wildlife in remote valleys. The infrared cameras provided additional scientific evidence of the efficacy of the patrols and the importance of the protected areas in preserving biodiversity. The results of the monitoring could be shared with local communities and the outside world.

Lü Zhi: The original motivation of the local people to protect the sacred areas may stem from their culture because it is their sacred mountain, their hometown. Now they could also demonstrate scientifically that their efforts are effective. So this began a process of integration, bringing together science and tradition. This is what we had dreamed of, an ideal scenario.

We believe that if this can be more widely communicated then we would be able to convince more prominent figures from the society and the government to become interested in this collaborative protection process and support it. So our current task is to sum up the our experience and our findings and communicate them to the outside world.

In summary this is what we concluded: it's very clear that local people can manage the protected areas. They do a better job than our official protected zones, and they do it in a way that is more sustainable and more cost-effective than what we have been trying to do in the official nature reserves. If the state has funding for protection then these protectors should get the benefit. Protection can even become a way for the local people to make a living. This would support the local economy and protect the environment. The entire protection system would be well structured and supported.

Sacred Mountains in the Ganzi Prefecture in western Sichuan province. What the researchers found.

The survey by Dr Lu Zhi and her colleagues at Peking University focused on the sacred mountains in Ganzi Prefecture, a subdivision of Sichuan province. Historically this region, which is about the size of New York state (153,000 sq. km), would have been part of an ancient Tibetan empire.

From 2004 to 2007 The researchers visited 74 monasteries in six of the 18 counties that make up Ganzi Prefecture. They visited 1/3 of the monasteries in each county and documented 213 sacred mountains. 154 of these sacred areas were mapped using GIS.

Based on an average of three sacred mountains around each of the monasteries and a total of 500 monasteries in the prefecture they extrapolated a total of 1500 sacred mountains. The total land mass of these protected areas in Ganzi alone is in excess of 46,000 square kilometers. More than 30% of the prefecture is protected. If the protected areas were combined they would be larger than the total area of Vermont and New Hampshire combined.

Some of these sanctuaries maintained by Tibetan Buddhists may be as old as Buddhism .

Links

Dr. Lü Zhi et.al Research on Sacred Mountains

Shen, X., Z. Lu, S. Li, and N. Chen. 2012. Tibetan sacred sites: understanding the traditional management system and its role in modern conservation. [*Ecology and Society* 17\(2\): 13](#)
[Download PDF](#)

See also

[Ecological Conservation, Cultural Preservation, and a Bridge between](#): the Journey of Shanshui Conservation Center in the Sanjiangyuan Region, Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, China

Tibetan Monasteries Serve as a Critical Allies for Snow Leopards [Panthera](#)

Tibetan Sacred sites Conserve Old Growth Trees and Cover in the Eastern Himalayas
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Contact the producer or directors Face to Face Media www.facetofacemedia.ca
info@facetofacemedia.com

<http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/science-sacred-mountain-extended-interview-dr-l%C3%BC-zhi>

December 2014

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI) Newsletter

<http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=b07e00386b&e=d85b57a294>

December 2014

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=55&key=bc2fd044f8e70fc5653b2cffe7bfdb82&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

December 2014

The New Paradigm of Energy Ethics

By Erin Lothes
Global Energy Affairs

Since 1981, when the US Catholic Bishops published a letter on energy and ethical principles, the ecological, economic, and technological landscape for assessing renewable energy has undergone shifts of seismic proportion. The IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report states that society's dependence on fossil fuels is driving severe disruption of ecological systems worldwide and accelerating socio-political disruption. While the realities and possibilities of renewable energy remain hotly debated, the ethical imperative to eliminate the impacts of fossil fuels is clear.

In April 2014, Bishop Mario Toso of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, stressed that "in view of the realization of peace... it is necessary that energy be thought of, produced, distributed, and used, according to a new paradigm." This new paradigm is the necessity of assessing social cost in tandem with economic cost.

Climate change poses an ethical challenge to global society because it is a life issue. Catholic social teaching upholds the values of human dignity, human health, socio-economic stability, respect for ecosystem integrity, and sustainable development. Access to affordable energy for lower-income households and developing nations is critical, as poorer communities suffer most from climate change, and are least able to adapt or mitigate its effects. The rights of informed participation in energy choices and the personal and societal freedom to change current lifestyles are also key principles. These values complement national goals to create affordable, clean, and secure domestic energy for a competitive economy.

Affordable Renewable Energy "Revolutions"

Why start the discussion with renewable energy? Simply put, renewable energy is needed at an enormous scale. A recent study that examined multiple models of global energy systems concludes that the global energy supply must use 50 to 75% renewable energy by 2100 – in order to have a 70% chance of remaining below the two degrees Celsius temperature increase. But in the United States, renewable energy currently provides only about 10% of total energy produced in April 2014. Thus, haste in moving toward renewable energy is essential.

Ethical energy policies should support low-income households through efficiency measures that reduce household costs and greenhouse gas emissions. One proposed initiative offers vouchers and guaranteed loans for the purchase of efficient cars, appliances, and home renovations. Such initiatives can reduce energy bills by more than 20 percent. Zero-emission buildings also represent opportunities for sustainable development and job creation, as does infrastructure that supports walkable communities.

Industrial Capacity

Ensuring global income equity and meeting a 450 ppm emission target require greatly reducing the carbon intensity of global economic output. A report by the British Sustainability Council quantifies the reduction from 68 gCO₂/\$ in 2007 to 14 gCO₂/\$ in 2050. Creating such a shift to a low-carbon macroeconomics is a big challenge.

However, constructing a straw man argument for a 100% renewable energy baseload, and then concluding intermittencies make this impossible; this evades the opportunity to engage the present options for renewable energy supply. Maximum shifts to renewable energy for transport, heating, and electricity can be achieved, limiting fossil fuel use to its most necessary applications, and using the smart grids that are increasingly cost-effective.

A 2011 study concludes that “wind, water and solar (WWS) energy can be supplied reliably and economically to all energy-use sectors,” and that the barriers “to 100% WWS power worldwide are socio-political, not techno-economic.” Overcoming such socio-political barriers requires the political will and ethical resolve to insist upon the necessary R&D- the same resolve that created the Model T and the Manhattan Project.

Investing at the Necessary Scale

McCollum et al. calculate that creating sufficient renewable energy to remain below a two degree temperature increase requires investments of \$1.1 trillion annually. Current annual investments into renewable energy amount to \$200-250 billion globally. “In other words, a substantial ‘clean-energy investment gap’ of some \$800 billion/yr exists. Unless the gap is filled rather quickly, the two degrees Celsius target could potentially become out of reach.”

And according to economist and IPCC co-chair Ottmar Edenhofer, “If we lose another decade, it becomes extremely costly to achieve climate stabilization.”

Notably global fossil fuel investments in 2010 amounted to \$500 billion for extraction, fossil electricity generation, pipelines, refineries, and liquefied natural gas terminals and \$523 billion are spent on present-day subsidies for fossil energy and electricity worldwide, six times the subsidies for renewables. Redirecting these funds to meet the \$800 billion clean-energy investment gap is an economic, political, and ethical choice.

The costs of shifting to renewable energy are estimated at two to 6% of GDP. The Apollo Project cost 4% of GDP; digging London’s sewers after deadly cholera outbreaks took two% of GDP. Investing in a sustainable planet is at least as valid. And according to economist and IPCC co-chair Ottmar Edenhofer, “If we lose another decade, it becomes extremely costly to achieve climate stabilization.”

Given that global society must act now, some solutions may not be fast enough. The 50% climate advantage of natural gas over coal is unlikely to be achieved over the next few critical decades. Natural gas, which appears to be a “bridge” forward, may instead lay down a “gangplank” to a warm future. Nor is carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) immediately deployable within a

plan to reduce emissions by 2030. The current development of CCS risks perpetuating fossil fuel use if its research and development is restricted to coal plants or enhanced oil recovery, instead of clean technologies like air capture and fiber development.

Energy choices and investments must be assessed with the aim of creating an economically stable, equitable, peaceful, ecologically vibrant global society. Social cost must be included in honest energy calculations to protect human health and wellbeing. Participatory decision-making requires disclosure of subsidies and externality pricing, which is essential to register the impact of climate change upon those most vulnerable.

Because the energy infrastructure of the developed world is largely fully built-out, phase-out programs must be accelerated. But investments into transitional or “backup” technologies must be carefully evaluated lest they become permanent technologies. Given the long lifespan of energy infrastructure, the immediate investment can become the de facto energy system of the future.

Investments can be assessed using the just war principle of “violence as a last resort.” Translated to energy ethics, this suggests that all non-fossil fuel options must be exhausted before justifying fossil fuels. If “one of the biggest hurdles to overcome on the path to energy system transformation and the [two degrees Celsius] target will be to mobilize the necessary investment flows” – then society must view creating the necessary investments in renewable energy as a major ethical imperative.

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<http://globalenergyinitiative.org/insights/195-the-new-paradigm-of-energy-ethics.html>

December 2, 2014

A Landscape of Lived Religion in Nepal

By Chris Crews
State of Formation

This is the first in a multi-part series discussing sacred landscapes and religion in the Himalaya

I recently returned from a month of fieldwork and research in Humla, the northwestern district of Nepal bordering Tibet and India. I was there as part of a research initiative focused on the concept of sacred landscapes in the Himalaya, with special interest in the pilgrimage routes leading to Mount Kailash (*Kang Rinpoche* in Tibetan) and Lake Manasarovar. These two geographic features, located on the Tibetan Plateau northwest of Nepal, have served as the focal point for millions of religious pilgrims from a wide range of traditions for centuries. Both are considered sacred sites by Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and Bönpos, as well as many syncretic and animist traditions still thriving in the region.

Although I have been doing research on sacred landscapes for several years, this was my first time going to Nepal and walking some of these trans-Himalayan pilgrimage routes that have been used for generations by people within this region. Spending a month traversing this beautiful yet challenging landscape gave me a renewed appreciation for those religious devotees who commit to such an undertaking, as well as the people who have made this area their home. While I wasn't traveling intentionally as a religious practice, I nonetheless felt a powerful sense of purpose and awe as we climbed mountains, descended valleys and explored the landscape.

One of the most poignant observations for me was how deeply embedded religious symbolism and meaning is within the landscape, far more than I have ever felt in my travels in northern India or southern China. Some of this influence is a function of the Tibetan Buddhist culture of Humla and the Limi Valley area we were in. But even the more Hindu-dominated areas closer to the district capital of Simikot still had a certain sacredness that was distinct. While some of this has to do with the distinct rural mountain folk culture of western Nepal, even in the heart of the Kathmandu Valley and the capital there was a sense of this pervasive religious influence unlike anywhere I have traveled before.

Let me offer two simple examples of what I mean by this embedded everyday religion.

Western Nepal is very rugged, especially around the Karnali River and upper Limi Valley where we traveled. Our trip took us from a low of about 3,000 meters (about 10,000 feet) in Simikot to a height of 4,500 meters (about 15,000 feet) crossing over Nara La pass near the border town of Hilsa. We would have gone over 5,000 meters but an early snowfall made Nyalu La impassable. Every time you are nearing the summit of a steep uphill climb there is inevitably a stone cairn or fluttering assemblage of prayer flags intermingled with white and yellow silk *khata* (Tibetan prayer scarf) waiting to greet you--a sign you have finally reached the top of your climb for that particular section of the mountain.

These structures both greet the passing traveler and serve a specific religious purpose, at least in the context of local Buddhist and Bön practices. A string of horizontal flags, known as *Lung Ta* (wind horse), are placed at or near the top of the mountains, allowing them to interact constantly with the mountain winds, which are common and often quite strong. This interplay of earth and sky (flag and wind) then carries the blessings or *mantras* written on the cloth flags into the surrounding landscape, thereby acting as both religious symbol and purification tool simultaneously. All the beings (human and nonhuman alike) living below these flags thus benefit from the flags' power, even including travelers like us.

After the first several days of grueling up and down climbs, these stone and cloth assemblages became signs that lifted our weary spirits--not to mention our tired feet--as we made our way across the mountain landscape. But even more than that, they also became integrated into our everyday lives as we carried stones from the bottom of the valleys to the top of the mountain passes, adding our own small contribution to these religious constructions which watch over the landscape and its varied inhabitants. It felt almost as if the very land itself was urging us to take part in these grand rituals of purification and transformation the longer we spent time there.

The second example of this subtle but pervasive religious landscape came towards the end of our trip, after we had returned to Simikot. One of the last research projects our group was able to do was meet with a local *dhami* from the Khas ethnic community that is native to this part of Nepal. While I am still trying to understand the nuances of how *dhami* spiritual practices function in this area, in general *dhamis* act as spirit mediums or oracles, and on the surface are often seen as closer to the Hindu community. Although *dhami* are often referred to as “shamans” in popular writings, Himalayan religious scholars tend to distinguish the *dhami* from the *jhākri*, which may perform similar activities but are more often described as shamans.[1] The *dhami* acts as an oracle who is possessed or “mounted” by their patron spirit or deity, and the *dhami* then acts as a spokesperson for the spirit. A *jhākri* may actively seek out and interact with numerous spirit beings in other spiritual plains, such as the sky realm or the underworld, but are generally not described as being possessed by the spirits, but rather going into shamanic trances and travel to interact or battle with spirits.

Our three-hour interview with the local *dhami* was extremely wide ranging and included a day-by-day narration of the religious pilgrimage schedule that the *dhami* makes when visiting Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar from Simikot, which included numerous specific geographic sites and their associated rituals performed along the way. From these and other details it was clear that *dhamis* still play a critical role in many Himalayan communities within Nepal, a role which goes beyond simply being spiritual oracles. The *dhamis* function as quasi-political figures, and from what I gathered listening to the description of community activities in our interview, his work consists of equal parts political negotiation, conflict resolution, community social guidance and personal spiritual advising. It would not be an understatement to say that *dhami* (and *jhākri*) continue to play a critical role in many Himalayan communities in Nepal.

While these experiences may not be surprising for those familiar with mountain communities and traditions in the Himalaya, for me this trip was a breath of fresh air. It’s hard to describe the feeling of being enveloped within a deeply sacred mountain landscape, but I’m convinced that once you have experienced it, you will never see the world in quite the same way. I’ll talk more about what I mean in future posts expanding on this recent trip to Nepal.

Sources Cited:

1. cf: Hitchcock, John and Tex Jones (eds). *Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas*. (1976); Walter, Damian. "Among Spirits and Deities: Diverse Shamanisms in the Nepal Himalayas." *Cultural Survival Quarterly*. 27.2. (2003).

<http://www.stateofformation.org/2014/12/a-landscape-of-lived-religion-in-nepal/>

December 4, 2014

Church of England challenges BP and Shell over global warming

Planned shareholder resolution is a ‘vital opportunity to influence companies’ climate change strategy’, says investment chief

By Adam Vaughan
The Guardian

The Church of England has challenged BP and Shell, two of the world's biggest oil companies, to take responsibility for their carbon footprints and limit their contribution to global warming.

The church will submit a shareholder resolution calling on the energy companies, which are two of the top five investments in its £9bn investment fund, to take action to “adapt their businesses over the long term for a low carbon economy”.

The intervention comes as ministers from [nearly 200 countries prepare to meet next week in Lima, Peru](#), for UN climate talks to lay the draft text for a carbon-cutting deal next year, [and as the church itself comes under pressure to relinquish its investments in fossil fuels](#).

[Edward Mason, the head of responsible investment at the Church Commissioners for England, said in a blogpost](#) that, as shareholders, the church had a vital opportunity to influence companies' climate change strategy.

“We have chosen to file shareholder resolutions at BP and Shell because they have the biggest carbon footprints of all the companies listed on the London Stock Exchange, and they are yet to achieve A ratings (they are both rated B) [on the Carbon Disclosure Project's ranking].

“Of course oil and gas companies have a particular responsibility because the fuels they produce contribute to climate change when they are burned,” he wrote.

He said the resolutions were supportive, but would stretch the companies. “The idea is to give all of the shareholders of both companies the opportunity to signal that, like us, they want to see BP and Shell adapt their businesses over the long term for a low carbon economy. We want the companies to be sustainably profitable.”

The church has come under pressure from campaigners, including the high-profile US author and activist Bill McKibben, to divest from fossil fuels. It has about £101m invested in Shell and £91.9m in BP. McKibben told the Guardian last month that the CoE was dragging its heels on divestment, even though it has been [encouraged by the retired Anglican bishop Desmond Tutu](#).

“Their response so far has been to say that they'll study it until late 2015, which means they will have examined it for a period slightly longer than Jesus's public ministry. It's not exactly what Desmond Tutu had in mind,” [McKibben said](#).

In response to the church, a BP spokesman said: “We have had constructive discussions with CCLA [church fund managers] and are aware that they intend to file a resolution for our AGM in April 2015. We will carefully consider it and respond appropriately before the meeting.”

Shell said it was not commenting on the church's move, but [in an article in the Times last month](#), the company's CEO, Ben van Beurden, said that rising energy demand meant a “pragmatic” look

at climate change meant recognising the world would need oil and gas into the second half of this century and beyond.

He added: “As chief executive of a company that believes in the value of innovation, I also know that, collectively, we must give ourselves every chance of allowing technology to help [on climate change].

“Innovation is no silver bullet but, as we navigate what will be a decades-long transition away from a fossil fuels-dependent energy system, new technologies can play a crucial and transformative role. One example is CCS [carbon capture and storage] – capturing carbon dioxide from man-made sources such as power stations and storing it safely deep underground.”

The resolution to be submitted by the church calls for BP and Shell to “direct that routine annual reporting from 2016 includes further information about: ongoing operational emissions management; asset portfolio resilience to the International Energy Agency’s (IEA’s) scenarios; low-carbon energy research and development (R&D) and investment strategies; relevant strategic key performance indicators (KPIs) and executive incentives; and public policy positions relating to climate change.”

Shareholders will vote on the resolutions next spring.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/dec/04/church-of-england-challenges-bp-shell>

December 5, 2014

Gods and faith versus Coal in name of climate change

Religious leaders in Australia are taking on coal with polite letters and coal blockades and say they’re in it for the long haul in the name of climate change

By Graham Readfearn
The Guardian

IT’s probably the closest thing the coal industry will ever get to actually receiving the word of a god – or rather, a note from several gods as well as other various prophets, spiritual leaders and the like.

Last month religious leaders representing Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and a couple of Christian denominations published [an open letter](#) calling for world leaders to “commit to a rapid transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy” to avoid “climate-related disasters”.

Some of those religious leaders turned up at the Canberra offices of the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA), the peak lobbying group for the coal industry, to hand them the letter in person before holding a “multi-faith prayer vigil” outside.

For the purposes of a nice snappy headline, it’s sort of like a fight between Gods and coal (except Buddhists don’t really have gods... but if the Buddhists will forgive me?).

But the response hasn’t been limited to prayers and firm but polite letters. Some religious leaders have also been turning up at coal mining sites. There has been civil disobedience, an arrest and, it seems, there might be more to come.

The [Australian Religious Response to Climate Change](#) (ARRCC) is a “multi-faith” group that’s been helping organise this spiritual fight against coal.

The group’s open letter kicked off a bit of a back and forth. In response, the [MCA wrote its own letter](#).

The coal lobby said fossil fuels were going to lift millions of people out of poverty (a constant [mantra from the industry](#)), that coal plants weren’t as dirty as they used to be and that “the Australian energy production sector does not receive ‘fossil fuel’ subsidies”.

[ARCC wrote](#) back. There were some fundamental flaws in the coal lobbyists’ arguments over poverty. It was “simply not true” that fossil fuels didn’t get subsidies. The letter went on:

The fossil fuel industry has not demonstrated the required moral imagination and courage to set aside self-interest and join the wider community to address climate change for the sake of the common good. In fact it has steadfastly set itself against the direction of the tide and appears to be ignoring its responsibility for the well-being of the earth and its inhabitants.

Thea Ormerod, the chair of ARRCC, says the group has been working to encourage religious groups and churches to divest their money from fossil fuel firms.

She says while the coal industry claims it will be around for many decades, the religious group too is “in this for the long haul”.

The group’s members and associates have also started to engage in civil disobedience, centred on the [expansion of the Maules Creek coal mine in northern New South Wales](#). This misbehaviour continues a long tradition of faith groups getting involved in such acts, Ormerod says.

If anything, our conviction has been growing that the greatest damage Australia is doing to global climate systems is through our coal and gas exports.

That Australia continues with expansionary plans amounts to willful neglect of our collective moral responsibility. Thus, our resistance must continue. What is at stake is, firstly, the life chances of those in developing countries at the front line of climate impacts and secondly,

humanity's long-term survival. Other species with which we share this planet are also under threat.

While "laws should be respected" Ormerod, a practicing Catholic, says "there are circumstances in which individuals may decide, in good conscience, to peacefully disobey a legal authority".

In Australia, she says this legal authority was "aligned with forces of destruction". Options to shift to renewable sources of energy were being consistently downplayed.

All the world's religions have teachings about respecting the Earth, and about finding happiness in right relationships rather than material gain. We believe influential people in government and mining in Australia are taking our country in entirely the wrong direction.

Professor Colin Butler, of the University of Canberra's health faculty, was [arrested last month at the site of the Maules Creek mine. Chains were involved.](#)

Butler, a Buddhist and a contributor to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, was at the ARRCC-organised protest at the mine. He's due in court in January to face charges of trespass and an offence in relation to mining equipment. He told me:

Conventional academic actions - papers, talks at conferences, editing books etc - are not enough to deeply engage with a sufficient number of the Australian community. Civil disobedience is needed, just as it was for the suffragette movement or to drive the British from India.

My Buddhist belief was central. I took the bodhisattva vows almost 40 years ago, as a young man. That led to my decision to study medicine, then public health, to co-found our NGO [Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight](#) and now this. I see it as all linked. The bodhisattva vows are to try to use one's life to help others, irrespective of their religion, caste or wealth etc.

Amen, shanti, and all that.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/planet-oz/2014/dec/05/gods-and-faith-versus-coal-in-name-of-climate-change>

December 5, 2014

Setting Aside a Scholarly Get-Together, for the Planet's Sake

By Mark Oppenheimer
New York Times

SAN DIEGO — If the bioethicist Laurie Zoloth, the president of the [American Academy of](#)

[Religion](#), has her way, she'll be remembered as the woman who canceled her organization's conference, which every year attracts a city's worth of religion scholars.

Two weeks ago, at her organization's gathering, which is held jointly with the [Society for Biblical Literature](#) and this year drew 9,900 scholars, Dr. Zoloth used her presidential address to call on her colleagues to plan a sabbatical year, a year in which they would cancel their conference. In her vision, they would all refrain from flying across the country, saving money and carbon. It could be a year, Dr. Zoloth argued, in which they would sacrifice each other's company for the sake of the environment, and instead would turn toward their neighborhoods and hometowns.

"We could create an A.A.R. Sabbatical Year," she told the crowd in a ballroom at the San Diego Convention Center. "We could choose to not meet at a huge annual meeting in which we take over a city. Every year, each participant going to the meeting uses a quantum of carbon that is more than considerable. Air travel, staying in hotels, all of this creates a way of living on the earth that is carbon intensive. It could be otherwise."

And they could use the traditional days of the conference, always held the weekend before Thanksgiving, to offer talks to "the poor, in local high schools, community colleges, or the prison, the hospital, the military base, the church, mosque, synagogue or temple." They could work at planting an orchard, or a garden, or serving food to the poor. "What if we turned to our neighbor — the woman who cleans the toilets, the man who sweeps the sidewalks — and included them in the university to which we are responsible?"

The audacious suggestion was the centerpiece of this year's conference theme — fighting [climate change](#). In 2011, Dr. Zoloth, who teaches at Northwestern University, was elected vice president of the American Academy of Religion, the world's largest association of religion scholars, for the following year, 2012. Scholars work at a 40-years-in-the-desert pace, according to which the vice president becomes president-elect the next year, then ascends to the presidency a year later. So Dr. Zoloth had three years to plan her presidential year.

Almost immediately, she knew that she wanted to focus on [climate change](#). Because in her own field, bioethics, she frequently talks with scientists, she was aware that religion scholars were lagging in their attention to climate change.

"I decided it was the core moral issue of our time," Dr. Zoloth said on Nov. 22, the day before her big speech. "And I had one chance to really say I don't know the answer — we don't know the answer, and we're faced with this. The scientists on my campus are frantic about this science. Every scientific panel I went to was filled with incredibly anxious scientists." And they kept asking about her religion colleagues: What are you doing?

So as she planned ahead for the 2014 conference, she encouraged the program chairmen, who coordinate the hundreds of small panels that make up the main business of the conference, to seek out papers that dealt with the environment and climate change. She succeeded; in her estimate, nearly a third of this year's papers somehow discussed the environment, ecology or related issues, like animal rights.

So attendees could have heard Cynthia Bond, of Claremont Graduate University, in California, discuss “Strategic Essentialism as a Tactical Approach to an Ecofeminist Epistemology.” Or Steven Heine, of Florida International University, speak on “The Staying Power of the Zen Buddhist Oxherding Pictures.” Or Donna L. Seamone, of Acadia University, in Nova Scotia, deliver her paper “‘The Path Has a Mind of Its Own’: Eco-Agri-Pilgrimage to the Corn Maze Performance — an Exercise of Cross-Species Sociality.”

Not all of the presentations were so esoteric. In a riveting session, Robert P. Jones, of the Public Religion Research Institute, announced the findings of a new survey, conducted jointly with the American Academy of Religion, about how climate change attitudes vary by religious belief. Some of the findings were not surprising — for example, white evangelical Protestants are most resistant to the findings of climate science, and they are “much more likely to attribute the severity of recent natural disasters to the biblical ‘end times’ than to climate change.”

But other findings were unexpected. Hispanic Catholics were more likely to be “very concerned” about climate change (43 percent of them) than any other group profiled, including Jews, black Protestants or the unaffiliated. One scholar at the conference, Bernard Zaleha of the University of California, Santa Cruz, later offered a theory. “It may be because they still have relatives in the global south, where the effects of climate change are already being felt,” Mr. Zaleha said in an interview.

Dr. Zoloth didn’t win all the victories she sought. A vegetarian, she was unable to persuade her fellow organizers to keep the conference catering meat-free. When asked why others resisted, she shook her head and said, “I don’t know. They just couldn’t imagine it.”

But she has at least introduced to her fellow academy members, most of them not Jewish, the biblical concept of [shmita](#). That is the Jewish theological term for the year, out of every seven, when, in the words of Dr. Zoloth’s speech, “all agricultural work stops, the fields are left fallow, and every living creature, animal, and person can eat from the field and the vineyard and the wide open world, when the boundaries of ownership and possession are broken so that the poor can take what they need, when all debts are released.”

We are currently in a shmita year, as it happens. The next one is 2021. That’s the year, Dr. Zoloth hopes, when the organization she currently leads will cease its conferencing labors and stay home. Such an action would create problems, not least for graduate students who interview for jobs at the conference. But there’s always Skype — and besides, time is short.

“Of course it will be hard,” Dr. Zoloth told her audience, “and you might be thinking now how hard, how costly, how, as they say, inconvenient. But we have seven years to figure out the details, and you are a very, very clever group of scholars.”

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/06/us/setting-aside-a-scholarly-get-together-for-the-planets-sake.html?ref=earth&_r=0

December 6, 2014

Bishops in Peru issue call to combat climate change

AFP

Catholic bishops from around the world issued an urgent call Saturday for greater action to combat global warming and reduce "climate injustice."

Religious leaders of all faiths should work together "to work sustainable agreements to promote the care of our planet," the clergy members said in a statement issued by the Episcopal Conference of Peru in Lima.

"Climate change creates poverty and leads to an increase in injustice."

The bishops gathered here from Bangladesh, Brazil, France, Peru and South Africa on the margins of a United Nations meeting of envoys from some 200 countries that got underway Tuesday.

The UN representatives are here for two weeks of meetings to create the framework for a climate agreement to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

That global climate change accord -- final details of which are to be hammered out in Paris next year -- would go into effect by 2020.

A recent push by the Catholic Church to fight climate change has been driven by Pope Francis, nicknamed "the green Pope" because of his commitment to environmental concerns.

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/bishops-peru-issue-call-combat-climate-change-215329622.html#QbWcQ5M>

December 10, 2014

New chapter in Daoist ecology

Alliance of Religions and Conservation

In a visit to China last month ARC Secretary General Martin Palmer was impressed by recent progress made by Daoism in meeting the country's environmental challenges.

He was attending the 3rd International Forum of the Chinese Taoist Association in November, an event which drew together Daoists from China and beyond as well as representatives of the Chinese authorities and environmentalist. The Forum took place on Longhu Shan, the Dragon Tiger Mountain that is one of the religion's most sacred places.

Despite rain the opening ceremony was a spectacular display of music and dance and the lavishness of the performance was one sign of the increasing official approval of Daoism within the country.

“When we first met with Daoists in 1994 there was about 30 people in a freezing cold room inside a dilapidated temple,” Martin Palmer recalled. “How great that now it was an amazing presentation in front of a large crowd.”

New level of commitment

Palmer described how Daoism is now looking to a new level of commitment on environmental action when their initial eight-year plan comes to a close in 2017. Provisional thinking is already under way for drawing up a second plan, perhaps to be launched in two years time, that will continue the progress made to date.

“There is a real wish to go much deeper about this issue, and also to consolidate the partnership with the Chinese Government,” Martin Palmer said. “ARC’s role will be to take responsibility for bringing in outside environmental organisations like WWF and TNC (The Nature Conservancy - the world’s largest environmental charity) who want to work in China and want to work with religions.”

Wildlife protection

One priority area is the challenge to the illegal trade in animal parts carried out in the name of traditional Chinese medicine. The Daoists have agreed new levels of engagement on this issue, with their own Daoist Health Centres taking a special focus on enforcing the ban on using animal ingredients and increasingly promoting herbal remedies.

Further discussions on this pressing issue involving the CTA, the Chinese Government’s State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), ARC’s China office and environmental groups including Traffic are due to take place in early 2015.

Valley Foundation

Another cause for celebration has been the emergence of the Dutch NGO the Valley Foundation as the principal funding supporter for ARC’s work in China from September 2015.

Sadly ill-health prevented Valley Foundation CEO and long-time ARC partner Allerd Stikker from attending the Forum in China but he was represented by his grandson Alexander Mercer. Alexander read an address from Allerd to the assembly during the course of the event and also spoke of his own considerable interest in the values and ideas of Daoism as a young European - something that greatly impressed those gathered Daoists who heard him speak.

Useful links

[Daoism and Ecology](#)

[Sacred Mountains - Allerd Stikker's book about Daoism and the environment](#)

[Daoist Long Term Plan for the Environment](#)

<http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=751>

December 10, 2014

Global group of Catholic bishops call for end to fossil fuels

By Matt McGrath
BBC News

Catholic bishops from around the world are calling for an end to fossil fuel use and increased efforts to secure a global climate treaty.

Catholics, they say, should engage with the process leading to a proposed new deal to be signed in Paris next year.

The statement is the first time that senior church figures from every continent have issued such a call.

Negotiators in Lima are currently trying to advance the outline text of an agreement at UN-led talks.

With 1.2bn people worldwide calling themselves Catholic, the church has considerable potential to influence public debate on any issue.

On climate change, some bishops have previously called for rapid decarbonisation and argued for moves to protect the most vulnerable.

But this is first time that such a global collection of senior priests have made such a call.

In their statement, the bishops say they want a "deepening of the discourse at the COP20 in Lima, to ensure concrete decisions are taken at COP21 to overcome the climate challenge and to set us on new sustainable pathways".

Monsignor Salvador Piñeiro García-Calderón, Archbishop of Ayacucho, and president of the Peruvian Bishops' Conference, said: "We bishops from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe have engaged in intense dialogue on the issue of climate change, because we can see it's the poorest people who are impacted the most, despite the fact they've contributed the least to causing it.

"They're the ones who respect the planet, the Earth, the soil, the water and the rainforests.

"As the church, we see and feel an obligation for us to protect creation and to challenge the misuse of nature. We felt this joint statement had to come now because Lima is a milestone on the way to Paris, and Paris has to deliver a binding agreement."

The bishops argue that nations should aim to keep the rise in global temperatures below 1.5C.

This goes further than the current position of many negotiators who say that 2 degrees represents the threshold for dangerous climate change.

The bishops say this is necessary "in order to protect frontline communities suffering from the impacts of climate change, such as those in the Pacific Islands and in the coastal regions."

As well as calling for the phasing in of 100% renewable energy, there is a strong focus on finance for adaptation in the statement.

The Bishops say that solving the climate challenge with a new treaty will be a key step towards a new economic approach.

"In viewing objectively the destructive effects of a financial and economic order based on the primacy of the market and profit, which has failed to put the human being and the common good at the heart of the economy, one must recognise the systemic failures of this order and the need for a new financial and economic order."

Ministers from around the world have joined their negotiators in Peru in an effort to drive forward the talks process. While the atmosphere has been positive, little progress has been made.

Environmental activists are planning a large scale demonstration in the centre of Lima on Wednesday in an effort to increase pressure on negotiators.

US Secretary of State John Kerry arrives in Lima on Thursday, the first time a senior US politician has attended the talks since President Obama went to Copenhagen in 2009.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-30408022>

December 16, 2014

Preparing for the Storm: Anticipating and Countering the Likely Attacks on Pope Francis and His Environmental Encyclical

By Dan DiLeo
Millennial Journal

Over the past several weeks, Pope Francis has made explicit reference to the challenge of climate change with respect to [nutrition](#), [migration](#) and the [United Nations international treaty negotiations](#). Given that Francis' ecological encyclical is expected to be published in the next

several months, these remarks make it seem increasingly likely that the pope will explicitly address climate change in the document.

If this is in fact the case, many Catholics—indeed many people of faith and goodwill—have reason to be particularly excited as we move closer to 2015. On the other hand, and in light of some Catholics’ resistance to *Evangelii Gaudium*, it also means that the Church should prepare for criticisms of the document and/or the pope by Catholics who seem more committed to their respective political ideologies than to the fullness of Catholic Social Teaching. As such, and based on my [previously published](#) expectations of what will be in Francis’ encyclical, I offer the following list of likely objections and recommended refutations.

Objection 1: “I don’t have to listen to Pope Francis on climate change. Encyclicals do not necessarily teach infallible dogma and climate change is a matter of prudential judgment.”

Respondeo: Theologian [Richard Gaillardetz, Ph.D.](#) identifies four levels of authority in Catholic teaching, the lowest of which includes “concrete applications of Church teaching, prudential admonitions and Church discipline” (p. 125). To this level, Gaillardetz says that Catholics owe “conscientious obedience” whereby Church teaching “must be taken seriously” in the prudential formation of opinions and positions (pp. 125-126). This understanding is echoed by Catholic commentator [George Weigel](#), who says that an encyclical’s “analyses of particular political, economic, and social situations [...] merit respectful attention, as coming from the supreme earthly shepherd of the Church.” In other words, Catholics are called to deeply, prayerfully consider prudential papal judgments made in an encyclical—and not immediately dismiss them based on their incongruence with a priori sociopolitical/economic ideologies.

Objection 2: “Pope Francis’ attention to climate change is an unorthodox, radical break from his predecessors.”

Respondeo: Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI both accepted the reality of human-caused climate change and recognized it as a moral issue. In [1990](#), Pope John Paul II insisted that “*the ecological crisis is a moral issue*” (emphasis in original) and lamented that the “‘greenhouse effect’ [had then] reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs.” In [1999](#), John Paul bemoaned “the danger of serious damage to land and sea, and to the climate.” During his eight year pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI [repeatedly](#) called people of faith and goodwill to address human-caused climate change.

Objection 3: “The Church should stay out of issues that are not directly related to faith and morals.”

Respondeo: As noted above (response to objection 2), the Church, starting with Pope John Paul II, has explicitly recognized creation care as a matter of faith and morals. In particular, the Church explicitly and consistently recognizes climate change as a moral issue because the consequences of this challenge threaten key Catholic social commitments—especially to protect and defend human life and dignity, protect the poor and vulnerable, promote the common good, and care for creation.

Objection 4: “The Church should stay out of politics entirely—including politics debates over the environment.”

Respondeo: In his encyclical [Caritas in Veritate](#), Pope Benedict XVI explains, “The Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere” (no. 51). This builds on the Church’s firm teaching that Christian individuals *and* institutions have a moral obligation to participate in public life (summarized in the U.S. bishops’ [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#), nos. 9-16).

Objection 5: “It is inappropriate for Pope Francis to support an international climate treaty that would circumscribe American sovereignty.”

Respondeo: As the [Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#) explains, “*The Magisterium recognizes the importance of national sovereignty, understood above all as an expression of the freedom that must govern relations between States*” (no. 435, emphasis in original). However, the same paragraph goes on to insist that “*national sovereignty is not, however, absolute. Nations can freely renounce the exercise of some of their rights in view of a common goal, in the awareness that they form a ‘family of nations’ where mutual trust, support and respect must prevail*” (emphasis in original). When this is viewed alongside the Catholic Social Teaching principle of subsidiarity, which maintains that the common good must be protected with the *lowest possible but highest necessary* level of sociopolitical coordination ([Compendium](#), nos. 185-186), the failure of national policies to mitigate climate change makes international coordination necessary.

Objection 6: “Pope Francis’ criticism of neoliberal laissez-faire capitalism is a radical break from Church teaching on the subject.”

Respondeo: In critiquing free-market, neoliberal capitalism, Francis stands on the shoulders of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI ([2010 World Day of Peace Message](#), no. 7; [Caritas in Veritate](#), nos. 35-36), St. John Paul II ([Centesimus Annus](#), no. 42), and Pope Paul VI ([Populorum Progressio](#), no. 26), who have all insisted that neoliberal laissez-faire capitalism is inconsistent with Catholic Social Teaching.

Objection 6: “Pope Francis’ critique of capitalism and structural injustice makes him a Marxist.”

Respondeo: Pope Francis has [explicitly denounced](#) this objection (which was given after the publication of *Evangelii Gaudium*): “There is nothing in the Exhortation that cannot be found in the social Doctrine of the Church. I wasn’t speaking from a technical point of view, what I was trying to do was to give a picture of what is going on. The only specific quote I used was the one regarding the ‘trickle-down theories’ which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and social inclusiveness in the world. The promise was that when the glass was full, it would overflow, benefiting the poor. But what happens instead, is that when the glass is full, it magically gets bigger nothing ever comes out for the poor. This was the only reference to a specific theory. I was not, I repeat, speaking

from a technical point of view but according to the Church's social doctrine. This does not mean being a Marxist."

Objection 7: "Catholics cannot address climate change because doing so means supporting population control and compromising our commitment to protecting human life and dignity."

Respondeo: The USCCB-endorsed Catholic Climate Covenant has published a [page](#) which demonstrates that attention to climate change is not antithetical to Catholic magisterial teaching on human life and dignity. In light of the World Health Organization statistic that [climate change currently causes 150,000 annual deaths](#), many Catholics additionally [argue](#) that the mitigation of climate change in fact protects and promotes the Church's commitment to human life and dignity.

Conclusion

Despite these responses to likely objections, I'm sure that there will inevitably be a contingent of Catholics who remain fundamentally opposed to Francis' encyclical based on commitments to ideologies that collide with Catholic Social Teaching. Nevertheless, it seems prudent to anticipate the critiques that this group will likely level against the pope in order to make sure that a vocal minority does not take away from the encyclical that will likely be a groundbreaking moment for the Church—and hopefully the world.

<http://millennialjournal.com/2014/12/16/preparing-for-the-storm-anticipating-and-counteracting-the-likely-attacks-on-pope-francis-and-his-environmental-encyclical/>

December 17, 2014

Care for the Whole Creation: The World Council of Churches at COP20 in Lima

By Grace Ji-Sun Kim
Huffington Post

It felt like the world had descended upon Lima, Peru. Political leaders, scientists, activists, NGOs, world leaders and religious leaders gathered at the [COP20](#) (20th annual Conference of the Parties, sponsored by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)) in Lima to discuss climate change and sustainability.

Each group had a similar goal: to save the planet and work for social justice and human rights. There were many ways identified to reach this goal and each group had its own. In some cases, groups and government delegations had agendas, mostly motivated by financial issues. They sometimes used their influence to block issue or slow things down. But the overall goal is to contribute to saving the planet, achieving social justice and protect human rights.

COP20 sought to tackle one of the most important issues of our time: the human impact upon the environment that is contributing to climate change. It has not taken us [long](#) to come to the point where our way of life is leading us on the road to destruction of the earth.

At COP20, the spirit was high, the energy was strong, the agenda was long and the goal was clear. Many high profile meetings occurred with world leaders discussing global warming, carbon emissions, ice cap melting and working towards sustainability. There were also many side events which were presented by various organizations which are working towards climate justice.

United Nations [Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council](#) are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights. They presented a side event and showed how climate change is affecting the rights of vulnerable populations. Climate change already interdicts the rights to food, water and sanitation and the right to live in an environment adequate for health and well-being for too many of the world's people. The international community needs to respond to this challenge. A key item under discussion at COP20 in Lima was to have human rights language in the preamble of the text that was being negotiated as the statement of the gathering.

The World Council of Churches (WCC), in partnership with Religions for Peace, the Quaker United Nations Office, the Centre for International Environmental Law, Earthjustice and Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung held a side event, "Climate Change Threatening Human Rights: Challenges and Actions," rooted in the understanding that, for many faith communities, the climate change issue is a [human rights issue](#).

Dr. Guillermo Kerber, WCC Programme Executive for Care for Creation and Climate Justice stated:

"Climate change is an ethical issue. Those who are and will be suffering the most from the consequences of climate change are those who contributed the least to the causes of climate change. This is why it is a justice issue. For churches and other faith based organizations, this struggle for justice and rights is an inherent component of their mission to human beings and to the whole creation."

As religious leaders and members of religious organizations, we believe that God created this beautiful world. God gave us everything we need for our survival and flourishing. The weakest and the poorest are affected by the greedy lifestyle of high consumption lifestyles in the first world, especially in the United States. Due to our own human greed, we have gone the downward path of self-destruction. If we are to make any inroad into this human rights issue, we must tackle the issue of climate change immediately.

We have bought into the false notion that "nothing will run out." Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, director of [The Earth Institute](#), said we cannot keep believing the earth is a "supermarket." Such a view wrongly teaches us to not worry about resources, as if there will always be more, as if there were no limits. Many now believe that the threat of scarcity is false and that we will continue to have what we want, where we want it as long as we have the money to buy it. There is possibly no

better parable of this than the recent film, Noah, where the reason for the creator's doing an Ctl-Alt-Del on creation is because humans had exhausted all the natural resources. Ridley Scott took a bit of poetic license and posited that in that situation, the only way Noah could build his ark was to supply him with new forests, since all others had been cut down.

We need to wake up and understand that we cannot continue to live the way the people of the rich nations, and the rich people of the poorer nations, have come to accept and love. Liberation theology reminds us that we need to live with a "preferential option for the poor." That is we need to emphasize the physical welfare of the poor and powerless.

We need to reflect on our own lifestyle and the way we live, understand the impact our living has on the planet and on our brothers and sisters and consider how we need to change our ways.

As spiritual leaders we recognize that God created this bountiful earth. As recipients of God's blessings, we should not destroy the blessings we receive. We cannot waste the very earth that we depend on for life.

Adapting a low [carbon](#) lifestyle is a basic step that nations and individuals can take to live a more ethical and just life. As we seek to identify other steps, technology is our friend, not our enemy. It offers new sources of energy from the sun, as well as the means to use less paper.

Rich and poor, male and female, of every age and race and nation, we all live on the same planet. As we co-inhabit the world with each other, the [World Council of Churches](#) reminds us that we need to take care of the whole of creation, including the entire human family.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/grace-jisun-kim/care-for-the-whole-creati_b_6334298.html?utm_hp_ref=green

December 27, 2014

Pope Francis's edict on climate change will anger deniers and US churches

By John Vidal
The Guardian

Pontiff hopes to inspire action at next year's UN meeting in Paris in December after visits to Philippines and New York

He has been called the "superman pope", and it would be hard to deny that Pope Francis has had a good December. Cited by President Barack Obama as a key player in the thawing relations between the US and Cuba, the Argentinian pontiff followed that by lecturing his cardinals on the need to clean up Vatican politics. But can Francis achieve a feat that has so far eluded secular powers and inspire decisive action on climate change?

It looks as if he will give it a go. In 2015, the pope will issue a lengthy message on the subject to

the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, give an address to the UN general assembly and call a summit of the world's main religions.

The reason for such frenetic activity, says Bishop Marcelo Sorondo, chancellor of the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences, is the pope's wish to directly influence next year's crucial UN climate meeting in Paris, when countries will try to conclude 20 years of fraught negotiations with a universal commitment to reduce emissions.

"Our academics supported the pope's initiative to influence next year's crucial decisions," Sorondo told Cafod, the Catholic development agency, at a meeting in London. "The idea is to convene a meeting with leaders of the main religions to make all people aware of the state of our climate and the tragedy of social exclusion."

Following a visit in March to Tacloban, the Philippine city devastated in 2012 by typhoon Haiyan, the pope will publish a rare encyclical on climate change and human ecology. Urging all Catholics to take action on moral and scientific grounds, the document will be sent to the world's 5,000 Catholic bishops and 400,000 priests, who will distribute it to parishioners.

According to Vatican insiders, Francis will meet other faith leaders and lobby politicians at the general assembly in New York in September, when countries will sign up to new anti-poverty and environmental goals.

In recent months, the pope has argued for a radical new financial and economic system to avoid human inequality and ecological devastation. In October he told a meeting of Latin American and Asian landless peasants and other social movements: "An economic system centred on the god of money needs to plunder nature to sustain the frenetic rhythm of consumption that is inherent to it.

"The system continues unchanged, since what dominates are the dynamics of an economy and a finance that are lacking in ethics. It is no longer man who commands, but money. Cash commands.

"The monopolising of lands, deforestation, the appropriation of water, inadequate agro-toxics are some of the evils that tear man from the land of his birth. Climate change, the loss of biodiversity and deforestation are already showing their devastating effects in the great cataclysms we witness," he said.

In Lima last month, bishops from every continent expressed their frustration with the stalled climate talks and, for the first time, urged rich countries to act.

Sorondo, a fellow Argentinian who is known to be close to Pope Francis, said: "Just as humanity confronted revolutionary change in the 19th century at the time of industrialisation, today we have changed the natural environment so much. If current trends continue, the century will witness unprecedented climate change and destruction of the ecosystem with tragic consequences."

According to Neil Thorns, head of advocacy at Cafod, said: “The anticipation around Pope Francis’s forthcoming encyclical is unprecedented. We have seen thousands of our supporters commit to making sure their MPs know climate change is affecting the poorest communities.”

However, Francis’s environmental radicalism is likely to attract resistance from Vatican conservatives and in rightwing church circles, particularly in the US – where Catholic climate sceptics also include John Boehner, Republican leader of the House of Representatives and Rick Santorum, the former Republican presidential candidate.

Cardinal George Pell, a former archbishop of Sydney who has been placed in charge of the Vatican’s budget, is a climate change sceptic who has been criticised for claiming that global warming has ceased and that if carbon dioxide in the atmosphere were doubled, then “plants would love it”.

Dan Misleh, director of the Catholic climate covenant, said: “There will always be 5-10% of people who will take offence. They are very vocal and have political clout. This encyclical will threaten some people and bring joy to others. The arguments are around economics and science rather than morality.

“A papal encyclical is rare. It is among the highest levels of a pope’s authority. It will be 50 to 60 pages long; it’s a big deal. But there is a contingent of Catholics here who say he should not be getting involved in political issues, that he is outside his expertise.”

Francis will also be opposed by the powerful US evangelical movement, said Calvin Beisner, spokesman for the conservative Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation, which has declared the US environmental movement to be “un-biblical” and a false religion.

“The pope should back off,” he said. “The Catholic church is correct on the ethical principles but has been misled on the science. It follows that the policies the Vatican is promoting are incorrect. Our position reflects the views of millions of evangelical Christians in the US.”

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/27/pope-francis-edict-climate-change-us-rightwing>

December 29, 2014

Religious Studies Can Help Save the Planet

By Chris Crews
State of Formation

Recently UC Riverside Religious Studies professor Ivan Strenski [published a piece](#) on the [Religion Dispatches](#) blog with a provocative question: can religion professors save the planet? He was responding to the American Academy of Religion's (AAR) Annual Conference which took place last month in California, and in particular the much-discussed efforts of AAR President Laurie Zoloth to green the annual gathering of religious studies scholars. Strenski

asserted that “Zoloth’s proposal, and moreover, the ethos from which it emerges, tells us everything we need to know about the malaise poisoning the study of religion in the university.” In short, he argued that attempts like Zoloth's to get religious studies scholars to focus on environmental issues was not only misguided, but also absurd and wrong.

As someone writing and working at the intersection of religion and ecology, and an AAR presenter for the past several years, Strenski's comments struck me as more than a bit odd, and strangely out of tune with the larger field of ecological concerns in religious studies. While the sub-field of “religion and ecology” is relatively new, it draws upon a rich and much older tradition of past and contemporary scholars interested in questions of religion and ethics in relation to the Earth and the natural world. The existence of a Religion and Ecology Group as one of the regular AAR bodies is one testament to this, as are various organizations supporting the growing community of practitioners interested in these sorts of questions, among them the Forum on Religion and Ecology ([FORE](#)) at Yale, the Center for the Study of Science and Religion ([CSSR](#)) at Columbia, The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences ([CTNS](#)) at the Graduate Theological Union, and the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture ([ISSRNC](#)), based at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

While I think Strenski has raised some excellent questions, I also see several problems with his argument. Here I want to focus on one, the artificial division he makes between ecological issues and the study of religion. Some of the other problematic claims in his piece have been addressed in two excellent rebuttal pieces by [Evan Berry](#) and [James Miller](#), so I won't go into them here.

The central problem with the view advanced by Strenski is that it creates a false separation between religion scholars and the larger world in which they operate, and in which their texts and their communities of practice are embedded. In other words, it attempts to disconnect religious studies from reality, in all its messy manifestations, by suggesting that the study of religion has no real relevance to ecological issues. “Aside from volunteering religious studies students for enrollment in basic science courses, or organizing campus progressive political clubs to work harder to elect “green” candidates to public office, perhaps asking a religious studies professor to do something about climate change is absurd, or at the very least, peripheral.”

In one swift move, the entire field of religious studies appears to have been magically whisked off planet Earth and placed in a magical realm where ecological realities are irrelevant at best, or totally absent at worst.

There is an implicit assumption in this argument that unless bodies like the AAR generate empirical social science research which demonstrates religion's relevance to environmental issues while simultaneously achieving measurable policy impacts to environmental issues such as climate change, then such efforts are basically a waste. To bolster this claim, Strenski offers several examples.

First, he argues the Society of the Scientific Study of Religion ([SSRC](#)) produces better research than the AAR, so the AAR should just bow out gracefully and leave the real religious studies work to empirical social scientists (who, in this story, apparently don't attend AAR meetings). Secondly, he suggests theologians and humanities scholars can't offer “the kind of significant

results obtained by social scientists”, and therefore they would be better served sticking to whatever it is they do best (systematic theology and textual analysis?). Third, playing off the *New York Times* column [by Mark Oppenheimer](#), he continues the trend of cherry picking seemingly obscure paper titles as “proof“ the AAR may be able to produce papers which are interesting “in their respective areas, but not likely to halt the shrinking of polar ice caps.”

By this standard, all religious studies scholars would need to become empirical social scientists with climate policy victories under their belt in order to qualify for entry into the scholarly circle imagined here. If we apply this same logic to the SSRC, one might equally wonder how many of their presenters have been able to “halt the shrinking of polar ice caps” with papers such as: “The Earth is the Lord’s: Religious Practice and the Environment” or “Saving the Creation Revisited: Three Decades of U.S. Religious Environmental Activism.” The standard seems just as arbitrary when applied in reverse. Why not see value in all of these, no matter their focus, since they help us better understand how people make sense of the natural world through everyday religious practices?

For the sake of the future relevance of religious studies, we should be wary of such claims, especially if the conclusion asks us to ignore climate change because it's not a matter for theologians or humanities scholars, as if they were somehow exempt from worrying about such Earthly matters. If anything, I would suggest Strenski's argument bolsters the case for why we need more religious studies scholars thinking about the state of the Earth, not less.

Can religion professors save the planet? The short answer is no, not alone. But as part of a larger community, yes.

<http://www.stateofformation.org/2014/12/religious-studies-can-help-save-the-planet/>

December 30, 2014

What Can a Popular Pope Do About Climate Change?

The pontiff plans to issue a rare and controversial plea for Catholics to consider the environment. Recent polls show his message just might resonate.

By Nicholas St. Fleur
The Atlantic

Pope Francis has ambitious environmental plans for 2015. Come March, he will deliver a 50 to 60-page edict urging his 1.2 billion Catholic followers to take action against climate change. The Pontiff will make his announcement during his visit to the Philippine city of Tacloban, which was ravaged by typhoon Haiyan, which killed thousands in 2013.

But within his global congregation, many conservative Catholics are expected to oppose the pope’s environmental views.

The message comes months in advance of the next United Nations climate meeting, which is slated to begin November 2015 in Paris. The pope's lead scientific adviser Bishop Marcelo Sorondo, said that the pope's message to his bishops, called an encyclical, is supposed to influence world leaders as they make their final recommendations after 20 years of negotiating how to reduce global carbon emissions, [The Guardian](#) reported. "The idea is to convene a meeting with leaders of the main religions to make all people aware of the state of our climate," Sorondo [said](#) to Cafod, the Catholic development agency, of the pope's plans.

Francis has [previously pointed](#) to the environment as being "one of the greatest challenges of our time," and he says that Catholics have a moral and scientific obligation to protect it. But the move to publish an encyclical goes beyond offering a soundbite. "A papal encyclical is rare. It is among the highest levels of a pope's authority," Dan Misleh, director of the Catholic climate covenant, said to *The Guardian*. The pope will distribute the lengthy document to 5,000 Catholic bishops and 400,000 priests, who will then share the message with their congregations in churches across the world.

In the United States, where climate change is a controversial topic, the majority of Catholics agree that the Earth is getting warmer, about a third of that group did not believe that the change is due to human activity, according to a 2012 survey by the [Public Religion Research Institute](#). The same poll found that about 82 percent of Republicans doubt that humans cause climate change. Among the climate deniers include some influential Republicans like House Speaker John Boehner.

Pope Francis also faces fierce [opposition from U.S. evangelicals](#). According to the Public Religion Research Institute, 69 percent of evangelicals do not believe in anthropogenic climate change, and many vehemently oppose its existence. Calvin Beisner, the spokesman for the [conservative Cornwall Alliance](#), believes that the idea of human-caused climate change is "un-biblical." "The pope should back off," he said to *The Guardian*. "The Catholic church is correct on the ethical principles but has been misled on the science."

Globally only 11 percent of people see the pope unfavorably, and 60 percent approve of him, according to a 2014 poll by the [Pew Research Center](#). Pope Francis is overwhelmingly accepted by heavily Catholic countries: 84 in percent Europe; 78 percent in the U.S., and 72 percent in Latin America. Now, with the pope's environmental encyclical forthcoming, and his global support at astronomical levels, it's still uncertain how much influence his environmental push will have with the most devout deniers of climate change.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/12/what-can-a-popular-pope-do-about-climate-change/384119/>

December 31, 2014

Tracing the Roots of Pope Francis's Climate Plans for 2015

By Andrew C. Revkin
Dot Earth
New York Times

One of the highlights of my year, perhaps my career, was being able to participate in “[Sustainable Humanity, Sustainable Nature: Our Responsibility](#),” a four-day Vatican workshop aimed at shaping strategies for human advancement that are attuned to the planet’s limits, organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Academy of Social Sciences last May.

Now there are signs that [the themes and conclusions developed in those sessions](#) are helping to shape Pope Francis’s planned push for serious international commitments in 2015 to curb greenhouse gases and gird communities, particularly the poorest, against climate-related hazards.

A first step will come in less than three weeks, when, during his visit to the Philippines, [the pope is scheduled to have lunch with some survivors](#) of the [typhoon that devastated Tacloban in 2012](#). The scope of the human calamity there was [as much a result of deep poverty and poorly governed urban growth](#) as the ferocity of Typhoon Haiyan.

The social and environmental roots of that disaster provide just the context the Vatican needs to reinforce its case that sustainable human progress will come as much through attacking poverty and fostering fairness as boosting environmental protection.

Those twin themes resonated throughout the Vatican meeting and have built since then, particularly in a speech delivered in London on Nov. 7 by [Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo](#), who, as chancellor of both pontifical academies, was the chief organizer of the Vatican sustainability workshop.

That speech sketches out much of the pope’s plans on climate change for the coming year. (You probably saw John Vidal’s [article on the pope’s climate plans in the Guardian](#) last Saturday, or the heaps of [coverage that followed](#), but if you dig in a bit, you’ll see that nearly every point in the story came from Sorondo’s lecture.)

In the speech, Sorondo carefully placed Francis’s steps in the broader context of Vatican actions going back to Pope Paul VI in 1975. Here are some excerpts, with a link to the full prepared text:

The basics:

Today solid scientific evidence exists that global climate is changing and that human activity based on the use of fossil materials contributes decisively to this trend. Coupled with an economy based on profit and on the games finance plays in order to profit from money itself, without a clear orientation to the production of goods, this leads to social exclusion and the new forms of slavery such as forced labour, prostitution, organ trafficking, and the use of drugs as a method of corruption. Therefore, a program in the light of the Populorum progressio and Pope Montini’s further interpretations must include climate stabilization, the sustainable development

of the natural environment and social inclusion focused on the centrality of the human being and the common good.

On the obligations that attend the Anthropocene:

[J]ust as humanity confronted “revolutionary change” (Rerum Novarum) in the 19th century at the time of Industrialization, today we have changed the natural environment so much that scientists, using a word coined by our Academy, tend to define our era as the Anthropocene, that is to say, a period of time in which human action is having a decisive impact on the planet due to the use of fossil fuels. If current trends continue, this century will witness unprecedented climate change and the destruction of the ecosystem, with tragic consequences for us all.

Human action that doesn't respect nature has a boomerang effect on human beings, creating inequality and increasing what Pope Francis has defined as “globalisation of indifference” and “economics of exclusion” (Evangelii Gaudium), which endanger solidarity and present and future generations.

On the world's wealth and energy gaps:

Advances in measured productivity in all sectors – agriculture, industry and services - enable us to imagine an end to poverty, shared prosperity, and a further increase in life expectancy. However, unjust social structures (Evangelii Gaudium) have become an obstacle to the appropriate and sustainable organization of production and to the equitable distribution of its fruits, which are both necessary to achieve those objectives....

For example, 50 percent of the available energy is used by less than a billion people, whereas its negative impacts on the environment affect three billion people who do not have access to it. These three billion people, in fact, have so little access to modern energy that they are forced to cook, heat and light their homes using methods harmful to their health.

A warning, but also “a message of hope and joy”:

Today we need to establish a mutually beneficial relationship: the economy needs to be imbued with true values, and respect for God's creation should promote human dignity and well being.

On these issues, all religions and all people of good will can agree. Today's young people will embrace them to create a better world. The message of the Pontifical Academies is an urgent warning because the dangers of the Anthropocene are real and the injustice of the globalization of indifference is a serious issue. Yet, our message is also one of hope and joy. This is exactly what the Blessed Pope Paul VI wanted to achieve with his project of the civilization of love: a healthier, safer, fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable world is within our reach. The believers among us ask the Lord to give us our daily bread as food for the body and soul.

The papal game plan, including a possible encyclical and a meeting of all faiths this year:

Following the lead of the great recent Popes, especially Paul VI, Pope Francis has a unique role as a religious leader and moral guidance to protect, preserve, sustainably develop the natural environment and achieve that social inclusion that can no longer be postponed. The problem of climate change has become a major social and moral problem, and mentalities can only be changed on moral and religious grounds.

Therefore, our Academics supported the Pope's initiative to publish an Encyclical or another such important document on climate and social inclusion to influence next year's crucial decisions.

In fact, the idea is to convene a meeting with the religious leaders of the main religions to make all people aware of the state of our climate and the tragedy of social exclusion starting from the biblical message that man is the steward of nature and of its environmental and human development according to its potential and not against it, as Paul IV intended.

Thus, the prophetic message of Paul VI continues to be valid even in this new era that humanity is beginning. It is connected to the programmatic expression that he used at the end of the 1975 Jubilee Year, when he urged everyone to promote "the civilization of love" as its successful culmination. In terms of public and social life, and relationship with nature, this civilization of love is the coronation of the period of grace and good will of the Second Vatican Council, or rather the beginning of a new era of grace and good will, which history unfolds before us.

I encourage you to read [the full speech on the website of The Tablet](#), a weekly Catholic magazine.

I smiled when I read that last section about the prospect of a "civilization of love." The other central theme permeating Sorondo's talk — and the meeting last May — was the role of values, more than data, in shaping humanity's choices.

Here's how I described this theme in [the summation I delivered on the final day at the Vatican](#):

It says much that even some of the most accomplished scientists at this meeting articulated that progress on climate, energy, equity, education and conservation of living resources will be driven by values and faith more than data and predictive models.

In a discussion over dinner, [Walter Munk](#), at 96 one of great oceanographers of modern times, spoke not of gigatons of carbon or megawatts of electricity: "This requires a miracle of love and unselfishness," he said.

Almost all you need is love. Here's to Pope Francis, and Walter Munk.

Update, Jan. 1, 2015, 8:49 a.m. | Chris Mooney's broader reflection on Pope Francis, Catholicism and science is an essential read: "[Our new pro-science pontiff: Pope Francis on climate change, evolution, and the Big Bang.](#)"

Update, Jan. 2, 9:10 p.m. | Alexander Lucie-Smith, a Catholic priest, doctor of moral theology and consulting editor of The Catholic Herald in Britain has written a very interesting piece questioning the need for an encyclical from Pope Francis. He notes that the church has long been pressing for care of the environment, but warns that global warming poses particularly complicated questions related to “proportionate benefit”:

The ethical principles are not in doubt. It is wrong, for example, to destroy nature without a proportionate reason. Everyone knows that. What constitutes proportionate reason is something that ethicists and scientists need to work out between them. If, for example one is to build a dam, that is certainly an interference in nature and a destruction of a natural environment – but is it worth it? Will the dam bring some proportionate benefit? That in itself is hard to determine. When I was schoolboy we did projects on the [Aswan High Dam](#), which was seen as a towering human achievement back in the seventies. But would it ever have got built today? Our understanding of the usefulness or otherwise of dams has changed, and will continue to do so over time. Look at the [Three Gorges Dam](#) in China, a project that has been damned by virtually everyone. I suspect that forty years ago the consensus would have been very different.

Please [read the full article](#).

http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/12/31/tracing-the-roots-of-pope-franciss-climate-plans-for-2015/?_r=0

December 31, 2014

Pope Francis Calls for Action on Climate Change & Capitalism on a Planet "Exploited by Human Greed"

Democracy Now

Pope Francis is set to make history by issuing the first-ever comprehensive Vatican teachings on climate change, which will urge 1.2 billion Catholics worldwide to take action. The document will be sent to the world's 5,000 Catholic bishops and 400,000 priests who will distribute it to their parishioners. Given the sheer number of people who identify as Catholics worldwide, the pope's clarion call to tackle climate change could reach far more people than even the largest environmental groups. "The document will take a position in favor of the scientific consensus that climate change is real ... and link the deforestation and destruction of the natural environment to the particular economic model of which Pope Francis has been a critic," says our guest, Austen Ivereigh, author of a new biography called "The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope." The pope also plans to address the United Nations General Assembly and convene a summit of the world's main religions in hopes of bolstering next year's crucial U.N. climate meeting in Paris.

Transcript

This is a rush transcript. Copy may not be in its final form.

AMY GOODMAN: This is *Democracy Now!*, democracynow.org, *The War and Peace Report*. I'm Amy Goodman, for our last report of 2014.

Pope Francis is set to make history by issuing the first-ever comprehensive Vatican teachings on climate change. In an effort to urge Catholics worldwide to take climate action, the pope will issue a rare papal letter, or encyclical, on climate change and human ecology, following a visit in March to Tacloban, the Philippine city devastated in 2012 by Typhoon Haiyan. The document then will be sent to the world's 5,000 Catholic bishops and 400,000 priests, who will distribute it to their parishioners.

Given the sheer number of people who identify as Catholics worldwide, the pope's clarion call to tackle climate change could reach far more people than even the largest environmental groups. Globally, there are 1.2 billion Catholics, of which around 75 million live here in the United States. The pope also plans to address the United Nations General Assembly and convene a summit of the world's main religions in hopes of bolstering next year's crucial U.N. climate summit in Paris.

Last year, during his first Christmas mass as head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis called for protection of the environment from human greed.

POPE FRANCIS: [translated] Lord of heaven and Earth, look upon our planet, frequently exploited by human greed and rapacity. Help and protect all of the victims of natural disasters, especially the beloved people of the Philippines gravely affected by the recent typhoon.

AMY GOODMAN: This year, Pope Francis shocked cardinals, bishops and priests by using his annual Christmas remarks to deliver a scathing critique of the Vatican itself, the central governing body of the Catholic Church. He said the Vatican is plagued with "spiritual Alzheimer's," "existential schizophrenia," "social exhibitionism" and a lust for power—all of which have resulted in an "orchestra that plays out of tune," he said. Pope Francis also lambasted the gossip, pettiness and rivalry he said were infecting the church. This is part of what he said.

POPE FRANCIS: [translated] There is also the sickness of the stony mind and spirit, of those who have a stone heart and a hard neck, of those who along the way lose their inner serenity, their vivacity and their audacity, and end up hiding behind papers, becoming machines for practices and not men of God. It is dangerous to lose the human sensitivity that we need to cry with those who cry and to rejoice with those who rejoice.

AMY GOODMAN: Pope Francis has also captured global attention for his criticism of capitalism, his softer tone on key social issues including abortion and homosexuality, and his calls to refocus the church toward the needs of the poor. In his personal life, the pope has chosen to live simply at the Vatican, residing in a guest house instead of the Apostolic Palace, forgoing a chauffeured Mercedes in favor a plain black sedan.

He's also made headlines for his everyday acts of extraordinary compassion. He invited a teenager with Down syndrome, Alberto di Tullio, for a ride in the Popemobile. He embraced and kissed Vinicio Riva, a man severely scarred by a genetic disease. And he washed a dozen

prisoners' feet at a jail for juveniles in Rome. The pope also responded to a letter from a rape survivor by personally calling to console her, saying, "You are not alone."

Most recently, the pope has emerged as a star diplomat, a key player in the thawing of relations between the Cuba government and the United States. Cuban President Raúl Castro thanked him for his support.

PRESIDENT RAÚL CASTRO: [translated] This decision by President Obama deserves respect and recognition from our people. I would like to thank and recognize the support of the Vatican, and especially that of Pope Francis, in helping improve the relations between Cuba and the United States.

AMY GOODMAN: Earlier this month, the pope offered to assist the United States with another diplomatic hurdle: its efforts to close Guantánamo prison. The Vatican has reportedly offered to help find adequate humanitarian solutions through its international contacts.

Meanwhile, the pope has rejected change in two other areas: the ordination of women to the priesthood and the church's view on abortion.

Well, for more on Pope Francis, we go to Oxford, England, where we're joined by his biographer, Austen Ivereigh, a British commentator, writer, co-founder of Catholic Voices. He's the author of a new biography called *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope*.

Austen Ivereigh, welcome to *Democracy Now!* Let's begin with this encyclical that he's putting out on climate change. How rare and how important is this?

AUSTEN IVEREIGH: Well, first of all, it's an encyclical, which is the highest form of papal teaching. What that means is it's a letter that's sent to the bishops and clergy and indirectly to all the Catholics of the world. And it's saying this is authoritative church teaching, this needs to be taken very seriously by Catholics. So that, in itself, is a major event.

The fact that it's also on ecology, on climate change, is also deeply significant, because there has never been a major document on this subject from the church. So, there is a lot of anticipation about it. He's about to go to Sri Lanka and the Philippines. That's in mid-January. And then he'll be issuing this encyclical, we think, in March or possibly April. And it's going to take a position on the science of climate change. So, this is a case of the church, as it were, wading into a scientific matter and taking a position. As I understand, the document will take a position in favor, if you like, of the scientific consensus that climate change is real.

And then the document will also link the deforestation, the destruction of the natural environment, to the particular economic model of which Pope Francis has been a very stern critic ever since he became pope, and indeed beforehand, a system which creates too much inequality, which regards the unemployed and the elderly as, as it were, to be dispensed with, as leftovers, as he calls them—so, in other words, an economic system which is dysfunctional in its impact on the world's population. But he'll also show that excessive consumerism and indeed the pattern of

that global economic model is—as it were, the price is being paid by the environment. So it's going to be a clarion call, as I understand it, for the church to work for changing the system which produces deforestation and climate devastation.

It will also be laying out the basis for the Catholic Church's thinking on this, prior to what I understand will be a meeting with other world religious leaders and, indeed, civic leaders. In other words, Pope Francis wants to build a global consensus to force—to bring about—help to bring about action later this year, prior to that very important summit, U.N. summit, in Paris on climate change. So it's about building the momentum to bring about real, effective change in this area.

AMY GOODMAN: Yes, ahead of this year's U.N. climate summit in Lima, Peru, Pope Francis wrote a letter to organizers noting that climate change will, quote, "affect all of humanity, especially the poorest and future generations. What's more, it represents a serious ethical and moral responsibility." So, how do you expect the bishops, the cardinals, the more than one billion Catholics to respond? What does this mean when the pope focuses on an issue like climate change, Austen Ivereigh?

AUSTEN IVEREIGH: Well, I think it will be, of course, problematic. It will be controversial, because there are some church leaders, but also some very prominent Catholics, who are, if not outright skeptics on climate change, are at least skeptical of some of the claims being made about climate change. And they will also be skeptical of his attempts to link that to a particular form of capitalism.

We've already seen this critique when he came out in November last year with his first major document—didn't have the authority of this encyclical, but still a major teaching document—called "The Joy of the Gospel," in which he had some very harsh words, some very stern words for the—for, as it were, the liberal capitalist system, of which—and he was speaking very much from the point of view of the poor. He always does. This is one of the things that distinguishes Francis's voice. He takes the position of the developing world, of the poor, of the people who, if you like, are normally ignored in these discussions, who aren't present at the table. So he's positioning himself—and the church indirectly—very definitely as the advocate of, in the profit for those people.

Now, in doing that, he's naturally going to find that there is pushback from business interests, from prominent Catholics in the world of business and finance, who are going to probably attack, no doubt, the—some of the science behind the encyclical, but will also critique him as he was criticized last year. He'll be criticized for naivety. He'll be criticized for wading into an area over which they say the church has no direct understanding or direct knowledge.

The answer to that, of course, is the church has always taken a very, very clear position, very strong position in its moral teaching about capitalism. And this goes back to late 19th century, 1891, Pope Leo XIII, who issued his great encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, "on new things," which was precisely an indictment of the way in which industrialization and contemporary capitalism had divided the world into the haves and the have-nots, and left the poor at the mercy of the rich. So, in fact, Pope Francis, even though it will be greeted, I think, as a great novelty, in fact is

speaking out of a, if you like, radical prophetic tradition which has been consistent in the church throughout the popes of the 20th century, ever since the late 19th century.

But he'll be doing so about, if you like, what he sees as the contemporary equivalent now of the debate about industrialization and the market in the 19th century—same kind of moral critique. Look at the devastation. Look at the impact that the economic model is having. If we have an economic system which produces, of course, tremendous wealth, tremendous growth in many parts of the world, but produces poverty, chronic long-term unemployment in other parts of the world, and results in devastation of the environment, he's going to say this is not a system that works. We need to have a system where the human being comes first, where the needs of humanity—if you like, an economy at the service of the needs of humanity, rather than making human beings, particularly the poor, instruments of a machine which benefits the few.

That will be the kind of response, that will be the kind of critique, if you like, that Francis will be making in this encyclical. So it looks to generate, actually, an extraordinary amount of debate. My understanding, from the people who are involved in the preparation of this document in the Vatican, is that in fact it's been very, very carefully thought through, particularly the scientific aspect of it, precisely because the church does not want to be, as it were, dismissed by having a naive position on the science.

AMY GOODMAN: Austen, even the pope's name—he's the first to take the papal name Francis after the reform figure Francis of Assisi. Last year, he explained why he chose the name, saying, quote, "For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation. These days we don't have a very good relationship with creation, do we? ... He is the man who gives us this spirit of peace, the poor man," he said. Austen Ivereigh, if you could respond?

AUSTEN IVEREIGH: Exactly right. I was there. I was there when he said those words to the 5,000 journalists shortly after his election. He was explaining why it was he took the name of Francis of Assisi. So he's identifying himself with a figure who is really the icon, in the Catholic tradition, of poverty, of humility, of identification with the poor, but also of course a man who was famous for his love of creation, his love of the natural world, where he saw mankind—as it were, man fits into, human beings fit into God's creation, and God's creation is much more than just us. We are stewards of the planet. We have been entrusted with the responsibility for the planet, and we must not damage it. We must care for it. We must embrace it. We must support it. So, absolutely, by taking the name of Francis of Assisi, he was signaling from the very beginning that he was going to be doing this. And I understand that this ecology encyclical has been under preparation almost ever since, really, he was elected.

He's also involved a number of theologians who have been, as it were, out of favor for some time, including the Brazilian Leonardo Boff and other Latin American liberation theologians, who have long critiqued capitalism from the point of view of its effect on the environment. So, all in all, Francis is absolutely positioning himself in that radical stream of the Catholic tradition stretching back to St. Francis of Assisi.

AMY GOODMAN: Austen Ivereigh, we're going to continue the discussion of the pope this year, from capitalism and climate change to Cuba, war and peace. Austen Ivereigh's new book is called *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope*. We'll continue with him in Oxford, England, in a moment.

http://www.democracynow.org/2014/12/31/pope_francis_calls_for_action_on
