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January 1, 2014

Message of His Holiness Francis for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace

Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace

Vatican

1. In this, my first Message for the World Day of Peace, I wish to offer to everyone, individuals and peoples, my best wishes for a life filled with joy and hope. In the heart of every man and woman is the desire for a full life, including that irrepressible longing for fraternity which draws us to fellowship with others and enables us to see them not as enemies or rivals, but as brothers and sisters to be accepted and embraced.

Fraternity is an essential human quality, for we are relational beings. A lively awareness of our relatedness helps us to look upon and to treat each person as a true sister or brother; without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace. We should remember that fraternity is generally first learned in the family, thanks above all to the responsible and complementary roles of each of its members, particularly the father and the mother. The family is the wellspring of all fraternity, and as such it is the foundation and the first pathway to peace, since, by its vocation, it is meant to spread its love to the world around it.

The ever-increasing number of interconnections and communications in today's world makes us powerfully aware of the unity and common destiny of the nations. In the dynamics of history, and in the diversity of ethnic groups, societies and cultures, we see the seeds of a vocation to form a community composed of brothers and sisters who accept and care for one another. But

this vocation is still frequently denied and ignored in a world marked by a “globalization of indifference” which makes us slowly inured to the suffering of others and closed in on ourselves.

In many parts of the world, there seems to be no end to grave offences against fundamental human rights, especially the right to life and the right to religious freedom. The tragic phenomenon of human trafficking, in which the unscrupulous prey on the lives and the desperation of others, is but one unsettling example of this. Alongside overt armed conflicts are the less visible but no less cruel wars fought in the economic and financial sectors with means which are equally destructive of lives, families and businesses.

Globalization, as [Benedict XVI](#) pointed out, makes us neighbours, but does not make us brothers.^[1] The many situations of inequality, poverty and injustice, are signs not only of a profound lack of fraternity, but also of the absence of a culture of solidarity. New ideologies, characterized by rampant individualism, egocentrism and materialistic consumerism, weaken social bonds, fuelling that “throw away” mentality which leads to contempt for, and the abandonment of, the weakest and those considered “useless”. In this way human coexistence increasingly tends to resemble a mere *do ut des* which is both pragmatic and selfish.

At the same time, it appears clear that contemporary ethical systems remain incapable of producing authentic bonds of fraternity, since a fraternity devoid of reference to a common Father as its ultimate foundation is unable to endure.^[2] True brotherhood among people presupposes and demands a transcendent Fatherhood. Based on the recognition of this fatherhood, human fraternity is consolidated: each person becomes a “neighbour” who cares for others.

“Where is your brother?” (Gen 4:9)

2. To understand more fully this human vocation to fraternity, to recognize more clearly the obstacles standing in the way of its realization and to identify ways of overcoming them, it is of primary importance to let oneself be led by knowledge of God’s plan, which is presented in an eminent way in sacred Scripture.

According to the biblical account of creation, all people are descended from common parents, Adam and Eve, the couple created by God in his image and likeness (cf. *Gen* 1:26), to whom Cain and Abel were born. In the story of this first family, we see the origins of society and the evolution of relations between individuals and peoples.

Abel is a shepherd, Cain is a farmer. Their profound identity and their vocation is to *be brothers*, albeit in the diversity of their activity and culture, their way of relating to God and to creation. Cain’s murder of Abel bears tragic witness to his radical rejection of their vocation to be brothers. Their story (cf. *Gen* 4:1-16) brings out the difficult task to which all men and women

are called, to live as one, each taking care of the other. Cain, incapable of accepting God's preference for Abel who had offered him the best of his flock – "The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering; but for Cain and his offering he had no regard" (*Gen* 4:4-5) – killed Abel out of jealousy. In this way, he refused to regard Abel as a brother, to relate to him rightly, to live in the presence of God by assuming his responsibility to care for and to protect others. By asking him "Where is your brother?", God holds Cain accountable for what he has done. He answers: "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (*Gen* 4:9). Then, the Book of Genesis tells us, "Cain went away from the presence of the Lord" (4:16).

We need to ask ourselves what were the real reasons which led Cain to disregard the bond of fraternity and, at the same time, the bond of reciprocity and fellowship which joined him to his brother Abel. God himself condemns and reproves Cain's collusion with evil: "sin is crouching at your door" (*Gen* 4:7). But Cain refuses to turn against evil and decides instead to raise his "hand against his brother Abel" (*Gen* 4:8), thus scorning God's plan. In this way, he thwarts his primordial calling to be a child of God and to live in fraternity.

The story of Cain and Abel teaches that we have an inherent calling to fraternity, but also the tragic capacity to betray that calling. This is witnessed by our daily acts of selfishness, which are at the root of so many wars and so much injustice: many men and women die at the hands of their brothers and sisters who are incapable of seeing themselves as such, that is, as beings made for reciprocity, for communion and self-giving.

"And you will all be brothers" (Mt 23:8)

3. The question naturally arises: Can the men and women of this world ever fully respond to the longing for fraternity placed within them by God the Father? Will they ever manage by their power alone to overcome indifference, egoism and hatred, and to accept the legitimate differences typical of brothers and sisters?

By paraphrasing his words, we can summarize the answer given by the Lord Jesus: "For you have only one Father, who is God, and you are all brothers and sisters" (cf. *Mt* 23:8-9). The basis of fraternity is found in God's fatherhood. We are not speaking of a generic fatherhood, indistinct and historically ineffectual, but rather of the specific and extraordinarily concrete personal love of God for each man and woman (cf. *Mt* 6:25-30). It is a fatherhood, then, which effectively generates fraternity, because the love of God, once welcomed, becomes the most formidable means of transforming our lives and relationships with others, opening us to solidarity and to genuine sharing.

In a particular way, human fraternity is regenerated *in* and *by* Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection. The Cross is the definitive *foundational* locus of that fraternity which human beings are not capable of generating themselves. Jesus Christ, who assumed human nature in order to

redeem it, loving the Father unto death on the Cross (cf. *Phil* 2:8), has through his resurrection made of us a *new humanity*, in full communion with the will of God, with his plan, which includes the full realization of our vocation to fraternity.

From the beginning, Jesus takes up the plan of the Father, acknowledging its primacy over all else. But Christ, with his abandonment to death for love of the Father, becomes the *definitive and new principle* of us all; we are called to regard ourselves in him as brothers and sisters, inasmuch as we are *children* of the same Father. He himself is the Covenant; in his person we are reconciled with God and with one another as brothers and sisters. Jesus' death on the Cross also brings an end to the *separation* between peoples, between the people of the Covenant and the people of the Gentiles, who were bereft of hope until that moment, since they were not party to the pacts of the Promise. As we read in the Letter to the Ephesians, Jesus Christ is the one who reconciles all people in himself. He *is* peace, for he made one people out of the two, breaking down the wall of separation which divided them, that is, the hostility between them. He created in himself one people, one new man, one new humanity (cf. 2:14-16).

All who accept the life of Christ and live in him acknowledge God as Father and give themselves completely to him, loving him above all things. The reconciled person sees in God the Father of all, and, as a consequence, is spurred on to live a life of fraternity open to all. In Christ, the other is welcomed and loved as a son or daughter of God, as a brother or sister, not as a stranger, much less as a rival or even an enemy. In God's family, where all are sons and daughters of the same Father, and, because they are grafted to Christ, *sons and daughters in the Son*, there are no "disposable lives". All men and women enjoy an equal and inviolable dignity. All are loved by God. All have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, who died on the Cross and rose for all. This is the reason why no one can remain indifferent before the lot of our brothers and sisters.

Fraternity, the foundation and pathway to peace

4. This being said, it is easy to realize that fraternity is the *foundation* and *pathway* of peace. The social encyclicals written by my predecessors can be very helpful in this regard. It would be sufficient to draw on the definitions of peace found in the encyclicals [*Populorum Progressio*](#) by [Pope Paul VI](#) and [*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*](#) by [John Paul II](#). From the first we learn that the integral development of peoples is the new name of peace.^[3] From the second, we conclude that peace is an *opus solidaritatis*.^[4]

[Paul VI](#) stated that not only individuals but nations too must encounter one another in a spirit of fraternity. As he says: "In this mutual understanding and friendship, in this sacred communion, we must also... work together to build the common future of the human race".^[5] In the first place, this duty falls to those who are most privileged. Their obligations are rooted in human and supernatural fraternity and are manifested in three ways: the *duty of solidarity*, which requires the richer nations to assist the less developed; the *duty of social justice*, which requires the

realignment of relationships between stronger and weaker peoples in terms of greater fairness; and the *duty of universal charity*, which entails the promotion of a more humane world for all, a world in which each has something to give and to receive, without the progress of the one constituting an obstacle to the development of the other.[6]

If, then, we consider peace as *opus solidaritatis*, we cannot fail to acknowledge that fraternity is its principal foundation. Peace, [John Paul II](#) affirmed, is an indivisible good. Either it is the good of all or it is the good of none. It can be truly attained and enjoyed, as the highest quality of life and a more human and sustainable development, only if all are guided by solidarity as “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good”.[7] This means not being guided by a “desire for profit” or a “thirst for power”. What is needed is the willingness to “lose ourselves” for the sake of others rather than exploiting them, and to “serve them” instead of oppressing them for our own advantage. “The ‘other’ – whether a person, people or nation – [is to be seen] not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our ‘neighbour’, a ‘helper’”.[8]

Christian solidarity presumes that our neighbour is loved not only as “a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but as the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit”,[9] as another brother or sister. As [John Paul II](#) noted: “At that point, awareness of the common fatherhood of God, of the brotherhood of all in Christ – ‘children in the Son’ – and of the presence and life-giving action of the Holy Spirit, will bring to our vision of the world a *new criterion* for interpreting it”,[10] for changing it.

Fraternity, a prerequisite for fighting poverty

5. In his encyclical [Caritas in Veritate](#), my predecessor reminded the world how the lack of *fraternity* between peoples and men and women is a significant cause of *poverty*.[11] In many societies, we are experiencing a profound *poverty of relationships* as a result of the lack of solid family and community relationships. We are concerned by the various types of hardship, marginalization, isolation and various forms of pathological dependencies which we see increasing. This kind of poverty can be overcome only through the rediscovery and valuing of *fraternal* relationships in the heart of families and communities, through the sharing of joys and sorrows, of the hardships and triumphs that are a part of human life.

Moreover, if on the one hand we are seeing a reduction in *absolute poverty*, on the other hand we cannot fail to recognize that there is a serious rise in *relative poverty*, that is, instances of inequality between people and groups who live together in particular regions or in a determined historical-cultural context. In this sense, effective policies are needed to promote the principle of *fraternity*, securing for people – who are equal in dignity and in fundamental rights – access to

capital, services, educational resources, healthcare and technology so that every person has the opportunity to express and realize his or her life project and can develop fully as a person.

One also sees the need for policies which can lighten an excessive imbalance between incomes. We must not forget the Church's teaching on the so-called *social mortgage*, which holds that although it is lawful, as Saint Thomas Aquinas says, and indeed necessary "that people have ownership of goods",^[12] insofar as their use is concerned, "they possess them as not just their own, but common to others as well, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as themselves".^[13]

Finally, there is yet another form of promoting fraternity – and thus defeating poverty – which must be at the basis of all the others. It is the detachment of those who choose to live a sober and essential lifestyle, of those who, by sharing their own wealth, thus manage to experience fraternal communion with others. This is fundamental for following Jesus Christ and being truly Christian. It is not only the case of consecrated persons who profess the vow of poverty, but also of the many families and responsible citizens who firmly believe that it is their fraternal relationship with their neighbours which constitutes their most precious good.

The rediscovery of fraternity in the economy

6. The grave financial and economic crises of the present time – which find their origin in the progressive distancing of man from God and from his neighbour, in the greedy pursuit of material goods on the one hand, and in the impoverishment of interpersonal and community relations on the other – have pushed man to seek satisfaction, happiness and security in consumption and earnings out of all proportion to the principles of a sound economy. In 1979 [John Paul II](#) had called attention to "a real perceptible danger that, while man's dominion over the world of things is making enormous advances, he should lose the essential threads of his dominion and in various ways let his humanity be subjected to the world and become himself something subject to manipulation in many ways – even if the manipulation is often not perceptible directly – through the whole of the organization of community life, through the production system and through pressure from the means of social communication."^[14]

The succession of economic crises should lead to a timely rethinking of our models of economic development and to a change in lifestyles. Today's crisis, even with its serious implications for people's lives, can also provide us with a fruitful opportunity to rediscover the virtues of prudence, temperance, justice and strength. These virtues can help us to overcome difficult moments and to recover the fraternal bonds which join us one to another, with deep confidence that human beings need and are capable of something greater than maximizing their individual interest. Above all, these virtues are necessary for building and preserving a society in accord with human dignity.

Fraternity extinguishes war

7. In the past year, many of our brothers and sisters have continued to endure the destructive experience of war, which constitutes a grave and deep wound inflicted on fraternity.

Many conflicts are taking place amid general indifference. To all those who live in lands where weapons impose terror and destruction, I assure you of my personal closeness and that of the whole Church, whose mission is to bring Christ's love to the defenceless victims of forgotten wars through her prayers for peace, her service to the wounded, the starving, refugees, the displaced and all those who live in fear. The Church also speaks out in order to make leaders hear the cry of pain of the suffering and to put an end to every form of hostility, abuse and the violation of fundamental human rights.[\[15\]](#)

For this reason, I appeal forcefully to all those who sow violence and death by force of arms: in the person you today see simply as an enemy to be beaten, discover rather your brother or sister, and hold back your hand! Give up the way of arms and go out to meet the other in dialogue, pardon and reconciliation, in order to rebuild justice, trust, and hope around you! "From this standpoint, it is clear that, for the world's peoples, armed conflicts are always a deliberate negation of international harmony, and create profound divisions and deep wounds which require many years to heal. Wars are a concrete refusal to pursue the great economic and social goals that the international community has set itself".[\[16\]](#)

Nevertheless, as long as so great a quantity of arms are in circulation as at present, new pretexts can always be found for initiating hostilities. For this reason, I make my own the appeal of my predecessors for the non-proliferation of arms and for disarmament of all parties, beginning with nuclear and chemical weapons disarmament.

We cannot however fail to observe that international agreements and national laws – while necessary and greatly to be desired – are not of themselves sufficient to protect humanity from the risk of armed conflict. A conversion of hearts is needed which would permit everyone to recognize in the other a brother or sister to care for, and to work together with, in building a fulfilling life for all. This is the spirit which inspires many initiatives of civil society, including religious organizations, to promote peace. I express my hope that the daily commitment of all will continue to bear fruit and that there will be an effective application in international law of the right to peace, as a fundamental human right and a necessary prerequisite for every other right.

Corruption and organized crime threaten fraternity

8. The horizon of fraternity also has to do with the need for fulfilment of every man and woman. People's legitimate ambitions, especially in the case of the young, should not be thwarted or

offended, nor should people be robbed of their hope of realizing them. Nevertheless, ambition must not be confused with the abuse of power. On the contrary, people should compete with one another in mutual esteem (cf. *Rm* 12:10). In disagreements, which are also an unavoidable part of life, we should always remember that we are brothers and sisters, and therefore teach others and teach ourselves not to consider our neighbour as an enemy or as an adversary to be eliminated.

Fraternity generates social peace because it creates a balance between freedom and justice, between personal responsibility and solidarity, between the good of individuals and the common good. And so a political community must act in a transparent and responsible way to favour all this. Citizens must feel themselves represented by the public authorities in respect for their freedom. Yet frequently a wedge is driven between citizens and institutions by partisan interests which disfigure that relationship, fostering the creation of an enduring climate of conflict.

An authentic spirit of fraternity overcomes the individual selfishness which conflicts with people's ability to live in freedom and in harmony among themselves. Such selfishness develops socially – whether it is in the many forms of corruption, so widespread today, or in the formation of criminal organizations, from small groups to those organized on a global scale. These groups tear down legality and justice, striking at the very heart of the dignity of the person. These organizations gravely offend God, they hurt others and they harm creation, all the more so when they have religious overtones.

I also think of the heartbreaking drama of drug abuse, which reaps profits in contempt of the moral and civil laws. I think of the devastation of natural resources and ongoing pollution, and the tragedy of the exploitation of labour. I think too of illicit money trafficking and financial speculation, which often prove both predatory and harmful for entire economic and social systems, exposing millions of men and women to poverty. I think of prostitution, which every day reaps innocent victims, especially the young, robbing them of their future. I think of the abomination of human trafficking, crimes and abuses against minors, the horror of slavery still present in many parts of the world; the frequently overlooked tragedy of migrants, who are often victims of disgraceful and illegal manipulation. As John XXIII wrote: “There is nothing human about a society based on relationships of power. Far from encouraging, as it should, the attainment of people's growth and perfection, it proves oppressive and restrictive of their freedom”.[\[17\]](#) Yet human beings can experience conversion; they must never despair of being able to change their lives. I wish this to be a message of hope and confidence for all, even for those who have committed brutal crimes, for God does not wish the death of the sinner, but that he converts and lives (cf. *Ez* 18:23).

In the broad context of human social relations, when we look to crime and punishment, we cannot help but think of the inhumane conditions in so many prisons, where those in custody are often reduced to a subhuman status in violation of their human dignity and stunted in their hope and desire for rehabilitation. The Church does much in these environments, mostly in silence. I

exhort and I encourage everyone to do more, in the hope that the efforts being made in this area by so many courageous men and women will be increasingly supported, fairly and honestly, by the civil authorities as well.

Fraternity helps to preserve and cultivate nature

9. The human family has received from the Creator a common gift: nature. The Christian view of creation includes a positive judgement about the legitimacy of interventions on nature if these are meant to be beneficial and are performed responsibly, that is to say, by acknowledging the “grammar” inscribed in nature and by wisely using resources for the benefit of all, with respect for the beauty, finality and usefulness of every living being and its place in the ecosystem. Nature, in a word, is at our disposition and we are called to exercise a responsible stewardship over it. Yet so often we are driven by greed and by the arrogance of dominion, possession, manipulation and exploitation; we do not preserve nature; nor do we respect it or consider it a gracious gift which we must care for and set at the service of our brothers and sisters, including future generations.

In a particular way, the *agricultural sector* is the primary productive sector with the crucial vocation of cultivating and protecting natural resources in order to feed humanity. In this regard the continuing disgrace of hunger in the world moves me to share with you the question: *How are we using the earth’s resources?* Contemporary societies should reflect on the hierarchy of priorities to which production is directed. It is a truly pressing duty to use the earth’s resources in such a way that all may be free from hunger. Initiatives and possible solutions are many, and are not limited to an increase in production. It is well known that present production is sufficient, and yet millions of persons continue to suffer and die from hunger, and this is a real scandal. We need, then, to find ways by which all may benefit from the fruits of the earth, not only to avoid the widening gap between those who have more and those who must be content with the crumbs, but above all because it is a question of justice, equality and respect for every human being. In this regard I would like to remind everyone of that necessary *universal destination of all goods* which is one of the fundamental principles of the Church’s social teaching. Respect for this principle is the essential condition for facilitating an effective and fair access to those essential and primary goods which every person needs and to which he or she has a right.

Conclusion

10. Fraternity needs to be discovered, loved, experienced, proclaimed and witnessed to. But only love, bestowed as a gift from God, enables us to accept and fully experience fraternity.

The necessary realism proper to politics and economy cannot be reduced to mere technical know-how bereft of ideals and unconcerned with the transcendent dimension of man. When this openness to God is lacking, every human activity is impoverished and persons are reduced to

objects that can be exploited. Only when politics and the economy are open to moving within the wide space ensured by the One who loves each man and each woman, will they achieve an ordering based on a genuine spirit of fraternal charity and become effective instruments of integral human development and peace.

We Christians believe that in the Church we are all members of a single body, all mutually necessary, because each has been given a grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, for the common good (cf. *Eph* 4:7,25; *1 Cor* 12:7). Christ has come to the world so as to bring us divine grace, that is, the possibility of sharing in his life. This entails weaving a fabric of fraternal relationships marked by reciprocity, forgiveness and complete self-giving, according to the breadth and the depth of the love of God offered to humanity in the One who, crucified and risen, draws all to himself: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (*Jn* 13:34-35). This is the good news that demands from each one a step forward, a perennial exercise of empathy, of listening to the suffering and the hopes of others, even those furthest away from me, and walking the demanding path of that love which knows how to give and spend itself freely for the good of all our brothers and sisters.

Christ embraces all of humanity and wishes no one to be lost. “For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (*Jn* 3:17). He does it without oppressing or constraining anyone to open to him the doors of heart and mind. “Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves” – Jesus Christ says – “I am among you as one who serves” (*Lk* 22:26-27). Every activity therefore must be distinguished by an attitude of service to persons, especially those furthest away and less known. Service is the soul of that fraternity that builds up peace.

May Mary, the Mother of Jesus, help us to understand and live every day the fraternity that springs up from the heart of her Son, so as to bring peace to each person on this our beloved earth.

From the Vatican, 8 December 2013

[1] Cf. Encyclical Letter [*Caritas in Veritate*](#) (29 June 2009), 19: AAS 101 (2009), 654-655.

[2] Cf. FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter [*Lumen Fidei*](#) (29 June 2013), 54: AAS 105 (2013), 591-592.

[3] Cf. PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter [*Populorum Progressio*](#) (26 March 1967), 87: AAS 59 (1967), 299.

[4] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter [*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*](#) (30 December 1987), 39: AAS 80 (1988), 566-568.

[5] Encyclical Letter [*Populorum Progressio*](#) (26 March 1967), 43: AAS 59 (1967), 278-279.

[6] Cf. *ibid.*, 44: AAS 59 (1967), 279.

- [7]Encyclical Letter [*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*](#) (20 December 1987), 38: AAS 80 (1988), 566.
- [8]Ibid., 38-39: AAS 80 (1988), 566-567.
- [9]Ibid., 40: AAS 80 (1988), 569.
- [10]Ibid.
- [11]Cf. Encyclical Letter [*Caritas in Veritate*](#) (29 June 2009), 19: AAS 101 (2009), 654-655.
- [12]*Summa Theologiae*II-II, q. 66, art. 2.
- [13]SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World [*Gaudium et Spes*](#), 69; cf. LEO XIII, Encyclical Letter [*Rerum Novarum*](#) (15 May 1891), 19: ASS 23 (1890-1891), 651; JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter [*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*](#) (30 December 1987), 42: AAS 80 (1988), 573-574; PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, [*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*](#), 178.
- [14]Encyclical Letter [*Redemptoris Hominis*](#) (4 March 1979), 16: AAS 61 (1979), 290.
- [15]Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, [*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*](#), 159.
- [16]FRANCIS, [*Letter to President Putin*](#), 4 September 2013: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 6 September 2013, p. 1.
- [17]Encyclical Letter [*Pacem in Terris*](#) (11 April 1963), 17: AAS 55 (1963), 265.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20131208_messaggio-xlvi-giornata-mondiale-pace-2014_en.html

January 3, 2014

Congregations turn to compost for lessons on life, death and the environment

By Adelle M. Banks
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS) -- The wheelbarrow outside the sanctuary was overflowing with vegetable scraps; decomposing matter filled the baptismal font; and a pile of rich brown soil replaced the Communion table.

Ashley Goff, minister for spiritual formation at Church of the Pilgrims, wanted to convey a message about the cycle of nature this fall, and she could think of no better analogy than the congregation's growing [enchantment with compost](#).

"I wanted them to see the process of life and death and change," she said of her Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation of 70. "It's a dying and a rising, where new life begins."

Across the country in the past decade, hundreds of houses of worship have started composting, relating it to theological concepts of resurrection and stewardship.

Read the full article at:

<http://www.religionnews.com/2014/01/03/congregations-turn-compost-lessons-life-death-environment/>

January 6, 2014

UN Applauds China Efforts to Combat Illegal Ivory Trade

Six Tonnes of Ivory Destroyed at Landmark Event in China

United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi – Six tonnes of confiscated ivory were destroyed by the authorities in China, Monday, in an effort to combat the illegal trade in elephant tusks.

The seized ivory was fed into crushing machines in the southern city of Dongguan, in what was described as the first public destruction of ivory in China.

According to the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), elephant poaching in Africa could lead to local extinctions if the present killing rates continue.

The situation is particularly acute in Central Africa, where the estimated poaching rates are twice the continental average.

UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Achim Steiner said, “We congratulate China and the State Forestry Administration on this milestone event.”

“The largest remaining land mammal on the planet is facing one of the greatest crises to hit the species in decades. The latest CITES data estimates that some 47,000 animals were killed in Africa in 2011 and 2012.”

“Yet, there is reason for optimism. International cooperation is paving the way towards improved law enforcement and increased efforts to reduce demand. These efforts need to be stepped up and strengthened to produce the desired results.”

“We have also seen the destruction of ivory stockpiles across range, transit and demand states: in

the Philippines, the Gabon, the US and China among others. As well as create critical public awareness, such actions send a clear message that wildlife crime will not be tolerated," he added.

Increased poaching and loss of habitats are decimating African elephant populations – especially in Central African countries – according to a report entitled *Elephants in the Dust: The African Elephant Crisis*, released last March.

The UN estimates that over 17,000 elephants were illegally killed in monitored sites in 2011 alone. Overall figures may be much higher.

Secretary-General of CITES John E. Scanlon, speaking at the event, said, "Despite considerable efforts to combat wildlife crime, it continues to be a problem worldwide. Illegal trade in elephant ivory is having a devastating impact on the African elephant, and it also poses a threat to people and their livelihoods – it must stop. China, and the entire international community, are determined to end this illicit trade."

The *Elephants in the Dust* report – produced by UNEP, CITES, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network (TRAFFIC) – says that the illegal ivory trade has tripled since 1998.

Criminal networks are responsible for the illegal trafficking of ivory between Africa and Asia. Large-scale seizures of ivory destined for Asia have more than doubled since 2009 and reached an all-time high in 2011.

The international community is looking at measures to address the crisis, including collaborative action to combat the illegal trade in wildlife and timber, which would include:

- * Improved law-enforcement across the entire illegal ivory supply chain;
- * Strengthened national legislative frameworks;
- * Training of enforcement officers in the use of tracking, intelligence networks and innovative techniques, such as forensic analysis;
- * Better international collaboration across range states, transit countries and consumer markets; and
- * Action to fight collusive corruption, identifying syndicates and reducing demand.

Notes to Editors

- * UNEP is strengthening and focusing its work to further assess global and regional environmental threats caused by the illegal trade in wildlife and timber, to provide policy advice on such threats, and to further catalyze and promote international cooperation and action to

address the threats caused by the illegal trade in wildlife and timber. Such efforts build on four decades of UNEP's work in support of the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife and forest resources.

* A range of regional initiatives have also been developed and adopted. In Africa, the Lusaka Agreement on Co-operative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora was adopted in 1994 to support member states and collaborating partners in reducing and ultimately eliminating illegal trade in wild fauna and flora.

* In other regions, Regional Wildlife Enforcement Groups/Networks have been developed (in North America, Europe, Southeast and South Asia, and the Middle East), which aim to facilitate cross-border cooperation among agencies involved in preventing and suppressing wildlife crime.

* Regional Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) processes have also been initiated in South-East Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and North Asia. The FLEG processes provide soft legislation which aims to improve governance in the forest sector and to strengthen cooperation to address illegal logging and timber trade.

* To download the Elephants in the Dust report, please visit the following link:

<http://www.grida.no/publications/rr/elephants/>

About UNEP

Created in 1972, UNEP represents the United Nations' environmental conscience. Based in Nairobi, Kenya, its mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

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About CITES

With 179 Member States, CITES remains one of the world's most powerful tools for biodiversity conservation through the regulation of trade in wild fauna and flora. Thousands of species are internationally traded and used by people in their daily lives for food, housing, health care, ecotourism, cosmetics or fashion.

CITES regulates international trade in close to 35,000 species of plants and animals, including their products and derivatives, ensuring their survival in the wild with benefits for the livelihoods of local people and the global environment. The CITES Permit System seeks to ensure that

international trade in listed species is sustainable, legal and traceable.

The CITES Programme for Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (CITES MIKE) has been monitoring trends in elephant poaching in a representative sample of sites spread across 43 elephant range States in Africa and Asia. These sites include many of the largest elephant populations on both continents. The operation of the MIKE programme in Africa was made possible thanks to the support of the European Union.

CITES banned international ivory trading in 1989.

For more information, please contact:

Shereen Zorba, Head of UNEP Newsdesk, Tel.+254 788 526 000 or Email:

shereen.zorba@unep.org/unepnewsdesk@unep.org

<http://www.unep.org/NewsCentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2758&ArticleID=10688>

January 9, 2014

Former Grace Church leader takes on new role promoting care of Earth

By Debra Scherban
Gazettenet.com

In 1988, the first year she was ordained as a priest in the Episcopal Church, Margaret Bullitt-Jonas of Northampton, remembers being alarmed as headlines about the dangers of greenhouse gases began appearing.

Then, a year later, after the massive Exxon Valdez oil spill off the shore in Alaska, she was moved to give her first sermon on environmental threats. It was Good Friday, and she couldn't help but connect the devastating pollution with the religious observance at hand. "I felt we were getting a glimpse of the crucifixion of the Earth," she said.

She was proud of her words that day, but when she sat down, a woman approached her, unimpressed: "I just don't get it. What does religion have to do with ecology?"

Bullitt-Jonas has been explaining ever since.

Now, after 25 years of parish work in five congregations, including nine as priest associate at Grace Church in Amherst, she has created the perfect job for herself.

In September, Bullitt-Jonas asked Bishop Douglas Fisher to make her Missioner for Creation Care — a title she made up — for the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts.

He said yes, if he could find the funds. And right then, a donor presented the diocese with money to use for climate change work.

“It all came together in this very graceful way. It was amazing,” Bullitt-Jonas said.

She said her goodbyes at Grace Church — with lots of tears on both sides — and started her new job Jan. 1. The church has not yet chosen a replacement.

“We are so desperately sad to see her go but excited that she is going to do this,” said Lucy Robinson of Amherst, a Grace Church parishioner. She and Bullitt-Jonas headed a group called Greening Grace that promoted conservation at the church and participated in state and national events and protests.

“She was amazingly dynamic,” Robinson said. “She’s just been a total inspiration to so many people.”

Focusing Bullitt-Jonas full time on environmental work now is a way for the diocese to show support for reviving the planet, said Fisher.

“The environment belongs to God and we have really abused it through the years,” he said in a telephone interview. “Climate change is a real threat to future generations.”

He wants churches to lead the way, much as they did in past movements for change, such as civil rights. Bullitt-Jonas, he said, is a strong advocate.

“She’s authentic in her belief about this and she’s very, very knowledgeable,” Fisher said.

Nature’s spirituality

Bullitt-Jonas now works out of an office on the third floor of her home in Northampton, which is filled with books, posters and pictures of her ancestors. Her cluttered desk, where tomes on prayer are side-by-side with environmental treatises, faces a bay window that looks out over Bancroft Road. A painting of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, which used to hang in her Grace Church office, adorns her hallway.

“I love to see him now at the top of my stairs,” she said. The painting, which incorporates the moon, waves, and the wind in his body, inspires her. “Everything is part of him. He knew his kinship was with all living beings and the elements.”

KINSHIP, in that same context, is printed on her Prius’ license plate. “All of creation is being sustained by God,” she said, and the mission should be to cherish, not destroy it. “I believe that God is very much with us when we work to get off fossil fuels and close down coal-fire power plants and turn toward clean safe renewable energy.”

Regardless of their religious beliefs — or non-beliefs — Bullitt-Jonas sees people drawn to nature in a way she deems spiritual. “When we want a conscious connection to a larger presence

we go to the mountains, to the lake, to the ocean,” she said. “We have a sense of the sacred disclosing itself to us.”

Over the years Bullitt-Jonas has participated in protests — and been arrested for helping to block the doors at the Department of Energy in Washington, D.C., a dozen years ago — preached, organized marches, lobbied legislators, arranged workshops, held retreats, wrote books, articles and letters, and advised and practiced ways to cut the use of fossil fuels.

But that isn’t enough.

“It wakes me up sometimes in the middle of the night when I think about how the climate is changing,” she said. “The oceans are heating up, the arctic is melting, the tundra is thawing and droughts are growing across Africa. It seems to me we have a very short window of time in which to make a difference.”

It was clear what she had to do.

“If I was on my death bed and looked back on my life, if I had not given 100 percent of my attention to caring for God’s creations I would feel that I had been living without integrity.”

Simplified life

She and Fisher will meet regularly to set her agenda. She’ll continue the work she has been doing all along, adding communicating through social media, organizing churches’ efforts and networking with climate activists to the mix. She is a board member of the Massachusetts-based Better Futures Project, and plans to use that position to make more connections.

She says she’ll take an interfaith approach. “The good news and bad news about climate change is that it affects all of us.”

Bullitt-Jonas, 62, is married to Robert Jonas, a retired psychologist who is chairman of the board of trustees of the Kestrel Land Trust in Amherst. They have grown children: a son, together, Sam Jonas, who is teaching English in Thailand, and Jonas’ daughter, Christine Labich, a landscape painter, who lives in Shutesbury with her husband and two children.

Bullitt-Jonas, who was wearing a clerical collar under a bright red sweater the day I visited, says she loved the pastoral work she did at Grace Church, including visiting parishioners in hospitals and in their homes. But, she said, she needed to simplify her life.

“How many years, God willing, of healthy life and ministry are ahead of me? While I still have the energy, health and time, I want to give myself to what I care about most deeply and where I feel God is truly calling me.”

Finding her way

Though she grew up the second of four children in Cambridge as an Episcopalian, she did not take religion seriously until she was 30 and well into graduate school at Harvard University. It was her desperate struggle with a longtime eating disorder that brought her back to the church she had abandoned in her teens. The illness and her rocky home life is detailed in her memoir “Holy Hunger” published in 1998 by Knopf, New York, and on her [website](#).

“I never went to church once when I was in college,” she said. That was at Stanford University in California where she had fled to be far from home.

After travels and dabbles in teaching and law, she had returned to study comparative literature at Harvard in 1975 where her father was a professor. Her mother worked at Radcliffe College. She said she was ready to face her family conflicts, but still very much in the grips of eating binges that started in her adolescence. “I was living a double life,” she said. “Outwardly I was a star. I was a graduate student at Harvard, but inwardly, I was secretly bingeing and secretly fasting and running.”

Finally, she could bear it no longer. “When you are sitting down to eat a dozen doughnuts at once there is something deathly about that. I realized I had to choose between life and death.”

It was Good Friday — another life-changing moment for her on that holy day — and so she went to a monastery in Harvard Square. “Good Friday is all about the day Jesus is crucified. I realized that there was a lot in me that needed to die and it would only be through God’s help that I could let the necessary death happen.”

Receiving communion confirmed it. “I vividly remember as I stretched out my hands to receive the bread and the wine that I felt that God was speaking to me in the only language I could understand at the time, which was the language of food. It was a huge moment. I realized that at the base of my food addiction was a religious hunger.”

She promptly left graduate school, got into a 12-step recovery program, began praying and meditating and entered the seminary.

“I wanted to find out, who is this God that just saved my life?”

She has come to believe that beneath her attachment to food was a universal longing for something other-worldly. “If you think of people who have it all, they have the resume, the portfolio, the yacht, the perfect husband or wife ... they still say to themselves, is that all there is? To me that is a spiritual longing.”

The story she tells in her memoir, Bullitt-Jonas said, is akin to the work she is doing now. “The same love that had empowered me to make peace with my body is now calling me out to help heal the larger body of the Earth.”

Debra Scherban can be reached at DScherban@gazettenet.com.

January 17, 2014

Workers of the World, Faint!

By Julia Wallace
New York Times

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — Just over two years ago, at the Anful Garments Factory in Kompong Speu Province, a young worker named Chanthul and 250 of her colleagues collapsed in a collective spell of fainting. They had to be hospitalized; the production line shut down.

Two days later, the factory was back up, and the mass faintings struck again. A worker started barking commands in a language that sounded like Chinese and, claiming to speak in the name of an ancestral spirit, demanded offerings of raw chicken. None were forthcoming, and more workers fell down. Peace, and production, resumed only after factory owners staged an elaborate ceremony, offering up copious amounts of food, cigarettes and Coca-Cola to the spirit.

This episode, however bizarre, was not singular. In the past few years, Cambodia has experienced a slew of mass faintings among garment workers: One after the other, hundreds of women have fallen to the floor of their factories in a dizzy spell called duol sonlap in the Khmer language. The swooning has been attributed, variously, to heat, anemia, overwork, underventilation, chemical fumes and food poisoning. But according to one group of medical anthropologists and psychologists who have studied the phenomenon, two-thirds of these episodes are associated with accounts of possession by local guardian spirits, known as neak ta.

The mass faintings have paralyzed production, to the consternation of the government, factory owners and international clothing retailers. The United States opened its market to Cambodian exports in the 1990s, and the garment industry in Cambodia has since become a \$5 billion-a-year business. According to the country's Garment Manufacturers Association, there are now over 600 garment factories, most owned by Taiwanese, Korean, Chinese, Hong Kong and Singaporean companies. Many were hastily erected on the dusty outskirts of Phnom Penh and in a few other free-trade zones — on land where people believe neak ta have lived for generations.

Although Theravada Buddhism has been the official religion of Cambodia since the 13th century, it never supplanted the existing pantheon of ancestral spirits, local gods and Brahmanic deities. Perhaps the most important of these is the neak ta, a spirit strongly associated with a specific natural feature — a rock, a tree, a patch of soil. These spirits represent a village-based morality and are inseparable from the land. This connection is so strong that in past times even some kings were seen to be merely renting the land from neak ta.

Like those kings of old, Cambodia's deeply superstitious prime minister, Hun Sen, in power for almost three decades, calls on land and water spirits to curse his enemies. Most Cambodians today, while Buddhist, ply spirits with tea and buns at small altars.

These days, when neak ta appear on the factory floor — inducing mass faintings among workers and shouting commands at managers — they are helping the cause of Cambodia's largely young, female and rural factory workforce by registering a kind of bodily objection to the harsh daily regimen of industrial capitalism: few days off; a hard bed in a wooden barracks; meager meals of rice and a mystery curry, hastily scarfed down between shifts. These voices from beyond are speaking up for collective bargaining in the here and now, expressing grievances much like the workers' own: a feeling that they are being exploited by forces beyond their control, that the terms of factory labor somehow violate an older, fairer moral economy.

Early last year, I met a 31-year-old woman called Sreyneang, a worker at Canadia Industrial Park, west of Phnom Penh. She had recently caused dozens of her co-workers to collapse after speaking in the voice of a neak ta. While entranced, she had also assaulted the president of the factory's government-aligned union, pounding him with her fists and pelting him with insults.

We chatted on the dirt floor of the tiny wooden house where she lived; there was nowhere else to sit. She said she had been feeling ill on the day of the fainting, and that the factory nurse had refused to let her go home. She did not remember most of what had happened next, but a spirit healer later explained that a neak ta had entered her, infuriated that a banyan tree on the factory site which had been his home for centuries was chopped down, with neither ritual propitiation nor apology, during the construction of the building.

A few months after that event, something similar happened at a sporting-goods factory near the capital that was said to have been haunted ever since it opened in August 2012. Female workers asked their supervisor, a man named Ah Kung, if they could hold a ceremony and offer a chicken to a neak ta angered at being displaced from the site. He refused. Two days later, the spirit entered the body of a young female worker, Sreymom, and claiming, in her voice, to have been “looked down upon,” began shouting in a mixture of Khmer and short, quick syllables her colleagues took to be Chinese. Several dozen other workers lost consciousness and had to be treated at a local clinic.

“When she was possessed, she just pointed around everywhere,” one eyewitness explained afterward. “She said, ‘I want to meet Ah Kung.’ She said, ‘I want to meet him because I lived here a very long time and he never respected me and this is my land.’” When Ah Kung arrived, the bystander said, “He came out and knelt down in front of her and offered whatever the neak ta asked.”

What the spirit was asking for was respect. He demanded that an altar be built and that ritual offerings be made to him there four times a month. He demanded that the owner roast a pig for him and throw a Khmer New Year party for the workers. The owner complied. The faintings stopped.

In other times and places, ethnographers have also noted seemingly magical manifestations when indigenous populations first confront industrial capitalism. As the manufacture of linen intensified in northern Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, household spirits began to appear in textile workshops in a more malevolent form. There was the story about the demonic imp Rumpelstiltskin, for example, who helped a young woman spin grotesque amounts of thread, but only in exchange for her firstborn. Other fairy tales sublimated the distress caused by the environmental and social costs of intensified flax production. The anthropologist Michael Taussig has written about Colombian peasants who were newly incorporated into wage labor on sugar cane plantations in the 1970s and reportedly sold their souls to the devil to increase their productivity.

Aihwa Ong, another anthropologist, documented an outbreak of spirit possession in the 1970s among Malaysian women in Japanese-owned electronics factories. These workers often screamed hysterically and attacked their supervisors under the influence of a native spirit called a datuk. Ms. Ong interpreted these acts as a spiritual rebellion against the drudgery of factory life and the rupturing of the women's longstanding social ties as they migrated from villages to newly established free-trade zones.

She also concluded that the spirit visitations did the women little good because they allowed the factory owners to cast the women's valid complaints about working conditions as mass hysteria.

In Cambodia, the opposite seems to be true. Like Ms. Ong's subjects, the vast majority of garment workers here are female and young. Many are the first generation in their families to work outside their native rice-farming communities. They often send a large portion of their wages back home, and feel both lucky to be able to do this and desperate. "The conditions are terrible — very, very bad," Sreyneang told me as she described working six days a week to eke out \$120 a month, without being allowed to take days off even when sick. "The factory has always been really strict."

Despite efforts to diversify, the garment industry in Cambodia still makes up around 80 percent of the country's total exports. Because the economy is so vulnerable to instability in the sector, the government has often reacted harshly, even violently, to garment workers' efforts to unionize or take any collective action to ask for higher wages. During recent demonstrations, on Jan. 2 and 3, striking workers at Canadia Industrial Park and another factory near Phnom Penh were set upon by soldiers and military police; at least four were killed and dozens were injured.

Cambodian workers frequently complain that they are forced to work overtime and threatened when they try to join independent unions rather than one of the many government- or factory-backed unions that have sprung up over the past decade. (For an estimated garment workforce of at least 450,000, by the International Labor Organization's tally, there are now over 400 unions, according to Solidarity Center, an international labor rights group.) Pro-government and pro-factory unions occupy most of the seats allotted to labor on the national committee that determines wage increases, and their dominance complicates collective bargaining.

In September 2010, when the national minimum wage was \$61 per month, some 200,000 workers took to the streets to ask for a raise. It was the largest-ever strike in the garment sector,

but after just three days it came to an anticlimactic halt due to police violence and threats against union leaders. Hundreds of the striking workers were illegally fired in retaliation. The minimum wage remained the same.

Then the neak ta appeared. Mass faintings in garment factories increased exponentially in early 2011, just a few months after the mass strike fizzled. Production lines shut down after the workers' bodies shut down, and spirits bargained with management on the factory floor.

Public sentiment started to shift. During the 2010 strikes, few seemed preoccupied with workers' rights. Even the foreign media and the Asian Development Bank's chief economist wondered aloud whether the workers' demands would hurt the industry. But when the mass faintings began, concern for the workers grew: Were they earning enough to feed themselves? Were they being exposed to dangerous chemicals?

Since then, basic pay for garment workers has risen from \$61 to \$80 per month, and is set to rise again to \$100 in February. Numerous conferences on occupational health and safety have been convened. Individual factories, the consortium of garment producers and mass retailers like H&M have commissioned studies of working conditions in Cambodian factories. Garment workers have started to receive monthly bonuses for health and transportation.

Not all improvements can be attributed to spirit visitations: The country's six independent unions have been fighting hard for wage increases. And working conditions still leave a great deal to be desired; labor rights advocates say that \$160 a month is the minimum workers need to adequately feed and house themselves. But insofar as conditions have gotten better, it is partly because the factory-floor faintings have reframed the debate. The government's brutal repression of this month's strike has shown that it will still not tolerate large-scale collective bargaining. But mass swooning is a rare form of group action that can hardly be suppressed.

And now neak ta have been showing up to defend other victims of development. The spirits have appeared at demonstrations and sit-ins organized by the political opposition, which has been contesting the results of elections held in July, which kept Hun Sen's governing party in power. At protests against urban dispossession in Phnom Penh, traditional animist curses are often levied at state institutions. Salt and chilies are hurled at courthouses, chickens are offered to spirits, mediums summon local gods to mete out justice in land disputes.

Last year, in a slum in Phnom Penh, a demonstration by residents who were being evicted by a wealthy landlord was interrupted when a neak ta possessed an indigent woman who lived under a staircase with her mentally ill husband, both suffering from H.I.V. The woman assaulted a local official who was trying to shut down the protest, forcing him to stand down. Previously, the landlord had cut down an old banyan tree believed to be the neak ta's home.

"I have been protecting this area for a long time," the woman shouted, "and I am very angry because the company demolished my house. I am very, very angry."

Julia Wallace is executive editor of The Cambodia Daily in Phnom Penh.

January 22, 2014

New Web Platform Launched to Accelerate Green Economy Transition

CHF 1.6 million commitment from Swiss government, 29 international knowledge partners to strengthen Green Growth Knowledge Platform

United Nations Environment Programme

Geneva - A robust, state-of-the-art knowledge-sharing platform was launched today by the newly established Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP), a diverse consortium of leading institutions and organizations working in areas related to green growth and green economy.

The website is in response to increasing demand from both policy makers and the public for information on ways to achieve sustainable economic growth.

Like the GGKP itself, the website - which features a searchable e-library with over 600 technical and policy resources, as well as dashboards with data and policies for 193 countries - transcends the traditional divide between economy and the environment.

It mobilizes knowledge, experience and support from disparate partners in both the global economic and environmental arenas, all of which share the common goal of accelerating green growth.

"The GGKP is quickly emerging as the leading platform for managing and sharing knowledge around green growth and its new web platform will help to empower others", said Howard Bamsey, Director-General of the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI).

He added: "Through world-class knowledge management, the GGKP is able to provide decision makers with the policy analysis, guidance, information and tools necessary to support a green economy transition."

The Geneva-based GGKP also confirmed a CHF 1.6 million (US \$1.7 million), three-year commitment from the Swiss government.

The pledge bolsters the initiative's existing support from its founding partners: the GGGI, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank. The GGKP's Geneva-based office will be jointly managed by the GGGI and UNEP.

UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner said: "The Green Growth Knowledge Platform provides a much needed tool to bridge knowledge gaps, exchange information and deliver policy guidance to accelerate and support the transition towards green economic development."

"A transformation towards a green economy is not just about the environment. It must be a priority across all facets of the post-2015 development agenda in order to deliver growth and prosperity and improved livelihoods. Achieving this goal rests on the integration of social, economic and environmental goals in public and private decision making, emphasizing a holistic and far-sighted approach", he added.

Green growth - meaning a path of economic growth which uses natural resources sustainably and works towards a global green economy - is a rapidly developing field encompassing aspects of science, global trade and investments, job creation and other areas.

"Geneva is already host to a number of different international organizations, NGOs, think tanks, and academic institutions working on green growth, building a green economy cluster. We are very excited to have the GGKP establish its roots here. It will benefit from the cluster and reinforce it at the same time", said Bruno Oberle of Switzerland's Federal Office for the Environment.

He added: "A green economy will allow us to achieve and keep high living standards. GGKP contributes to the solid knowledge base necessary for the transition towards this green economy."

As of January 2014, the GGKP confirms agreements with 29 knowledge partners, including international organizations, research institutes and think tanks.

Moving forward, the GGKP will work with these partners to promote collaboration and coordinated research on a number of priority themes, including green growth indicators and measurement, trade and competitiveness and green technology and innovation.

A Green Growth Practitioners' Workshop is scheduled for 5-6 February in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, and UNEP will host the GGKP's next Annual Conference in September 2014, in Nairobi, Kenya.

Notes to Editors:

About the GGKP

The Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP) is a global partnership of international organizations and experts that identifies and addresses major knowledge gaps in green growth theory and practice.

By encouraging widespread collaboration and world-class research, the GGKP offers practitioners and policymakers the policy guidance, good practices, tools, and data necessary to support the transition to a green economy.

The GGKP was established in January 2012 by the Global Green Growth Institute, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the World Bank. This group of partners has since expanded to include a large, diverse group of leading institutions and organizations active in areas related to green growth and green economy at the local, national, regional, and international levels.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.greengrowthknowledge.org> or follow us on Twitter at @GGKPlatform

Contacts

Green Growth Knowledge Platform: Amanda McKee, +1 202 458 8886, amckee@ggkp.org

Swiss Confederation: Media Section Federal Office for the Environment, +41 (0)31 322 90 00, medien@bafu.admin.ch; Media Section Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, +41 (0)31 322 31 53, info@eda.admin.ch

United Nations Environment Programme: Leigh-Ann Hurt, +41 22 917 8766, leigh-ann.hurt@unep.org

Global Green Growth Institute: Rachel Waddell, +44 20 3178 7656, r.waddell@gggi.org
<http://www.unep.org/NewsCentre/default.aspx?ArticleID=10695&DocumentID=2758>

January 23, 2014

Nevada's diverse faith leaders to jointly pray for drought affected West

Merinews

Nevada faith leaders belonging to various religions and denominations are gathering in Sparks on February one for an afternoon of prayers urging for divine intervention in view of persistent drought conditions in Western USA.

Distinguished religious statesman Rajan Zed, who is coordinating this Nevada Multi-faith Drought Relief Prayers Service, states that leaders of Christian (various denominations), Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Native American, Baha'i, etc., faiths will pray in their respective traditions and scriptural languages seeking God's blessings for rain and snow.

According to reports, currently over 81% area of the West is facing drought conditions. Many counties in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah have been declared as drought disaster areas; with California, Nevada and Oregon as worst affected, Zed points out.

Reports suggest that about 97% of Nevada is in drought, with all its counties designated as disaster counties. Most of Nevada is under “Extreme” and “Severe” drought categories; but part of the state is under the highest D4 category of drought known as “Exceptional Drought”. Many Nevada farmers are considering not irrigating this year, which will reportedly be first time in recorded history, Rajan Zed adds.

Organizers; declaring February one as a “day of prayer for rain, moisture and snow”; are asking all Nevadans belonging to diverse faiths to join them in prayers at three pm, wherever they are, for two minutes of prayers. They are also urging Nevada churches and other religious centers to hold prayer-sessions at three pm on February one to help farmers, ranchers and other residents, Zed notes.

When God will see Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Native American, Baha’i, etc., leaders sitting together in unity and harmony and praying in diverse traditions, God will be naturally moved to provide the devotees relief from drought so that it will not affect their quality of life, livelihood and health, Rajan Zed says.

Joseph E. Johnson, President of Sparks Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who is Co-Coordinator of this Service, stresses: Our belief is that prayers are answered and connect us with God. We also need to be responsible stewards of what God has given us.

Sparks Mayor Geno R. Martini will also participate in this Nevada Multi-faith Drought Relief Prayers Service.

<http://www.merineews.com/article/nevadas-diverse-faith-leaders-to-jointly-pray-for-drought-affected-west/15894258.shtml>

January 23, 2014

Inquiry into the Design of a Sustainable Financial System

United Nations Environment Programme

Davos - The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched an Inquiry today into policy options for guiding the global financial system to invest in the transition to a green economy.

In the wake of the global financial crisis, there is growing recognition that the financial system must be not only sound and stable, but also sustainable in the way it enables the transition to a low-carbon, green economy.

The Inquiry, extending over 18 months to mid-2015, aims to engage, inform and guide policy makers, financial market actors and other stakeholders concerned with the health of the financial system and its potential for shaping the future economy.

In addressing its core aim, it will map current best practice, draw together principles and frameworks, catalyze new thinking, and ultimately lay out a series of options for advancing a sustainable financial system.

It will also engage with global financial experts and commission-relevant research, as well as contribute to related initiatives across the UN system and elsewhere.

As leading financial institutions increasingly appreciate the imperative of climate change, resource scarcity and other environmental challenges, the current financial 'rules of the game' may not be well suited to accelerate this transition.

World Economic Forum estimates suggest that globally, investment in infrastructure of an estimated US\$6 trillion annually to 2030 is needed to deliver a low-carbon economy. Of this, nearly US\$1 trillion is over and above the business-as-usual trajectory.

Such evidence shows that when investments are targeted towards greening key economic sectors, they can produce multiple benefits for the economy, environment and society.

In launching the Inquiry, Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director and Under-Secretary General of the United Nations, said: "UNEP is working to advance a rapid transition towards an inclusive, green economy. The Inquiry will catalyze actions to enable the financial system to support the transition, building on policy innovations and countries' best practices".

The Inquiry extends UNEP's ground-breaking work on the green economy, and draws on the commitment and wealth of practical expertise of the 200 financial institutional members of the UNEP Finance Initiative (UNEPFI).

David Pitt-Watson, Co-Chair of UNEPFI, said: "The world's financial institutions are there to finance a growing, sustainable economy, but the evidence suggests that, today, the industry performs that task poorly. The Inquiry will support the urgent need to reshape a practical and agreed agenda of reform that ensures that the finance industry fulfills its purpose."

An Advisory Council has been established to guide the Inquiry, comprising financial regulators, senior executives from leading financial institutions and international organizations and financial market and sustainability experts, currently including:

Naina Kidwai, Group General Manager and Country Head, HSBC India
Rachel Kyte, Group Vice President of the World Bank
David Pitt-Watson, co-Chair of UNEP Finance Initiative
Atiur Rahman, Governor of the Central Bank of Bangladesh
Murilo Portugal, President of the Brazilian Bankers Federation

Neeraj Sahai, President of S&P Rating Services
Rick Samans, Managing Director of the World Economic Forum
Mallam Sanusi, Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria
Andrew Sheng, President of Fung Global Institute.
Lord Adair Turner, Senior Fellow of the Institute of New Economic Thinking, ex-Chair of the Financial Services Authority

Naina Kidwai, Chair of HSBC India, said: "The Inquiry offers the financial world a timely opportunity to engage on critical issues and examine how we can best respond to pressing challenges such as water stress, energy efficiency and indeed climate change. I look forward to moving this important agenda forward."

"The Inquiry provides a vehicle for taking a strategic look at how the financial system can play its part in mobilizing capital for a low-carbon, resilient economy", added Rachel Kyte, Group Vice President, World Bank Group.

Two Co-Directors and a Head of Strategic Outreach have been appointed to lead the Inquiry from its Geneva base:

Nick Robins, currently head of HSBC's Center for Excellence in Climate Change
Simon Zadek, ex-Chief Executive of AccountAbility and Senior Fellow of the Global Green Growth Institute and the International Institute for Sustainable Development Mahenau Agha will serve as UNEP Advisor. The first Advisory Council meeting is scheduled to be held in April 2014.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/financialinquiry/>

Contact:

UNEP Inquiry into the Design of a Sustainable Financial System, Email: inquiry@unep.org
Mahenau Agha, UNEP Advisor, Email: mahenau.gha@unep.org, Mobile: +4179-773-1864
Leigh-Ann Hurt, UNEP Green Economy Initiative, Email: leigh-ann.hurt@unep.org, Tel: +4122-917-8766

<http://www.unep.org/GreenEconomy/InformationMaterials/News/PressRelease/tabid/4612/language/en-US/Default.aspx?DocumentId=2758&ArticleId=10698>

January 23, 2014

Friends Fiduciary calls for fossil fuel risk assessment

Friends Fiduciary

FFC, as part of a coalition of 70 global investors representing over \$3 trillion in assets under management, launched the first-ever coordinated effort to spur 45 of the world's largest oil &

gas, coal and electric power companies to assess the financial risks that current and probable future climate policy pose to their business plans.

The World Bank warns of catastrophic climate change impacts at the world's current path for global warming of 4 degrees Celsius or more. Recent studies by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) suggest that achieving the international goal of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius requires a global carbon budget and leaving proven fossil fuel reserves in the ground.

In 2012 alone, however, the 200 largest public fossil fuel companies collectively spent an estimated \$674 billion on finding and developing new reserves, according to the Carbon Tracker Initiative's *Unburnable Carbon* report. Some of these reserves, however, may never be utilized due to the probability of increased carbon emission regulation.

FFC supports mitigating climate change risks and is concerned that directing capital towards high carbon assets, in the wake of growing climate change concern and the probability of increased carbon-limiting policy, would ultimately lead to share value loss. As a long term investor, FFC advocates and anticipates a low-carbon future, and calls for companies to assess business plans in an environment of greater fossil fuel emission restrictions.

View letter: <http://www.friendsfiduciary.org/files/Carbon-Risk-CompiledCompanyLetters-1.20.14.pdf>

View list of signatories: http://www.friendsfiduciary.org/files/Carbon-Asset-Risk-Investor-Signatories-November-2013_final-1.20.14.pdf

<http://www.friendsfiduciary.org/news-resources/>

January 24, 2014

Hundreds of Millions of Hectares, Nearly the Size of Brazil, Face Degradation Threat - UN Report Warns

Implications on Food Security and Natural Systems

United Nations Environment Programme

Davos / Switzerland – Up to 849 million hectares of natural land – nearly the size of Brazil – may be degraded by 2050 should current trends of unsustainable land use continue, warns a report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The need to feed a growing number of people globally has led to more land being converted to cropland at the expense of the world's savannah, grassland and forests.

This has resulted in widespread environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity, affecting an estimated 23 per cent of global soil.

Agriculture currently consumes more than 30 per cent of the world's land area, and cropland covers around 10 per cent of global land.

Between 1961 and 2007, cropland expanded by 11 per cent, a trend that continues to grow.

The report, entitled *Assessing Global Land Use: Balancing Consumption with Sustainable Supply*, was produced by the International Resource Panel: a consortium of 27 internationally renowned resource scientists, 33 national governments and other groups, hosted by UNEP.

UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner, said, "The findings of the International Resources Panel show that the world has witnessed an unprecedented sharp decline in terrestrial ecosystem services and functions during the past decades. Forests and wetlands have been converted to agricultural land to feed growing populations but at a cost that is not sustainable".

"Recognizing that land is a finite resource, we need to become more efficient in the ways we produce, supply and consume our land-based products. We must be able to define and adhere to the boundaries within which the world can safely operate to save millions of hectares by 2050," he said.

"Recommendations from the report are meant to inform policy and contribute to on-going discussions on targets and indicators for sustainable resources management as the world charts a new course for sustainable development post-2015," he added.

The report outlines the need and options to balance consumption with sustainable production.

It focuses on land-based products, such as food, fuels and fibre, and describes methods to enable countries to determine whether their consumption levels exceed sustainable supply capacities.

At the same time it distinguishes between gross and net expansion of cropland.

While net expansion is a result of rising demand for food and non-food biomass – which cannot be compensated by higher yields – gross expansion comprises the shift of cropland to other areas due to losses caused by severe degradation.

Under a business-as-usual scenario, the net expansion of cropland will range from 120 to 500 million hectares by 2050.

Shifts to more protein-rich diets in developing countries and a growing demand for biofuels and biomaterials, especially in developed countries, are increasing the demand for land.

A Safe Consumption Level

The report attempts to answer the question: how much more land can be used to serve the growing demand for food and non-food biomass while keeping the consequences of land use change (e.g. deforestation) at a tolerable level?

A combination of rising incomes and urbanization are changing diets and increasing the demand for land to the point that dietary change soon may override population growth as the major driver behind land requirements for food.

To manage these and other challenges the International Resource Panel uses the “safe operating space” (SOS) concept as a starting point to understand how much more land use can occur before the risk of irreversible damage – in particular through biodiversity loss, release of carbon dioxide, disruption of water and nutrient cycles and loss of fertile soil – becomes unacceptable.

The report says that if the goal of halting global biodiversity loss by 2020 is to be reached then cropland expansion, a key driver of that loss, will need to be halted.

Using the SOS concept, it calculates that the global cropland area available for supplying demand could safely increase by up to 1,640 million hectares.

Under business-as-usual conditions, the report warns that expected global land demands by 2050 will overshoot this safe operating space.

As an interim target, the report proposes 0.20 hectares (1,970 square metres) of cropland per person by 2030.

Monitoring global land use of countries and regions for their domestic consumption gives an indication of whether they have exceeded or are within their safe operating space.

For the European Union, for instance, 0.31 hectares per person were required in 2007. This is one-fourth more than what is domestically available in the EU, is one-third more than the globally available per person cropland in 2007, and it well above the 0.20 per person SOS target for 2030.

The report says that the key causes of our global challenges are linked to unsustainable and disproportionate consumption levels, but in high-consuming countries only a few policy instruments address excessive consumption habits and the structures that encourage them.

At the same time, with an expanding global population and a worldwide trend towards urbanization, up to 5 per cent of the global land (around 15 billion hectares) is expected to be covered by built-up areas by 2050.

In many cases, built up areas expand at the expense of agricultural land, and agricultural land expands at the expense of forests, particularly in tropical regions.

In addition, in the past five decades, deforestation has occurred at an average rate of about 13

million hectares per year.

Reducing Land Demand

While the world's average agricultural yield growth is slowing, the opportunity to increase productivity in regions with lagging yields, like sub-Saharan Africa, seems promising.

Capacity building on best management practices, integrating scientific and local know-how and investing in the remediation of degraded soils offer strong potential for maximizing yield.

In high-consumption regions, more efficient and equitable use of land-based products is required.

Up to 319 million hectares of land can be saved by 2050, if the world follows a combination of measures designed to keep cropland expansion within the 'safe operating space'.

These measures include:

- Improve land management and land use planning in order to minimize the expansion of build-up land on fertile soils;
- Invest in the restoration of degraded land;
- Improve agricultural production practices to increase intensification in an ecologically and socially acceptable way;
- Monitor global land use requirements of countries for the total consumption of agricultural goods in order to allow comparisons with the global average and sustainable supply and implications on sectoral policies;
- Reduce food waste and shift towards more vegetable diets;
- Reduce the subsidization of fuel crops – including the reduction and phase out of biofuel quotas in consuming countries.

More Findings from the Report

- More than half of the synthetic nitrogen fertilizer ever produced has been used up in the past 25 years.
- By 2005, the 10 largest seed corporations controlled half of all commercial seed sales; the top 5 grain trading companies controlled 75 per cent of the market, and the 10 largest pesticide manufacturers supplied 84 per cent of pesticides.
- International agricultural trade has increased tenfold since the 1960s.
- A global agricultural trade has emerged, characterized by high levels of agribusiness concentration, a rapid increase in the share of retail food sales by supermarket chains, and growth in the trade of foodstuffs, fertilizers and pesticides.
- Food prices remain below their peak in 2008, but are higher than pre-crisis levels in many developing countries.

Towards More Sustainable Land-use

The report makes a number of cross-cutting recommendations, which taken together could help

limit cropland expansion to an additional 8-37 per cent by 2050, allowing the world to stay within its safe operating space.

These include:

- Improving information systems, especially to monitor domestic land use, and foreign land use for domestic production and consumption;
- Land use planning to prevent the loss of high-value natural areas to the encroachment of cropland and to avoid the spread of built-up areas onto fertile soil;
- Harmonizing food security, energy, rural development and industrial policies through economy-wide programmes for sustainable resource management;
- Economic instruments to trigger sustainable supply and demand; for example, a “subsidy to sustainability” approach to foster long-term soil productivity;
- Targeting public investment to focus on the needs of smallholders to enhance food security and living conditions in rural areas.

For more information, please contact:

Shereen Zorba, Head of News and Media, United Nations Environment Programme, Tel. [+254 788 526 000](tel:+254788526000) or Email: shereen.zorba@unep.org/ unepnewsdesk@unep.org

Moira O’Brien-Malone, Head, Communications, UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, Paris. Tel +33 1 44 37 76 12 or mobile [+33 6 82 26 93 73](tel:+33682269373). Email moira.obrien-malone@unep.org

Notes to Editors

- To download a copy of the report, please visit: www.unep.org/resourcepanel (from 24 January)
- UNEP’s 2012 Foresight report ranked the issue of global food safety and security among the top three global challenges. The integration of the biodiversity theme into environmental and economic agendas and the new rush for land were within the top twelve.

About the International Resource Panel

The International Resource Panel was established in 2007 to provide independent, coherent and authoritative scientific assessment on the sustainable use of natural resources and the environmental impacts of resource use over the full life cycle. By providing up-to-date information and best science available, the International Resource Panel contributes to a better understanding of how to decouple human development and economic growth from environmental degradation. The information contained in the International Resource Panel’s reports is intended to be policy relevant and support policy framing, policy and programme planning, and enable evaluation and monitoring of policy effectiveness.

About UNEP

Created in 1972, UNEP represents the United Nations’ environmental conscience. Based in

Nairobi, Kenya, its mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics – based in Paris – helps governments, local authorities and decision-makers in business and industry to develop and implement policies and practices focusing on sustainable development. The Division leads UNEP's work in the areas of climate change, resource efficiency, harmful substances and hazardous waste.

Visit: <http://www.unep.org>

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2758&ArticleID=10697>

January 25, 2014

Pope Francis preps tome on the environment

By Jonathan Easley
The Hill

Pope Francis is drafting an encyclical on the environment.

According to multiple media reports, the Vatican announced Friday that the pope is in the early stages of a work on “the ecology of man.”

The pope adopted his name from St. Francis of Assisi, known for his love of nature and the environment. Francis has previously spoken about the exploitation of the earth's natural resources and urged followers to “respect for the whole of creation and the protection of our environment.”

Since taking control of the church in March, Francis hasn't shied away from taking strong political positions, often with a populist bent. Many Democrats have been encouraged by his focus on combating poverty and his criticisms of unrestrained capitalism.

President Obama will meet with Pope Francis at the Vatican at the end of March.

The Catholic church, however, sharply disagrees with a number of the Obama administration's policies, such as the health law's contraception coverage and the U.S. government's tacit support for gay marriage and legalizing marijuana.

Catholic leaders are also concerned about allegations that the National Security Agency spied on the Vatican.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/196419-pope-francis-preps-tome-on-the-environment>

January 28, 2014

UNEP Releases Video on Sea Level Rise and How Nature Can Help Protect Coastal Communities

Video Part of Two Minutes on Oceans with Jim Toomey Series

United Nations Environment Programme

Washington, D.C. —The United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for North America (UNEP RONA), UNEP's Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI) and nationally-syndicated cartoonist Jim Toomey announced today the release of a new video on how communities can adapt to sea level rise. This production is part of a series of six innovative ocean awareness videos entitled ***Two Minutes on Oceans with Jim Toomey***.

The video will be launched at a panel discussion at the National Council for Science and Environment (NCSE) National Conference on Building Climate Solutions. The discussion, sponsored by UNEP and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), will deal with what makes a climate-smart city and how we can build them.

The video demonstrates how coastal communities can adapt to sea level rise by restoring nature's resilience. New research shows that sea level could rise between 0.5 to 2 meters towards the end of this century - threatening low-lying regions with floods and storm surges. The health of many ecosystems, which traditionally were able to cope with shifts in sea levels have been weakened, leaving them less able to protect coastal communities from these impacts. The video also offers ways to restore natural flood barriers, like coral reefs and mangroves, to protect vulnerable regions from sea level rise.

Keith Alverson, Coordinator of UNEP's Climate Change and Adaption Programme in DEPI, shares the video's hopeful message when he says that "Unlike the intractable problems that keep stalling progress on reducing greenhouse gasses, getting started on adaptation does not require any intergovernmental agreements at UN summits, nor does it depend on enormous global sums of money. By preserving and restoring coastal ecosystems, and harnessing their innate resilience to sea level change, any coastal community can dramatically decrease their vulnerability to climate change today."

"What I like about this video is the fact that it offers concrete and economical approaches to mitigating the effects of sea level rise that just about any community anywhere in the world can

adopt with success,” said Toomey. “It’s a video that packs a lot of practical advice to a very urgent problem.”

Using animation and humor, the six videos in the Toomey series, provide in clear and simple language, information about cutting-edge science and policy issues regarding our oceans, their importance to human well-being and the challenges facing our oceans. They address a wide range of ocean topics including: blue carbon, the true value of our oceans, the impacts of climate change, as well as threats such as marine litter.

Each video ends with a call to action for individuals, decision-makers and organizations across North America – inviting them to do their part. The videos are released using web based marketing tools and are free for all those who want to show or air them.

You can watch this video, as well as the previous ones at: <http://www.rona.unep.org/toomey>, or find us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/RONA.UNEP>.

To help UNEP promote this ocean-awareness initiative, please share it with your networks or post it to your webpage. For more information about the series please contact:

- Elisabeth Guilbaud-Cox, Head of Communications, UNEP RONA at elisabeth.guilbaud-cox@unep.org, Tel.: (202) 974-1307
- Monika Thiele, Programme Officer, UNEP RONA at monika.thiele@unep.org, Tel.: (202) 974-1309
- Keith Alverson, Coordinator, Climate Change and Adaptation Programme, UNEP DEPI at keith.alverson@unep.org or Tel: +254 714636317

UNEP’s Regional Office for North America (RONA)

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading authority on the environment within the United Nations system. RONA’s mission is to build support in the region for UNEP’s work, to promote effective responses to international environmental challenges and to foster cooperation on environmental issues between North America and the broader international community. To achieve this mission, RONA’s strategy is to promote collaboration between UNEP and all sectors of North American society, including U.S. and Canadian governmental institutions, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups.

http://rona.unep.org/documents/news/Sea%20Level%20Rise%20Video%20Launch%20Press%20Release%20FINAL%20Jan%2024_2014%20%282%29.pdf

January 29, 2014

UNEP Invites Nominations for 2014 Champions of the Earth Award

United Nations Environment Programme

Climate Change Action in Focus as World Works towards New Climate Deal

Nairobi – The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is inviting nominations for the 2014 Champions of the Earth Award, which honours visionaries whose actions and leadership have had a positive impact on the environment.

UNEP's Champions of the Earth—lauded each year in the fields of Policy and Leadership, Science and Innovation, Entrepreneurial Vision, and Inspiration and Action—serve as an inspiration for transformative action as the world transitions to an inclusive Green Economy.

Previous laureates have been recognized for their efforts in areas such as the management of natural resources, demonstrating new ways to tackle climate change and food waste, taking uncompromising business decisions based on sustainability models and raising awareness of emerging environmental challenges.

This year, UNEP is particularly interested in individuals who have made a substantive contribution to tackling climate change as the global community works towards the agreement of a new comprehensive climate deal, which will be adopted in 2015 and implemented from 2020. Women and youth nominees are also strongly encouraged.

Google Earth, Brazil's Minister of Environment Izabella Teixeira and Carlo Petrini, the founder of the Slow Food Movement, were among the award winners in 2013.

Other winners in 2013 were European Commissioner for Environment Janez Potocnik; Veerabhadran Ramanathan, Professor at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UCSD; Jack Dangermond, founder of the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), and Martha Isabel Ruiz Corzo from the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve in Mexico.

Champions of the Earth is now in its 10th year, and since its inception has seen steady growth in both profile and the number of nominees. It has recognized heads of state, companies, activists, musicians and many others at award ceremonies in major cities such as Singapore, Paris, Seoul, New York City and Rio de Janeiro.

The 2014 winners will be unveiled at a gala event towards the end of the year. China's Guangdong Wealth supported the 2013 awards, and will continue to do so in 2014.

About Champions of the Earth

Champions of the Earth, which was launched in 2005, is the UN's flagship environmental award. To date, it has recognized 59 individuals and organizations for their leadership, vision,

inspiration and action on the environment. The list of previous Champions laureates include Mongolian President Tsakhia Elbegdorj, Mexican President Felipe Calderon, Chinese actress and environmental advocate Zhou Xun, the Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO) and global music legend Angélique Kidjo. Visit <http://www.unep.org/champions/> to register your nomination.

About Guangdong Wealth

Guangdong Wealth Environmental Protection is a leading supplier of water purifying products and water treatment integrated solutions in China. The company practices a business model that puts social welfare before economic interests. Their development concept "let the sky be bluer and the water clearer" supports UNEP's goals of maintaining, if not improving, the health of our natural resources. The company invests in environmental scholarships for young university students, organizes clean-up operations and donates tonnes of purifying tablets to tackle pollution in rivers in Guangdong and Beijing.

For more information, please contact:

UNEP Newsdesk (Nairobi), on Tel. +254 725 939 620 or e-mail unepnewsdesk@unep.org

<http://www.unep.org/champions/news/2014-call-for-nominations.asp#sthash.gSggKLCg.dpbs>

January/February 2014

Religious Naturalism and Its Place in the Family of Religions

By Donald A. Crosby

From *The Fourth R*

Volume 27, Issue 1

To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least, they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood. His intercourse with heaven and earth becomes part of his daily food. In the presence of nature a wild delight runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows. Nature says—he is my creature, and maugre [despite] all his impertinent griefs, he shall be glad with me.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson¹

Religious naturalism deserves recognition as an important form of religious faith among the various religious stances and outlooks of the world. It does so especially today, when its significance is coming to be increasingly acknowledged, vigorously developed, and actively propounded. What is religious naturalism? Simply put, it is the recognition that to be is to be natural and the conviction that nature in all of its forms and manifestations is a proper focus of

religious commitment. When I say that to be is to be natural, I am exempting from reality anything other than nature, meaning that, for religious naturalism, there is no such thing as a supposed *supernatural* being, beings, regions, revelations, origins, purposes, destinies, and the like. All of reality is natural, or, to state the matter negatively, nothing beyond, beneath, or above nature and its multifarious forms exists. This does not mean that there can be no deeply fulfilling and saving religious faith, outlook, or devotion. It means that the appropriate source and object of such faith, outlook, and devotion can rightly be regarded as nature itself.

Nature gives birth to each of us humans and to our species, nurtures us, supports us, surrounds us with rejuvenating beauty and awesome sublimity, and fills us with gladness and wonder—even in the face of loss, sadness, or pain. The words of Ralph Waldo Emerson in the epigraph to this essay express this idea with forceful beauty and exactness. Nature can assure us, demand the utmost of us in loyalty and dedication, and empower us to live meaningful, constructive, and contributing lives. However, nature also allows us and other natural beings to die, and sometimes not in the fullness of time. And it not only permits but also warrants in numerous ways untold sufferings for the creatures of earth. I shall say more about this troubling fact later.

As natural beings among diverse other natural beings, we humans are at home in nature. We need not wistfully yearn for some other home or for some other form of existence. Religious naturalism maintains that our central task in life and the deepest fulfillment of our existence is to serve nature, not to think, act, or react as if nature were put here to serve us. Nature is not to be regarded as mere raw material for human use but is to be revered as having ultimate, abiding, and inexhaustible worth. Its vast reaches of space and time do not center on us, but we are products of its evolutionary processes here on earth and an integral part of the earth-wide community of living beings sustained by our respective natural environments. The environments of humans may be modified by human technology, but they are still at bottom aspects of nature turned to human use.

Should nature be worshipped or prayed to, then? Does it have an overall purpose? Can the fact of its existence be explained without recourse to God or to a transcendent, non-natural source or ground akin to God? Is religious commitment to the ultimacy of nature a form of pantheism? Can it have religious meaning without being acknowledged as the creation of God, without relying from moment to moment on the sustaining power and presence of God? Is nature not rife with indifferent danger, destructiveness, and waste, and thus hardly qualifying for religious reverence and commitment? Exactly how or in what ways can nature assure us religiously, call forth our utmost dedication and commitment, or empower us to live richly meaningful and amply fulfilling lives? In short, can nature save us? I shall spend the rest of this essay responding to these questions as a proponent of the version of religious naturalism I label as Religion of Nature.

Can we worship or pray to nature?

Religion of Nature does not expect us to worship or pray to nature. Worship is appropriate only for a personal being, and nature is not a personal being. And while meditation and prayer have an important place in the outlook and practice of Religion of Nature, they are focused on nature but not addressed to nature as if it were personal. There can be prayers of gratitude for nature's magnificence and our place as humans within nature. There can be expressions of commitment to serving the well-being of nature and its creatures, including its human creatures. There can be

meditations on the mysteries and wonders of nature. There can be confessions of failure to live up to the ideals of Religion of Nature. And so on. But petitionary prayers, as one type of prayer, can be addressed only to a personal religious ultimate, not to nature. We cannot entreat a non-personal nature to help us. But rituals of various sorts, both public and private, can be created and celebrated in Religion of Nature.

Does nature have an overall purpose?

For Religion of Nature, nature as a whole has no purpose. But there are ample purposes within nature, that is, in the distinctive modes of aspiring, acting, and flourishing among sentient beings and especially in the lives of human beings. So purpose has emerged in nature even though there is no overarching purpose of nature. It is natural for us humans to live purposively as we go about planning our lives, rearing our children, relating to one another, devoting ourselves to our careers, involving ourselves in creative activities, and committing ourselves to moral and religious ideals. The absence of an overarching purpose of nature as a whole does not disqualify Religion of Nature from having profound and lasting religious significance.

Nature may not focus primarily on us or care for us in the way a personal God could be expected to do, but it should be remembered that the personal God of traditional religion has today to be conceived as presiding over a universe of well over a hundred billion galaxies, each with at least a hundred billion stars, and who knows how many planets. (Just to give some image to these overwhelming numbers, there are more stars in the universe—100 billion \times 100 billion—than there are grains of sand on all the beaches on earth.) It seems unlikely that such a God could be intimately concerned exclusively or even primarily with the human species on one small planet or with the relatively parochial concerns of individual human beings. It may be claimed that such a God has a comprehensive purpose for the universe as a whole, but that purpose may be so radically general as not to be directed specifically to human beings. At any rate, nature does “care” for us in the perspective of Religion of Nature by providing us with the nurture, support, resources, abilities, and motivations to find our own purposes in life and to pursue those purposes in challenging and meaningful ways.

Can the existence of nature be accounted for apart from a divine creator?

It was traditionally believed that the existence of the universe could only be explained if there is a God to create and sustain it. The universe was viewed as contingent or critically dependent on God for its existence and persistence in being. Only God exists necessarily, it was believed, meaning that only in the case of the existence of God does it make sense not to require a reason for that kind of existence. To refer to God as a necessary being is to assert that it is impossible for God not to exist, precisely because God does not depend on anything else for existence. By contrast, it is possible for everything other than God not to exist. That is why everything else, and the universe as a whole, could not have come into being or continue in being unless it depended throughout on God’s providence and power. Or so we have frequently been told in past religion and philosophy.

But there is no compelling reason, from the standpoint of Religion of Nature, to conceive of the universe as existing contingently rather than necessarily, and thus as requiring a transcendent ground and reason for its existence. If there is such a thing as necessary existence, it can apply to the universe itself rather than to God. The universe in some shape or form has always existed and

always will exist, according to this view. It did not arise from nothing, nor was it created from nothing by a God. In fact, sheer nothingness is not even a meaningful conception, as is shown by the theist's felt requirement to posit the prior existence of God. There is no need to explain the existence of the universe any more than there is need for the traditional theist to explain the existence of God.

What about the supposed Big Bang origin of our present universe, as argued for by contemporary science? Does that not strongly suggest origination out of a prior nothingness? And is that idea explicable apart from the existence of God or some sort of previously existing ground? In today's physics, the Big Bang is not held to have originated out of sheer nothingness. Theories of its occurrence tell us that our universe resulted from fluctuations within a so-called "quantum vacuum" or empty space, or that it was a tiny cosmic nugget of incredible density and potential power. But neither the vacuum nor the space is really claimed to be completely empty or devoid of character, and the nugget is acknowledged to have previously existed. The laws of physics by which the Big Bang occurred must similarly have existed prior to its occurrence. In all these cases, something is alleged to have given rise to something else. Religion of Nature takes this way of thinking into account and is open to the possibility, if not probability, that this universe and its rapid expansion arose from the crunch or collapse of a previous universe, and that universe from another universe, and so on back into infinite time. The universe as a whole in all of its successive guises and forms has therefore always existed, and our universe is a phase of this ongoing process of the creation and destruction of universes over endless time.

For Religion of Nature, therefore, all meaningful explanations are those relating one part of the universe to some other part. The universe is the given context within which all explanations should take place. To have recourse to God is to seek to explain one alleged inexplicable mystery (the existence of the universe) in terms of another one (the claimed existence and nature of God) that is in many ways even more deeply uncertain, mysterious, and elusive. So it is not entirely clear that anything is really explained. In saying these things, I do not mean to demean or dismiss out of hand theistic belief or those who hold to it. I mean only to show that it is possible to be authentically religious and philosophically coherent in the absence of such a belief. I respect those who think differently, even though I am not swayed by their reasoning. I am seeking here to exhibit the rationale for a satisfying and fulfilling religious vision that does not require belief in God.

Is Religion of Nature a kind of pantheism?

It might seem to be the case that Religion of Nature is a kind of pantheism. Pantheism means literally that everything (*pan*) is God (*theos*). But there is no God of any sort in Religion of Nature, whether God be conceived as one with nature or whether nature be conceived as contained within God (panentheism). In other words, there is no divine spirit pervading nature and giving guidance and support to nature. Spirituality is contained within nature and provided by nature quite apart from the existence of a deity of any kind. In Religion of Nature, nature is deemed worthy of the religious devotion, loyalty, and commitment accorded to God in theistic religions. But Religion of Nature is not a theistic religion.

For people of Western and Middle Eastern cultures, long accustomed to having religion closely associated with belief in God and commitment to the will and purpose of God, it may seem

strange to speak of a religious outlook that does not focus on God or assume the ultimacy of God. But there are Eastern religions that do not devote their reverence and loyalty to God but are nevertheless deeply and undeniably religious in character. Examples are Advaita Vedanta Hinduism, Theravada Buddhism, and Daoism. Atheism or the absence of belief in God is not equal to non-religion, even though it is often assumed to be so here in the West. This idea is provincial and ill-informed. The increasing interdependence of various parts of the world with one another should help to disabuse us of the notion that belief in God and religion are synonymous.

To be free of this misconception is to attain an important new level of religious literacy. Religion of Nature is admittedly a godless religion, but it is not, by virtue of that fact, lacking in profound religious meaning and value. Atheism and irreligion are not one and the same, and there is no good reason to designate positive religious outlooks, that are alternatives to types of religious theism, solely with the negative epithet of atheism. This is especially so in view of the fact that nontheistic religious outlooks and commitments have nourished millions of the world's peoples over extremely long periods of time.

Is nature not rife with indifferent danger, destruction, and waste?

It could be argued that nature is hardly fit to be the object of religious commitment. It is dark, threatening, and even terrifying in some of its manifestations and not focused directly or primarily on human well-being. It is shot through with danger, destruction, and waste.

Unpredictable and hugely destructive catastrophes occur frequently in nature, sweeping everything before them: ecosystems, plants and animals, including insects, sea creatures, and humans. Examples are forest fires, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, volcanic eruptions, droughts, and plagues. Predatory practices abound in nature, with routine sacrifices of one life for another. Innumerable creatures—human and nonhuman alike—also die from such things as birth defects, lack of adequate food, or disease. How can such a seemingly uncaring, harshly destructive force be a candidate for religious veneration?

Apart from the fact that we could also ask such a question of a God who is said beneficently to rule the universe in which such things occur, we need to recognize that nature's awesome power is such that its creations and its destructions go hand-in-hand. Nature's laws are generally supportive and beneficent, but they can also have destructive effects. Moreover, laws and chance go necessarily together. The human species would not be around if nearly 99% of previous species had not become extinct, including the dinosaurs of 65 million years ago, whose extinction prepared the way for the flourishing of mammals. Momentous natural forces have carved out river valleys, upthrust and chiseled out mountain ranges, routinely rid forests of old, decrepit trees and choking understory, and so on. Ecosystems are dynamic and ever-changing, not static. Malformed creatures are born as well as normal ones, although in far less numbers.

As creatures of nature, humans can find ways sometimes to anticipate and perhaps mitigate such natural disasters, but they are part of the creative processes of nature. Everything in nature is subject to natural laws, and the human species is no exception. The destructiveness of nature is part of its majesty. And its destructiveness must be weighed in relation to its pervasive nurturing and sustaining power. As for the charge of nature's wanton wastefulness, we should note that everything is efficiently recycled in nature, much more consistently and thoroughly than by

human beings. It may seem easy to imagine a better world here on earth than the one we live in, but on reflection, it is not as easy overall as we might have thought. And we should note soberly that as precious as our human autonomy and freedom is, it also contains the seeds of disastrous evil and rampant destruction. We cannot have the gift of freedom without its potential misdirections and misuses. Even the lazy or indifferent failure to act can in many instances have disastrous consequences. Our present ecological crisis testifies to this truth.

Having noted all of this, can we imagine a better world? And would we, after careful reflection, want to live in a different world? A nature without potential disaster could not be a nature ruled in general by natural law. We could not execute our choices without the expectation of lawful regularities in the world. For example, I might try to lift a chair, wash a dish, design a machine, or bestow a kiss but find that I could not do so. Without natural laws, the world would not even be a world; it would be sheer chaos. But these regularities can, on occasion, hurt us or even kill us. Gravity and fire, for example, are of great use, but they can also have destructive and even disastrous effects. And the gift of meaningful freedom also contains within it the seed of its misuse, and even of its rampantly destructive misuse—as human history sadly testifies.

Were there no risks or uncertainties in our lives, we would have lost many of our lives' most admirable aspects, such as the challenge of creativity accompanied by the risk of failure, courage in the face of danger, acts of temperance and honor despite temptations to the contrary, the overcoming of odds by dint of sustained effort, the effortful building of character and of a way of life in the face of an uncertain future, and the like. In fact, the very notion of freedom is unintelligible if there is no liability to make mistakes in choosing between better and worse, reasonable and unreasonable, true and untrue, and so on. I could not write this article without the assumption of my having such freedom, but my freedom exposes me to the risk of unclarity, mistakes in reasoning, and error in what I write. A world that guarantees only good outcomes would be one in which human effort and freedom could make no difference. In such a world, we humans would be robots, not persons.

With the ambiguity of the world goes genuine responsibility in and for the world. Without it, such responsibility, and in fact the very meaning, value, and importance of human life, would seem to be lost. It is highly doubtful, therefore, that we would want to live in a world devoid of ambiguity. The traditional religious depiction of heaven seems often to be oblivious to this observation. The world of nature is in many undeniable ways threatening, sobering, and precarious—replete with systematic natural evils and the doleful evils brought about by human misuses of freedom. But it is also in many other equally undeniable ways welcoming, joyful, and sustaining. The evils and the goods are woven inextricably together. The possibilities for the bad allow for innumerable, otherwise unattainable possibilities for the good.

Does nature have saving power?

Can nature provide deep and lasting assurance? Can it place rigorous, soul-searching demands on us? And can it empower us to respond effectively to such demands? These three questions encompass what it would mean to find salvation in Religion of Nature. The answer to all three is affirmative. Let us see why. The assurance that nature provides to the human spirit is aptly depicted in this essay's epigraph, where Emerson speaks of the lovers of nature as experiencing "wild delight" in their close attunements with nature over the course of their lifetimes and of the

intimate “intercourse with heaven and earth” that has become an essential part of their “daily food.” We fail to give due recognition sometimes to how extraordinary it is to be not only alive but consciously alive and to have the ability to reflect upon, marvel at, and settle gratefully into our place in the natural order. What a spectacular gift this is for any reasonably thoughtful human being! We have the assurance of being at home in nature and of being in need of no more than this cherished fact to confidently live our lives, exercise our choices, and make our contributions to our fellow humans and to other living beings of this planet.

But what about the hope of an afterlife? How can nature assure us if absolute extinction of our existence and bodily consciousness awaits us at the end of our lives? My answer to this question is that we need to free ourselves of the assumption that salvation means going to heaven when we die. For Religion of Nature, we—like all creatures of nature—have a finite span of life. We come into being and we pass away. But while we are here we can strive to make the most significant contributions we can to the ongoingness of life on earth. The meaning of our lives is measured by the quality of our experience and awareness here and now and by what we give to the earth and its creatures, not by expectation of an endless life to come. Our influences can live after us and be sown into the fabric of lives of those who come after us, humans and nonhumans alike. The emphasis throughout is not on egoistic preoccupation with endless personal survival but on doing as much with our relatively brief lives as we can for the good of others. This is privilege enough and more than gift enough.

In speaking of the importance of the contributions we can and should make to the well-being of earth and its creatures, including its other human creatures, I have already alluded to the demand aspect of salvation, as envisioned by Religion of Nature. Any so-called religion without rigorous demands is not worth the name. If it demands little or nothing of us, it can have little or no transformative power in our lives. Salvation is a gift, in this case the gift of being alive and aware, and of experiencing on every side the wonders of the natural world. But it is also a requirement, a challenge, a task—with deeds to be performed that adherents of Religion of Nature must determine for themselves, in light of each person’s particular talents and abilities. But in all cases the task should include profound care for the ecosystems of earth, especially in this time of grave ecological crisis.

In the perspective of Religion of Nature, human ethics is a subset of ecological ethics, and ecological ethics is conceived in the context of a powerfully demanding religious outlook and commitment. There is much suffering, pain, and deprivation in the nonhuman aspects of nature and among human beings, and we should devote our energies to preventing or alleviating these sufferings, pains, and deprivations as far and as appropriately as we can. Religion of Nature demands this of us. An essential part of the meaning of our lives is what we do and are called on to do to address and minister to the needs of others.

But in the midst of its strenuous demands, Religion of Nature also highlights our empowerment to respond positively and effectively to them. What is the source of this empowerment? Fundamentally, it is the love of nature in all of its aspects, a love that courses in the veins of all who are genuinely attuned to nature and deeply aware of its splendor and magnificence. This love can be awakened by the steady hum of cicadas on a warm summer night; by the rise of an orange moon in the mists of an early evening; by a snowcapped mountain range towering in the

distance; by the white-capped waves of a wind-swept sea; by the playful antics of a puppy or kitten; by the light steps and easy bounds of a mule deer; by the ratta-tat-tat of a ladderbacked woodpecker on a sweet gum tree; by the sparkle and rush of a waterfall cascading over a cliff; by the miracle of birth, whether of animals or humans; by the delicately linked tendrils in the orb of a spider's web; by the human facility for language and other forms of symbolic thought and expression; and by countless other miracles. The list is endless.

The empowerment of such love is all around us, and it dwells within us, only awaiting fuller and richer sensitization and development. If we humans lose our instinctive capacity for intense imaginative love as we grow into maturity and take on the responsibilities of adult life, as Emerson suggests we are apt to do, then this regrettable situation calls for concerted, effective cultivation of such love by every individual and cultural means available. Such cultivation is essential for every human life and for every human culture. It is deeply engrained in the rituals of Paleolithic cultures, and we have much to learn from them.

Enlivened, fully aware, childlike appreciation and imagination in the presence of the marvels of nature can have great and lasting effects for good in the world and in the lives of humans as integral parts of nature. Stimulations of nature's empowering love are no deep secret and are not in short supply. They lie ready at hand. We have only to wake up and see, to become fully alive in order to experience their luminous meanings and to understand.

On the basis of these all-too-brief musings, I argue that the three components of religious salvation—assurance, demand, and empowerment—are readily and fully available in Religion of Nature. And I am convinced that this religious perspective should be welcomed into the world-wide family of highly significant religious outlooks and commitments. When we are deeply convinced of the truth of a particular religious outlook, as I am of this one, it is all too easy to become intolerant or even contemptuous of religious views other than one's own. This tendency must be strongly resisted. No one religious faith, however compelling or conclusive it may seem, is adequate to capture the full range of the mysteries of life or the meanings, prospects, and demands of human existence. We can share our various perspectives and commitments even as we are centered within them. And as we do so, can continue to learn from one another and experience ongoing transformations and enhancements of our respective outlooks on the world.

Want to know more? Watch for another article on religious naturalism in the May/June 2014 issue of *The Fourth R*, or read this [Evolution 2014 interview](#) with Westar Fellow Lloyd Geering.

Donald A. Crosby is emeritus professor of philosophy at Colorado State University. He has expounded religious naturalism in three books: *A Religion of Nature* (2002), *Living with Ambiguity: Religious Naturalism and the Menace of Evil* (2008), and [*The Thou of Nature: Religious Naturalism and Reverence for Sentient Life*](#) (2013). He lives in Tallahassee, Florida.

<http://www.westarinstitute.org/resources/the-fourth-r/religious-naturalism/>

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=45&key=793e9330c9354aa6e8aaeb7a37b56a04&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

February 2014

Member Spotlight: A field course in the mountains of Usambara led Stephen Awoyemi to make conservation his purpose in life

Society for Conservation Biology

Stephen Awoyemi's passion for conservation was ignited in the Usambara Mountains in Tanzania in 2002 where he was participating in a field course sponsored by the [Tropical Biology Association](#).

The mountains are a biodiversity hotspot and it was there, engaged in on-the-ground conservation projects and learning about the scale of humanity's impact on the environment, that Stephen realized that conservation is the cause to which he would dedicate his career.

Since then he has "not turned back. Not even once."

Today Stephen is a Miriam Rothschild Scholar at the [Conservation Leadership Program](#) (MPhil) at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

In the following Q&A, Stephen, who is from Nigeria, offers advice to conservation biology students on how to make a difference and discusses leadership, the role of religion in conservation biology, and why he is pursuing a Master of Philosophy in conservation.

You are one of the founders of SCB's Religion and Conservation Biology Working Group. Most don't associate religion with conservation. What role does religion play in conservation?

Steven: If you observe trends you will find out that in the last 50 years humanity has increased tremendously in its capacity to self-determine and above all be responsible for its destiny and its planet. Irrespective of the shortfalls, there is a dawning, an awakening in humanity that we can change things, we are in control and therefore responsible.

This consciousness is also spreading across religious communities in different parts of the world. Religions have more strongly emphasized, refined and altered their teachings about conservation

in ways that call for changing human behavior toward nature. This is a welcome development. We know that religion drives three behavioral pivots in the human: beliefs, emotions and values. Facts, figures and statistics do little to foster the commitment conservation badly needs. And religion can help us place meaning, value and concern for biodiversity in society where science cannot tread.

Why did you decide to pursue a Masters of Philosophy in Conservation Leadership?

I have always known that conservation is all about leadership. Long before I saw the MPhil in Conservation Leadership Program in Cambridge, I had been studying leadership and management literature for years. I knew this was as far self-help could take me. I needed capacity building of international standards in what I know how to do best. So I seized the opportunity. Thanks to my mentor Phoebe Barnard who encouraged me to apply.

There are people in your program from literally all corners of the world. What have you learned from your classmates and what is it like to participate in group discussions where so many different cultures, experiences, perspectives and approaches are represented?

I have learned even more that there is strength in diversity. From saving octopuses in Madagascar, solving complex policy issues in protected areas in Colombia and protecting snow leopards in India, each classmate affirms the need for courage, persistence, creativity and the passion to make an impact. Each of us is distinct in our views, tackling conservation from the basis of our strengths and peculiarities. This makes a stimulating atmosphere for discussions and team work when we address conservation problems in class.

How is the program shaping your views on the challenges of conserving Earth's biological diversity?

As the program exposes the breadth of conservation problems and the different approaches in addressing these problems, I see even more profoundly the daunting challenge before humanity. Importantly, I see how hard conservation organizations and individuals round the world are working and making a difference. This gives me hope, telling me no matter how little, each individual can make a difference; whether a researcher, practitioner or policy maker.

You talk about the leadership mind to solve conservation problems. What do you see as the key characteristics of a leadership mind?

The leadership mind is a choice. It is not a given. What characterizes the leadership mind are:

1. Sustained “initiative” all through one’s life and career not just a flash in the pan demonstration.
2. A heart of service, contribution and personal responsibility. In essence, a leader should consistently ask: how can I contribute? What is needed of my strengths and personality to make a difference in my organization, society and world?
3. The leadership mind is an embodiment of love. Love for work, humanity, and biodiversity. Without love, service becomes mechanical, dull and ineffective.

4. Lastly but not limited to these, the leadership mind is one that is self-aware. The reason why many cannot lead is because they have not found themselves; their identity; their voice.

On a local scale, what conservation issues in Nigeria are dear to you? What about a continent wide scale?

Wildlife conservation is not considered a priority in Nigeria and many parts of Africa. I see religion as the most apt conduit to reach the hearts and minds of many Africans. The essence would be to enlighten and bring to their consciousness the importance of biodiversity and the African's role in contributing to save life on Earth from an imminent catastrophe.

What advice do you have to offer to conservation biology students looking to follow their dreams and make a difference in the field?

Defining purpose is central to any aspiration. The conservation biology student must search deeply within him or her to identify their purpose. When this is done, all things, all activities will converge at a point of concentration. There will be less frivolous activity, distraction and waste of opportunity. Purpose will fuel passion and passion in turn will fuel perseverance, creativity and innovation. My friend and teacher Tom Lombardo observes "Although it is important to strive for self-improvement through education and to pursue education to realize professional goals and advancement, these goals are one-sided and self-centered; one should also pursue education so that one can contribute something to the world – to humanity, to something beyond oneself".

<http://www.conbio.org/membership/members-spotlight/awoyemi>

February 2, 2014

Slow down

By Abbot Stanislaus Gumula
Post and Courier

The Brothers at Mepkin Abbey have followed the discussion about the fate of Cainhoy Plantation over the past three months. We are hopeful that a positive outcome can be achieved for this important property, and with that in mind offer a message of patience and hope.

Mepkin Abbey, a Trappist monastery at the confluence of the two forks of the Cooper River, played a role in the conservation of the historic Cooper River corridor. Mepkin was originally the estate of several historic families including Sir John Colleton, Henry Laurens, and thereafter the well-known publisher, Henry Luce. In 1949, the Luces donated a large portion of the property to

the Trappist Order. It was then that we accepted the hallowed role of stewards of Mepkin, a place we believe to be set in one of the most beautiful and sacred landscapes in America.

Our goal has been to respect the historic and ecological integrity of the property and be good members of the Cooper River community. Leading a monastic life, traditionally our community involvement is of the quiet kind.

In the mid-1990s, however, development pressures were soaring and land prices escalating, leaving the future of the Cooper River corridor uncertain. Sensing a tipping point, Father Francis Kline, then Abbot of Mepkin and now deceased, and his long-time colleague, Strachan Donnelley, then director of the Center for Humans and Nature and also now deceased, proposed a series of meetings loosely called the "Cooper River Forum." The purpose of the forum was to bring all of the community interests to the table to develop a common vision for the corridor. What was it that we all - fishermen, hunters, foresters, industrialists, landowners, historians, recreationists, and monks - valued? Over the course of several meetings we all resolved to move forward slowly and with controlled growth. On Mepkin's part, in August 2006 we placed the abbey under a conservation easement. In turn, our neighbors, the Meads, the Royalls and many others, including industries, placed easements on their properties.

Of course, there were instances of temporary conflict. For example, the remains of Childsbury, a colonial town established in 1707 on a high bluff along the river, was threatened with development. The community took the time to come together to find a solution. Today, Childsbury is protected in perpetuity for the public as a South Carolina Heritage Preserve.

Likewise, there was Bonneau Ferry. Then-owner Mead-Westvaco announced that it was selling 10,000 acres of its prime Bonneau Ferry holdings to a private developer. Again, the community worked together for an alternative. Bonneau Ferry was saved and given to South Carolina's Department of Natural Resources. Altogether some 30,000 acres have been protected.

Cainhoy Plantation is part of the Cooper River corridor. It anchors the southern end of the river much like we at Mepkin anchor the north. For good or for bad we are all connected. Like Childsbury, Bonneau Ferry and Mepkin, Cainhoy has enormous historic, cultural and ecological wealth and has irreplaceable strategic value given its place in this immensely complex and intricate system that includes the Francis Marion National Forest and the Cooper and the Wando Rivers.

We at Mepkin Abbey believe Cainhoy deserves a plan that accurately reflects its historical, cultural and ecological sensitivity as well as allowing smart development. Further, we believe we can arrive at a plan for Cainhoy that benefits all parties. Such a positive outcome cannot happen overnight and without the sincere collaboration of all interested parties.

And surely it cannot happen if the City of Charleston moves forward with its current fast-track approval process.

Some have coined the first of the Cooper River Forum meetings the "Miracle Meeting" as it set the stage for abundant good will and solid cooperation. In truth, at work then was not a miracle but inspired leadership.

In the spirit of Father Francis Kline and the many leaders who labored with him to protect the Cooper River, I humbly suggest that the City of Charleston slow down the approval process and that we convene another Cooper River Forum, again at Mepkin Abbey, to help the community focus on the shared values of this unique and treasured landscape and plan for its development and conservation.

Cainhoy is a jewel that must not be lost.

And it will not be lost if we agree to move forward together slowly and with grace.

Abbot Stanislaus Gumula was elected the fourth abbot of Mepkin Abbey in 2006.

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20140202/PC1002/140209912>

February 6, 2014

Tikkun Tevel – A Spring to Heal the Planet, from Pesach to Shavuot

By Rabbi Arthur Waskow
The Shalom Center

Snow two feet deep and a huge tree-limb down in our back yard, thermometer dancing with Zero, 620,000 folks here in Philly without electricity — winter gone haywire from what some call “Global Weirding” –

I am yearning toward the coming thaw. Not just of flowers rising up against Winter, but the people rising up against Pharaoh. Springing up in active hope to save us all from the Carbon Pharaohs that are bringing on the climate crisis – Plagues that afflict us all.

So let’s begin to plan now. I am writing with suggestions, hopes. I especially hope many of us will comment, suggest, and begin planning now for vigorous action.

The first night of Pesach comes Monday evening, April 14. Palm Sunday comes the day before. Not surprising! — The first Palm Sunday was a protest against oppression by the Roman Empire, a protest march in the provincial capital of the Empire – Jerusalem — led by a radical Rabbi from the Galilee.

Not surprising for these nonviolent Jewish marchers to choose Passover-time to raise green palms of life and protest: Passover was the archetypal festival of a victorious challenge to

Imperial power, as well as the festival of life reborn.

So ——— already from The Shalom Center on our own and within Interfaith Moral Action on Climate and Philadelphia Interfaith Power & Light there are plans afoot for action in Philadelphia, NYC, and Washington DC. We'd also be glad to assist wherever possible if activist groups emerge in other cities — in synagogues and havurot & independent minyanim, in churches and mosques everywhere.

FIRST EVENT IN A SPRING OF TIKKUN TEVEL: On April 9 or 10, with Matzah in one hand and Palms in the other, we who seek to heal our wounded Mother Earth will gather in a house of worship, pray and praise that ONE who breathes all life.

Then we will march with Palms in hand to some Pyramid of Power: an office of the American Petroleum Institute, or a coal-powered plant spewing asthma into the neighborhood and drought upon the planet, or railroad tracks where derailed tanker cars threaten to bring flames of terror upon an entire city.

There to pass a Globe from hand to hand, singing “We’ve got the whole world in our hands/
Trees and tigers in our hands/ Our children and their children in our hands / We have the whole world in our hands!”

And to eat the Matzah that is the Bread of Haste, “for there was no time for the dough to rise”; it is the Bread of the “fierce urgency of Now.”

NEXT POSSIBLE CLIMATE-FOCUS TIME: On Shabbat morning April 12, Jews will read a passage from the last of the Prophets – Malachi — specially designated for the Shabbat before Passover:

Here! The day is coming that will flame like a furnace, says the Infinite YHWH / Breath of Life, when all the arrogant and all evil-doers, root and branch, will like straw be burnt to ashes. Yet for those of you who revere My Name, a sun of justice will arise with healing in its wings / rays... .

Here! Before the coming of the great and awesome day of YHWH/ the Breath of Life, I will send you the Prophet Elijah to turn the hearts of parents to children and the hearts of children to parents, lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction.” (Malachi 3: 20-21, 23-24; See commentary at <https://theshalomcenter.org/node/1497>)

This Haftarah passage lends itself to bringing together different age groups in the congregation to learn more deeply about the climate crisis and to plan for action.

NEXT: During the week of Pesach and Holy Week, clusters of people can plan an Interfaith Seder for the Earth: perhaps a Second or Third Seder, perhaps on Holy Thursday in memory of the Last Supper, perhaps on the evening of Earth Day, April 22, beginning just after Passover ends. Check at <https://theshalomcenter.org/haggadah-for-the-earth> for a PDF version of such an Interfaith Seder

for the Earth and at

<https://theshalomcenter.org/content/palms-passover-interfaith-healing-seder-earth> for a version that can easily be edited to your own taste.

In a separate letter, I will suggest ways of pointing Shabbat B'Har (May 10); Lag ba'Omer (Sunday May 18); and Shavuot (beginning the evening of June 3) toward the Torah of Tikkun Tevel – Healing of the Planet.

Let me repeat: I welcome comments, suggestions — write them below; and I hope some of us will respond to the wailing of our wounded Mother Earth by drawing on these ideas to shape our own actions.

<https://theshalomcenter.org/tikkun-tevel-spring-heal-planet-pesach-shavuot>

February 10, 2014

Top Scholars Address Religious Ethics and Animal Protection

Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics News Release

More than forty scholars worldwide will be speaking at the Summer School at Oxford in July 2014 to address the role of religion in furthering animal protection.

“There has been so much interest in the Summer School” said Professor Andrew Linzey, “that we have had to arrange parallel sessions to cope with the demand”.

The top scholars include Professor Richard Gombrich (University of Oxford) and Professor Sudhir Chopra (University of Cambridge) on animals in Buddhist Ethics;

Rabbi Dr Tony Bayfield (President, The Movement for Reform Judaism) and Dr Khayke Beruriah Wiegand (University of Oxford) on Judaism and animals;

The Rt Revd John Pritchard (Bishop of Oxford), Professor Kurt Remele (Karl-Franzens-University in Graz, Austria) and Professor Daniel Dombrowski (Seattle University) on Christianity and animals;

Dr Tim Winter (University of Cambridge) and Dr John Chesworth (University of Oxford) on Islam and animals;

Professor Clifton Flynn (Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of South Carolina Upstate), Dr Kay Peggs (University of Portsmouth), Professor Chien-hui Li (National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan) and Professor Lisa Johnson (University of Puget Sound) on the historical, sociological and legal analyses of the role of religion.

The Revd Professor Adrian Anthony McFarlane (Vice President, International University of the Caribbean) and Professor Kai Horsthemke (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg) on Caribbean and African religions and animals;

Professor Deborah Cao (Griffith University, Australia) on animals and Confucianism; Dr Jagbir Jhutti-Johal (University of Birmingham) on animals and Sikhism, and Dr Kenneth Valpey (University of Oxford) on Hinduism and animals.

In addition, the special Gala Dinner speakers will be Professor Joy Carter, Vice Chancellor of the University of Winchester, and Sir David Madden, formerly British Ambassador to Greece.

“This promises to be the most important event ever on religion and animals”, said Professor Linzey, Director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics.

The Summer School will be held at St Stephen’s House Oxford on 21-23 July. The full programme of events will be published in March 2014. For more details, see [here](#) or contact Clair at depdirector@oxfordanimaethics.com.

<http://www.oxfordanimaethics.com/2014/02/news-release-top-scholars-address-religious-ethics-and-animal-protection/>

February 11, 2014

2014 SEED Awards Applications Now Open

United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi - Start-up social and environmental entrepreneurs who have developed innovative products or services and are working with local communities can win a tailor-made business support package through the 2014 SEED Awards, which open for nominations today.

SEED Award Winners, based in emerging economies, developing and least-developed countries, will receive \$5000 towards their most urgent needs.

In addition, over a period of about 6 months, they will be offered expert advice on developing their business plans, the opportunity to take part in specially-designed workshops to enhance their skills, high-level profiling of their enterprises and access to an international network of businesses, governments and development institutions.

For the 2014 SEED Awards, SEED has received support from the European Union; the International Climate Initiative of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Protection, Building and Nuclear Safety; the Government of Flanders; the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women); the UN Industrial

Development Organization (UNIDO); and the international law firm Hogan Lovells. Additional support is provided by the SEED Partners.

SEED this year will make available up to:

-30 SEED Africa Awards to enterprises in Ethiopia, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania and Uganda;

-12 SEED South Africa Awards to enterprises in South Africa, with up to four of them to enterprises in the provinces of Free State, Limpopo or KwaZulu-Natal;

-10 SEED Low Carbon Awards to enterprises in Colombia, India, Tanzania, Uganda and Viet Nam;

-3 SEED Gender Equality Awards to enterprises in countries that are not OECD or EU Member countries.

Winners of the 2013 SEED Awards included enterprises in Uganda for a biogas plant which utilises agricultural waste to produce renewable energy for rural communities; in Colombia for an alternative lighting system based on recycled plastic bottles for off-grid housing; in Ethiopia for improved cook stoves and briquettes for various end-users throughout the country; and in Namibia for a value-added fish and food processing facility which focuses on solar-dried food. Details about these and other SEED Winners are at: www.seedinit.org

The deadline for applications is 08 April 2014, 23:59 Central European Time (CET).

Applications can be filled in online at the SEED Initiative website www.seedinit.org. Alternatively, the application form can be downloaded and emailed to seedawards2014@seedinit.org. Applicants may also contact the SEED Initiative by email or phone (+49 30 89 00 068 99) should they not be able to submit their application electronically.

For more information please contact:

Amélie Heuër, Email: amelie.heuer@seedinit.org

Mellab Shiluli, Tel: +254 721 546 406 / Email: mellab.shiluli@unep.org

You can also read this press release in [Spanish](#), [French](#) and [Portuguese](#).

You may also follow the SEED Initiative on the following social media channels:

-<https://www.facebook.com/The.SEED.Initiative>

-https://twitter.com/SEED_Initiative, #SEEDAwards

-<http://www.linkedin.com/company/the-seed-initiative>

About the SEED Initiative

SEED was founded by UNEP, UNDP, and IUCN at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. It is hosted at Adelphi Research, in Germany.

Partners in 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; and SEED's corporate partner, Hisense.

The SEED Initiative is a global partnership for action on the Green Economy. It identifies and supports promising small-scale start-up social and environmental entrepreneurs around the globe who, in working towards a greener economy, also tackle poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion. SEED provides these social entrepreneurs with know-how and networks, taking the lessons learnt at local level up to decision-makers with a view to promoting evidence-based policymaking on the green economy.

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2762&ArticleID=10708&l=en>

February 12, 2014

Church of England vows to fight 'great demon' of climate change

General Synod says it is willing to disinvest from companies that do not live up to its theological, moral and social priorities

By Sam Jones
The Guardian

The Church of England has said that it will, as a last resort, pull its investments from companies that fail to do enough to fight the "great demon" of [climate change](#) and ignore the church's theological, moral and social priorities.

Although the church's Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) has resisted calls for the church to pull its money from fossil fuel companies, insisting that engagement is the best way to effect change, its deputy chairman told the General Synod that it was considering "all options" when it came to developing future investment policy.

"Make no mistake, we reserve the final option of disinvesting from those particular companies who resist change," said the Rev Canon Professor Richard Burridge, adding that the church had sold its £3.8m stake in the controversial mining company Vedanta four years ago following concerns about its human rights record.

"Climate change is in sharp focus at the moment, with the UK experiencing such extreme [flooding](#) that even the chief scientist of the [Met Office](#) links [it] to climate change – not to

mention forest fires in Australia and blizzards in the USA," he told the synod meeting in London on Wednesday. "Scientists warn about the damage we are creating but we do very little to mitigate the threat, or adapt to it."

But he added that while the EIAG recognised that climate change was a huge ethical investment issue, swift disinvestment from fossil fuel companies was not the answer.

"Pointing the finger at the extractive industries gets us off the hook and avoids the fundamental problem which is our selfishness and our way of life, which has been fuelled by plentiful, cheap energy and more and more people around the world wanting that," he said.

Burridge said that the church's investments and engagement with large UK companies with poor carbon emission management had led to 72% of the companies targeted improving their emission management.

His comments came during a debate that culminated in a vote approving the creation of a working group on the environment to monitor the church's action on climate change and other environmental issues.

Canon Giles Goddard of Southwark diocese, who proposed the motion, said the church needed to "align the mission of the church with its investment arm and with the life of the parishes".

He added: "Climate change is a moral issue because the rich world has disproportionately contributed to it and the poor world is disproportionately suffering. Poor communities are least equipped to deal with the impacts."

Steven Croft, the bishop of Sheffield, described the threat of climate change as "a giant evil; a great demon of our day", adding: "Its power is fed by greed, blindness and complacency in the present generation, and we know that this giant wreaks havoc though the immense power of the weather systems, which are themselves unpredictable."

He said the church had a "critical role" to play in lobbying politicians on climate change in order to bring about manifesto commitments to reach the target of an 80% reduction in UK greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The church's renewed commitment to tackling climate change was welcomed by Christian charities.

"Climate change is increasingly becoming one of the moral issues of our time and the church has a powerful voice with which to speak," said Christian Aid's senior climate change adviser, Dr Alison Doig.

"The next 18 months will significantly shape the politics of climate change with the UN global deal on emissions expected in Paris next year and the publication of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report next month. The church can now engage prophetically on this subject and speak with a united voice for those suffering both here and abroad."

Paul Cook, advocacy director of Tearfund, said the current flood in Britain were serving as a wake-up call to the church.

"The climate really is changing, and it's happening now," he said.

"It's not just a problem for our grandchildren, it's not just a problem for polar bears, it's not just a problem for people thousands of miles away; it's a problem for us too, today."

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/12/church-climate-change-investment-great-demon-flooding>

February 12, 2014

Operation Noah welcomes CoE Synod decision to act on climate change

Independent Catholic News

Operation Noah has welcomed Wednesday's decision at the Church of England's General Synod to engage seriously with the issue of climate change.

The Synod voted overwhelmingly in favour of a motion to ensure that C of E investment policy is aligned with their policies on climate change, and to establish a working group on the environment to monitor this and other environmental issues.

"Today the Church of England has taken the first step to re-engaging with the issue of climate change," said Dr Isabel Carter, Chair of Operation Noah today. "This vote commits the Church to seriously consider how its investments reflect the urgency of climate change, including the option of disinvestment from fossil fuels.

"As Canon Goddard's resolution made very clear we need to make a series of radical transformations in our economy and society if we are to avert catastrophic and uncontrolled changes to the climate system. That is going to require leadership from the Church."

'We are delighted with the backing from Synod, and particularly welcome the support from the Ethical Investment Advisory Group.'

The motion debated today follows a resolution passed by Lambeth North Deanery for Southwark Diocesan Synod, calling on the Church's national investment bodies to ensure that their investment policy is aligned with the theological, moral and social priorities of the Church.

Canon Giles Goddard, who presented the motion, said: 'This vote proves that there is a hunger for us to do more on climate change as a church. But this is not the end, it's the beginning.'

Speaking at a fringe meeting shortly after the debate, Mark Letcher, Vice Chair of Operation Noah said, 'The record-breaking weather in the UK this winter, and statistics that show both the

frequency and intensity of extreme weather events to be increasing, provides an opportunity for a step change in the debate on climate change.

'There is now recognition of the need for a fresh public conversation about climate change and the future habitability of our planet, and whether we want a future for our children which is cleaner, safer and healthier. There is a need for the government to be willing to take responsibility for change. The Church could help lead that conversation. The need for leadership has never been greater. We look forward to working with the C of E on this issue.'

Last year, Operation Noah launched their campaign 'Bright Now: towards fossil free churches', calling on Churches in the UK to disinvest from companies involved in the extraction of fossil fuels, take a leading and influential role in the national debate on the ethics of investment in fossil fuels, and support the development of clean alternatives to fossil fuels through their investment policies.

For more information see: <http://www.operationnoah.org/>

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=24150>

February 13, 2014

Statement by Ibrahim Thiaw, UN Assistant-Secretary-General and UNEP Deputy Executive Director at the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade 2014

United Nations Environment Programme

Your Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Over 30 years ago, the mighty African elephant went extinct in my homeland Mauritania, where it once roamed.

Elephants are intelligent and compassionate creatures, whose capacity for joy is only matched by that for grief. The emotional attachment elephants form may rival our own.

The gruesome images of slain herds of elephants across all regions in Africa are heart wrenching. And the surge in the killings continues.

Today, the demand for ivory is carving a bleak future for already vulnerable populations.

The world's rhinos and tigers, along with other species, face similarly bleak futures, unless we act now.

As His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales eloquently said, humanity is less than humanity without the rest of creation.

Today, the international community comes together in solidarity and resolve to consider critical action to curb the global poaching crisis and the illegal trade in wildlife.

Such criminality – fuelled by demand and lawlessness – is not only destroying species, habitats, and communities, but is also jeopardizing peace and security.

Organized criminal networks are cashing in on the poaching crisis, operating with relative impunity and with little fear of prosecution.

The rise in the illegal killing of species does not only threaten wildlife populations but the livelihoods of local communities and the lives of rangers in their fight to stem the illegal tide.

The illegal exploitation of wildlife exacerbates other long-term threats to the species' survival, such as the increased loss of habitat and climate variability.

In our search for solutions, it is important to realize that there is no “one size fits all” answer to the poaching crisis.

Fast-track measures must be implemented to address the current poaching crisis, taking into account the diverse socio-economic, legal and market dynamics across range, transit and consumer states.

Such measures will vary from strengthening law enforcement, building adequate human and financial capacity, raising public awareness, and fighting corruption, to supporting national legislation and the overriding need to curb demand for wildlife products that are illegally sourced or unsustainably harvested.

However, in addition to short-term measures, longer-term considerations need to be given to natural resource management and sustainable economic development, based on sovereign priorities and choices.

Implementing nationally and internationally agreed biodiversity strategies and targets and other relevant existing commitments must be at the heart of such action.

The African Elephant Action Plan and the African Elephant Fund, for example, were established under the CITES to support the long-term survival of African elephants.

But without adequate political and appropriate financial support, it is difficult for such mechanisms to become truly effective.

In the first ever UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), which will convene in Nairobi in June, the environmental rule of law in relation to the illegal exploitation of wildlife and timber will feature as a key topic.

This will help maintain the political momentum following the London Conference and will provide an opportunity to galvanize the attention of the United Nations bodies on this critical issue.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The last two years have been momentous for many in this room who have worked tirelessly for years-on-end to combat the trafficking in wildlife: from the CITES COP in Bangkok to the Botswana Elephant Summit and the French Government-hosted Summit for Peace and Security in Africa, to the UNEP-INTERPOL Conference or the UNODC Conference and, most recently, the UN Security Council resolutions (21/34 and 21/36) which recognize the inter-linkages between the illegal exploitation of wildlife and ongoing conflicts in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Building on these initiatives and on many other ongoing positive undertakings, such as the most recent decision by the US Government made just yesterday, it is imperative that 2014 becomes a year of concrete and decisive action.

I would like to thank the UK Government for convening this important meeting - allowing us all to join hands for a more sustainable and humane future.

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2762&ArticleID=10710&l=en>

February 13, 2014

First International Hindu Environment Week

**The Bhumi Project
Press Release**

For the first time in history, Hindus worldwide are coming together for a week-long celebration of the environment. Hindu Environment Week, taking place from 17th-23rd February, will see Hindu leaders, communities, temples and organisations raising awareness about the importance of caring the planet.

Launched in Varanasi in October 2013, Hindu Environment Week will see a variety of Hindus taking part in a number of events.

Some of the highlights of the Week include:

- A conference on the importance of water and the River Ganges will be held at the Parmarth Niketan ashram in Rishikesh.
- The holy town of Vrindavan will see school children taking to the streets to raise awareness about environmental problems facing the town

- The famous Jagannath temple in Puri will be organising a number of events, including tree planting in the areas surrounding the temple
- In Varanasi, students from Benaras Hindu University will be conducting a week of events including the cleaning of temple grounds
- 50 students will help clean the main temple in Dwarka before a special lecture on the importance of caring for the environment will be delivered by temple leaders to over 300 pilgrims
- Students at both Oxford University in England, and Princeton University in America, will hold special discussions to learn and share what young people can do to help the environment

The Week is being organised by The Bhumi Project - a joint initiative between the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation. Launched in 2009 at Windsor Castle with HRH Prince Philip and HE Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the UN, the Project works with Hindu groups across the world to address environmental concerns.

Gopal Patel, Project Manager for the Bhumi Project commented, “Hindu traditions have much to say about good environmental care. We hope through this Week those messages are shared with as many people as possible and people begin to make practical changes in their lives to take better care of the environment.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS

With Hindus forming 80.5% of India's population, they are the largest religious group in the sub-continent.

Key Hindu texts such as Atharva Veda discuss the environment, and its importance to human and animal life in great detail. Compassion for all life is therefore considered to be a key tenet of Hinduism.

CONTACT

Gopal Patel (English) gopal@bhumiproject.org / +44 7958 807 506 / +91 9573 676514

Jignesh Patel (Hindi) jignesh@bhumiproject.org / +91 9930 141141

Devika Jina devika@bhumiproject.org / +44 7815 694200

February 18, 2014

Fossil Free PC(USA) divestment movement gains momentum

By Leslie Scanlon
The Presbyterian Outlook

Concerned about the impact of climate change, Presbyterians are asking the 2014 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to take a stand — to instruct the Board of Pensions and Presbyterian Foundation to immediately stop any new investment in fossil fuel

companies — and over the next five years to divest any assets the denomination already has placed in oil, gas and coal firms.

With concerns about global warming increasing, the Fossil Free divestment movement is gaining momentum across the United States — making allies out of church-going retirees and college students, bringing secular environmental groups such as 350.org in alignment with faith-based advocates, some of whom see stopping the progression of climate change as a moral issue.

Critics contend such initiatives could have a steep economic price, costing jobs and putting pressure on corporate targets ahead of consumers changing their own energy consumption. Advocates draw strength from the success of previous divestment campaigns — including pressure brought to end apartheid in South Africa — and argue that big differences in carbon usage won't be made unless more fossil fuel resources remain untapped, forcing companies to develop and support alternate energy sources.

Environmental activists and some investment analysts cite the “two degree” target — the goal of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius (or 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), endorsed by many governments. To achieve that, they contend, about 80 percent of the oil, gas and coal reserves need to stay in the ground.

Some Presbyterians also make an argument based on justice — saying the economic and environmental impact of climate change falls disproportionately on the poor in underdeveloped countries.

“I definitely view it as a huge concern for my life,” said Joy Gresham, a high school senior and a youth elder at St. Luke Presbyterian Church in Wayzata, Minn. “It’s something I find not as a future concern, but as a now concern” — she wants to have children, but worries about badly the planet will be damaged during the course of their lives.

Gresham also contends that people of faith have a responsibility to speak up for people in undeveloped countries whose land and ways of making a living are taking a hit from global warming. “It’s affecting especially the least of these,” she said. “People in the poorest countries are being devastated by superstorms and floods. If we’re going to live by the words of Jesus, then we need to do something about it.”

Responding to concerns such as these, Presbyterians have organized a group called Fossil Free PC(USA) and hope to convince the 2014 General Assembly to use divestment as a tool to pressure oil, gas and coal companies to leave fossil fuel resources in the ground. The Presbytery of Boston passed the first fossil fuel divestment overture last September, with a concurrence from the Presbytery of San Jose — that’s enough to get the issue on the General Assembly docket in Detroit in June. The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area passed an overture in January, and votes are expected in more presbyteries later this spring.

At St. Luke Presbyterian, the youth group pushed the adults to take a stand — convincing the session to send an overture to Twin Cities Area presbytery (as did another congregation, Church of the Apostles in Burnsville, Minn.)

Cody Kirk, a high school senior, spoke at the presbytery meeting in favor of the overture. Kirk's passion for environmental concerns was sparked in part by a backpacking trip he took last summer in the Yellowstone Mountains, where he realized "how quickly the consequences of our actions are going to catch up with us," unless something changes.

"This has really become a moral issue of what do we as individuals and a community, as a church and a presbytery, want to do with the earth that we are given by God? It's more than just trying to take a political stand. It's doing as I like to think of it as Jesus would do, taking action against things we know are immoral and destroying the planet."

The adults listened to the teenagers' passion, said Karen Larson, who was recently ordained as a teaching elder and is Gresham's mother. "There's been kind of a feeling of hopelessness around climate change that keeps people from being able to do anything," Larson said. "Somehow, the kids broke through that."

Opposition. Not everyone buys the divestment argument. Some academic institutions, including Harvard and Middlebury College, have decided not to divest — worried that the issue might polarize their campuses and that divestment might ultimately not make much difference in pressuring the fossil fuel companies or slowing global warming.

Harvard's president, Drew Faust, wrote in an open letter in Oct. 2013 that if Harvard divested, other "willing buyers" would purchase the shares, and the decision would have would "negligible impact" on the firms and could "diminish the influence or voice we might have."

Faust also wrote that she finds "a troubling inconsistency in the notion that, as an investor, we should boycott a whole class of companies at the same time that, as individuals and as a community, we are extensively relying on those companies' products and services for so much of what we do every day."

Some presbyteries have voted no — in the Presbytery of East Tennessee, a fossil fuel divestment proposal lost by a vote of 53-50. In presbytery debates, some have raised questions about the impact divestment might have on retirement income for Presbyterian pastors; about whether jobs would be lost in areas that depend on coal mining or other fossil fuel industries. Some also raise concerns about hypocrisy — about why divestment makes sense when Presbyterians continue to fill their cars with gasoline and run their air conditioning in the summer.

Dan Terpstra, who works in supercomputing and is a ruling elder at First Presbyterian Church in Oak Ridge, Tenn., got involved with Fossil Free PC(USA) after attending a climate change rally in Washington D.C. in February 2013, where the environmentalist Bill McKibben was one of the speakers.

Responding to the hypocrisy argument, McKibben makes the analogy that "when we get in our cars in the mornings and drive to work, we care about getting to work — we don't necessarily care about using gasoline," Terpstra said. "If we had viable options fueled by anything else, that would be perfectly fine."

The companies that produce fossil fuels “have shown no interest or willingness in investing significantly in renewable energy sources,” Terpstra said. “We don’t have a choice to use other technologies easily because the entire market is being controlled by the fossil fuel industries. They’ve got enough money to be able to control the conversation.”

The Fossil Free PC(USA) organizers also are aware that divestment in other contexts has been controversial for past General Assemblies — and likely will be this year too, if the assembly considers another recommendation from the Mission Responsibility Through Investment committee to divest in three companies said to be involved in non-peaceful pursuits in Israel-Palestine.

“We know the word ‘divestment’ is a really touchy word and has a lot of sensitivity, especially from the last General Assembly,” said Rob Mark, pastor of the Church of the Covenant in Boston, whose session sent the fossil fuel divestment overture to Boston presbytery. “The word is big. We’re aware of it. It could be problematic. It could be hopeful,” as Presbyterians link to a wider fossil fuel divestment movement drawing strength from students and environmental activists.

In July 2013, the United Church of Christ became the first U.S. religious denomination to take steps fossil fuel divestment, starting with increased shareholder engagement and moving towards the creation by 2015 of a list of “best in class” fossil fuel companies. Mark said he’s seen the climate change issue cut across some of the traditional divisions between progressives and evangelicals within religious groups — and become a place of common ground between people of faith and the “nones” who don’t identify with a religious tradition.

Mark also sees the climate change issue as an opportunity for evangelism for the PC(USA). Having worked in a college chaplain’s office, he’s seen how worried many young people are about the impact of global warming.

“If we’re not talking about something like climate change, which is at the forefront for people in their 20s ... if we are not speaking that language, we lose a huge chance for evangelism and witness and speaking about who Jesus is,” Mark said. “I call it creative evangelism.”

Congregations. Many of those involved in the Fossil Free PC(USA) movement also belong to congregations that take eco-stewardship seriously. At First Presbyterian Palo Alto in California, a Cool Planet group has been meeting since 2006, doing everything from planning earth-themed worship services to educating parishioners on how to reduce their carbon footprints. They’ve raised money for people in Cameroon “who are on the frontlines of climate change already,” said Shirley Eglington, a retired teacher active in the effort.

“To me, it seems as if we don’t have a sustainable environment then all of the things I care about in terms of dignity and justice for human beings are threatened,” Eglington said. With climate change, “the disruption of food sources hits the poor so hard ... It’s a catastrophe if you’re living on a dollar a day.”

<http://www.pres-outlook.com/infocus-features/current-features/19371-fossil-free-pcusa-divestment-movement-gains-momentum.html>

February 18, 2014

Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies host an organic meal for Hindu Environment Week

Bhumi Project Press

On Wednesday, February 19th, the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies and HUMSoc, the Hindu student group at Oxford University, will celebrate Hindu Environment Week. The Centre's weekly Wednesday luncheon will feature locally grown, organic food. HUMSoc will host a talk by representatives of the Bhumi Project, and a discussion afterwards. Both events will take place at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies on Magdalen Street.

Both are part of a series of events taking place across the world during Hindu Environment Week. For the first time in history, Hindus worldwide are coming together for a week-long celebration of the environment. Hindu Environment Week, taking place from 17th-23rd February, will see Hindu leaders, communities, temples and organisations raising awareness about the importance of caring the planet.

Launched in Varanasi in October 2013, Hindu Environment Week will see a variety of Hindus taking part in a number of events.

Some of the highlights of the Week include:

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Project works with Hindu groups across the world to address environmental concerns.

Gopal Patel, Project Manager for the Bhumi Project commented, “Hindu traditions have much to say about good environmental care. We hope through this Week those messages are shared with as many people as possible and people begin to make practical changes in their lives to take better care of the environment.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS

There are over 800,000 Hindus in the UK, making them the second largest minority community in the country.

Key Hindu texts such as Atharva Veda discuss the environment, and its importance to human and animal life in great detail. Compassion for all life is therefore considered to be a key tenet of Hinduism.

CONTACT

Gopal Patel (English) gopal@bhumiproject.org / [+44 7958 807 506](tel:+447958807506) / [+91 9573 676514](tel:+919573676514)

Jignesh Patel (Hindi) jignesh@bhumiproject.org / [+91 9930 141141](tel:+919930141141)

Devika Jina devika@bhumiproject.org / [+44 7815 694200](tel:+447815694200)

February 21, 2014

Dynamic New Platform to Protect Forests Worldwide Launched

More than 40 partners launch near-real time forest monitoring system

United Nations Environment Programme

WASHINGTON—The [World Resources Institute](#) (WRI), Google, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and a group of more than 40 partners on Thursday launched the [Global Forest Watch](#) (GFW), a dynamic online forest monitoring and alert system that empowers people everywhere to better manage forests. For the first time, Global Forest Watch unites the latest satellite technology, open data, and crowdsourcing to guarantee access to timely and reliable information about forests.

“Businesses, governments and communities desperately want better information about forests. Now, they have it,” said [Dr. Andrew Steer](#), President and CEO, WRI. “Global Forest Watch is a near-real time monitoring platform that will fundamentally change the way people and businesses manage forests. From now on, the bad guys cannot hide and the good guys will be

recognized for their stewardship.”

According to [data](#) from the University of Maryland and Google, the world lost 2.3 million square kilometers (230 million hectares) of tree cover from 2000 to 2012—equivalent to 50 soccer fields of forest lost every minute of every day for 12 years. The countries with the highest tree cover loss are: Russia, Brazil, Canada, United States, and Indonesia.

“Managing the world’s forest resources is today both a local and global undertaking, and technology has provided Global Forest Watch with an unprecedented opportunity to connect not only information and data but people, whether they be forest managers, businesses and private sector, or consumers across the globe. This is a great example of a community coming together and providing the world with a truly groundbreaking and pioneering product. Hopefully in a few years’ time we will be able to monitor the impact and the results in terms of what actually happens on the ground – that will be both a litmus test and I think the greatest affirmation that the time for this idea had come,” said Achim Steiner, UN Under Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director.

“We are honored to partner with WRI and power the Global Forest Watch platform with Google cloud technology, massive data and turbo-powered science,” said Rebecca Moore, Engineering Manager, Google Earth Outreach and Earth Engine. “GFW is an ambitious vision, and yet it’s both timely and achievable given WRI’s knowledge of environmental science and policy, strong partnerships, and the high-performance Google cloud technology that we’re donating to this initiative.”

What’s new about Global Forest Watch:

- * **High-resolution:** Annual tree cover loss and gain data for the entire globe at a resolution of 30 meters, available for analysis and download.
- * **Near-real time:** Monthly tree cover loss data for the humid tropics at a resolution of 500 meters.
- * **Speed:** Cloud computing, provided by Google, multiplying the speed at which data can be analyzed.
- * **The crowd:** GFW unites high resolution information from satellites with the power of crowdsourcing.
- * **Free and easy to use:** GFW is free to all and no technical expertise is needed.
- * **Alerts:** When forest loss alerts are detected, a network of partners and citizens around the world can mobilize to take action.
- * **Analytical Tools:** Layers showing boundaries of protected areas worldwide; logging, mining, palm oil and other concessions; daily forest fire alerts from NASA; agricultural commodities; and intact forest landscapes and biodiversity hotspots.

Global Forest Watch was launched on Thursday 20 February at the Newseum in Washington, D.C by a group of leaders in government, business, and civil society.

“Partnerships like Global Forest Watch that bring together governments, businesses and civil society and technological innovation are the kinds of solutions we need to reduce forest loss,

alleviate poverty and promote sustainable economic growth,” said Administrator Rajiv Shah, U.S. Agency for International Development.

Global Forest Watch will have far-reaching implications across industries. Financial institutions can better evaluate if the companies they invest in adequately assess forest-related risks. Buyers of major commodities such as palm oil, soy, timber, and beef can better monitor compliance with laws, sustainability commitments, and standards. And suppliers can credibly demonstrate that their products are “deforestation free” and legally produced.

“Deforestation poses a material risk to businesses that rely on forest-linked crops. Exposure to that risk has the potential to undermine the future of businesses,” said Paul Polman, CEO, Unilever. “That is why Unilever’s Sustainable Living Plan has set targets to source 100 percent of agricultural raw materials sustainably. As we strive to increase the visibility of where the ingredients for our products come from, the launch of Global Forest Watch – a fantastic, innovative tool – will provide the information we urgently need to make the right decisions, fostering transparency, enforcing accountability, and facilitating partnerships.”

Global Forest Watch can support other users like indigenous communities, who can upload alerts and photos when encroachment occurs on their lands; and NGOs that can identify deforestation hotspots, mobilize action, and collect evidence to hold governments and companies accountable. At the same time, many governments like Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, welcome Global Forest Watch because it can help them design smarter policies, enforce forest laws, detect illegal forest clearing, manage forests more sustainably, and achieve conservation and climate goals.

“Indonesia is committed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 26 percent, or 41 percent with international support, which reflect national and international commitments to combat climate change. How Indonesia meets that commitment is largely defined by how we manage our forests,” said Heru Prasetyo, Head of the REDD+ Agency, Indonesia. “The ability to better monitor our forests and have up-to-date information to make decisions are critical. I commend the Global Forest Watch initiative, will continue to support it, and expect that it will be an effective tool for the world and each nation as we leave neglect and ignorance in the past.”

Global Forest Watch was created by the World Resources Institute with over 40 partners, including Google, Esri, University of Maryland, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Imazon, Center for Global Development, Observatoire Satellital des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale (OSFAC), Global Forest Watch Canada, ScanEx, Transparent World, the Jane Goodall Institute, and Vizzuality. Major companies have also provided early input, including Unilever and Nestle, and the wider Tropical Forest Alliance 2020 Partnership. Core funders include the Norwegian Climate and Forests Initiative, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Global Environment Facility (GEF), U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), and the Tilia Fund.

For more information visit: www.globalforestwatch.org.

Note to Editors

About World Resources Institute

WRI is a global research organization that spans more than 50 countries, with offices in the United States, China, India, Brazil, and more. Our more than 300 experts and staff work closely with leaders to turn big ideas into action to sustain our natural resources—the foundation of economic opportunity and human well-being. (www.wri.org)

About Global Forest Watch

Global Forest Watch (GFW) is a dynamic online forest monitoring and alert system empowering people everywhere to better manage forests. For the first time, GFW unites satellite technology, open data, and crowdsourcing to guarantee access to timely and reliable information about forests. Armed with the latest information from GFW, governments, businesses, and communities can halt forest loss. (www.globalforestwatch.org)

About UNEP and the UN-REDD Programme

As one of the key agencies for the UN-REDD programme, UNEP leads and delivers on a variety of activities at both the national and global level.

At the global level, UNEP in conjunction with the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) leads on the multiple benefits agenda which consists of a variety of activities which aim to highlight the many benefits and ecosystem services of REDD+ that go beyond carbon sequestration. These include water, forest-based products, tourism, community development, biodiversity and others.

UNEP is working to identify the interventions that add value to the economy, increase revenue, and provide new livelihood opportunities while conserving forests and reducing emissions and collaborates with national counterparts to demonstrate the potential of forest sector investments, institutional changes and targeted tools to contribute to both development and climate mitigation goals.

For more information, please contact:

Shereen Zorba, Head, UNEP Newsdesk. [Email.shereen.zorba@unep.org](mailto:shereen.zorba@unep.org); or Tel. [+254788526000](tel:+254788526000).

Lauren Zelin, WRI, Email. lzelin@wri.org; Tel. [+1 \(301\) 807-9527](tel:+13018079527)

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2762&ArticleID=10714>

February 22, 2014

Faith and reason: Scientists are not as secular as people think

The Economist

TO GREENS, men like John Shimkus—the chairman of a congressional body that oversees work to curb air, soil and water pollution—represent a special sort of bogeyman. Mr Shimkus, a Republican from rural Illinois, is not just staunchly pro-industry, anti-regulation and sceptical of claims that man's activities menace the planet. He also brings his Bible to work. At a hearing on greenhouse gases, he opened it and quoted God's words to Noah after the Flood. "Never again will I destroy all living creatures," God promised. This, said Mr Shimkus, was "infallible" proof that neither man's actions nor rising flood waters will destroy the Earth. So let's not worry too much about global warming.

Folk like Mr Shimkus feed a perception that American religion and science are doomed to be in conflict, with unhappy consequences for public policy. For decades, the loudest boffin-on-believer fights involved the teaching of evolution in public schools (a battle the boffins nearly always won), followed more recently by disputes about stem-cell research. Rows about global warming are catching up. In conservative states such as Louisiana, Missouri, Tennessee and Oklahoma, Republicans have introduced bills urging schools to teach children that there are competing opinions on such "controversial" scientific issues as evolution, global warming and human cloning.

Ostensibly the goal is to foster critical thinking. But the country's largest science-promotion body, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), has urged states to reject such bills, protesting that the basic facts of global warming and evolution are not in significant dispute. (Even if the policy response to global warming is hotly disputed, as are the ethics of cloning.) Pro-evolution campaigners are blunter, calling the bills a ploy by the political and religious Right to muscle their way into science classrooms.

Political and religious conservatives do not perfectly overlap. Black churchgoers, for instance, may be stern traditionalists when it comes to morality, yet reliably vote Democratic. Not all conservatives who oppose government action to tackle climate change are religious: plenty of businesses straightforwardly oppose rules which they fear will cost money and jobs. Meanwhile, some strict believers and church leaders think God wants people to take care of the environment; they talk of their responsibilities as "stewards of creation". But in general the very religious—and especially the third of all Americans who call themselves evangelical or born-again Christians—have been allies for conservatives itching for a scrap with the scientific establishment. Though most evangelicals say that the earth is warming, in polls they are much less sure than the average American that this matters, or that man is to blame.

Why this should be so is a subject of debate, and until recently a lot of guesswork. Evangelical Christianity is a slightly hazy term. To simplify, it describes a faith anchored by a believer's personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and which closely follows the Bible. It is an individualistic faith—many jump from church to church until they find a style of worship that appeals—rooted in conservative communities (evangelicals are a majority in nine states, all in the South).

A much-cited theory advanced in 1967 by Lynn White, a historian, charges that the devout draw from Genesis the idea that mankind has “dominion” over nature, and thus think they have a right to exploit the world’s resources. A hypothesis floated in the 1980s draws a link between “environmental apathy” and the belief, among some evangelicals, that the End Times are near. In 2010 Elaine Howard Ecklund, a sociologist at Rice University, caused a stir with a survey of 1,700 scientists at Harvard, MIT and other elite colleges. About a third were atheists (as opposed to fewer than one-in-20 ordinary Americans), just under a third were agnostics, and the rest reported varying degrees of belief.

At the annual meeting of the AAAS in Chicago on February 16th Dr Ecklund unveiled the first results of a still-larger study into science and religion, involving more than 9,000 survey respondents and lots of follow-up interviews. This new survey sought out “rank-and-file” scientists: researchers in company labs, engineers, dentists and so on. To her surprise, Main Street scientists are only a bit less religious than the average American. Perhaps Ivy League scientists are ultra-secular because they are Ivy League, not because they are scientists?

The Al Gore effect

Evangelicals are wary of calls to environmental action, but not necessarily because they feel strutting dominion over nature, Dr Ecklund adds, in a forthcoming paper in the *Review of Religious Research*. Instead, many describe a rigid hierarchy placing God above humans and humans above the environment. To “respect the earth more than its due”—to quote a young Southern Baptist in the study—is to risk worshipping creation rather than the creator. Many simply trust that “God’s in control”. The evangelicals in the study barely engage with the science of environmentalism, instead querying the motives of those pushing such arguments. They especially bridle when Democratic politicians push for big-government solutions (“The Al Gore Effect”, the paper calls it).

Dr Ecklund and her colleagues at the Chicago seminar wondered if the devout might be won round by environmental arguments stripped of politics and focused on helping people in poor, ecologically vulnerable countries. Climate change need not challenge evangelical theology, it was argued: mankind can cause terrible harm that stops short of ending the world. As for secular-minded scientists, they should beware of conflating their work (explaining the world in terms of natural forces) with what they personally believe (that the natural world is all there is). The worlds of religion and science will not always agree. But America, a big country, has room for both.

<http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21597021-scientists-are-not-secular-people-think-faith-and-reason>

February 26, 2014

‘The fragile world’: Church teaching on ecology before and by Pope Francis

By Donal Dorr
Thinking Faith

It is reported that Pope Francis is preparing a text on the environment, and Donal Dorr expects that the resulting document will develop the links that Francis has already and repeatedly made between 'concern for the exploited earth and concern for marginalised and exploited people'. How does Pope Francis' thinking about the environment compare with that of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI?

Read full article:

http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20140226_1.htm

March 2014

SAFCEI - South African Faith Communities Institute Newsletter

<http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=96202c6bb9&e=a758405790>

March 2014

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=46&key=9be40217ae15f1be3aae0c51edb48559&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

March 4, 2014

Lent a reflection pool for diving into water usage issues

By Sharon Abercrombie
National Catholic Reporter

Diving deeply into prayer and making sacrifices are the primal stuff of Lent.

For many U.S. Catholics, participating in weekly parish faith sharing gatherings around Scriptural themes, foregoing those luscious squares of 72 percent dark chocolate, eating simple, meatless meals, donating the resulting grocery savings to Catholic Relief Services' Rice Bowl program to feed hungry people in 100 countries -- all these have become the spiritual staples of this penitential season.

For ecologically minded parish coordinators searching for materials relevant to their midweekly Lenten and Advent gatherings, Sr. Terri MacKenzie's ongoing creativity has proven to be a real gift.

Since *NCR* featured MacKenzie's Ecospiritualityresources.com in February 2013, the site has continued to brim generously with Scriptural references, contemporary music resources, poetry, YouTube videos and selections from contemporary environmental spirituality pioneers that are relevant to global developments around ongoing climate crises.

For Lent 2014, MacKenzie has tackled water issues. In her free-to-download resource -- titled "[Thirst: A Lenten Journey from Desert to Garden](#)" -- MacKenzie, a member of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, first takes us back in time to Matthew's account of Jesus' 40-day desert fast (Matthew 4: 2-3).

"It seems safe to assume that Jesus was also in a state of extreme thirst," she writes. "Humans can live without food for weeks, but after one day without water, dehydration leading to death can begin."

As part of the first week of Lent lesson, MacKenzie asks us to reflect, "What is the thirstiest you can remember being?" That reflection could lead to also asking, what would it be like to walk in a thirsty Jesus' footsteps?

In the week two lesson, contemporary developments enter the picture when MacKenzie reminds that that nearly one billion people have no access to clean drinking water, and that drought, desertification or flooding threaten the lives of at least one billion people in more than 110 countries.

Besides water deprivation, water pollution also comes into play in the worldwide water crisis. In the week three lesson, MacKenzie lists the multitude of factors that contribute to the contamination and subsequent suffering: industrial animal production; chemical fertilizers; synthetic chemicals from laundry, dishwashing soaps and chlorine bleaches; drugs flushed down toilets; and hydraulic fracturing and mountaintop coal removal.

Climate change, too, she notes plays a part as droughts and flooding exacerbate, the number of people migrating as a result grow. On energy usage's role, MacKenzie offers us a mind-boggling bit of math: To produce four gallons of gasoline or a pound of plastic, 70 gallons of water is needed.

"As you review these and other issues that damage and threaten water and all life, what do you hear God saying?" she asks.

For some, MacKenzie said the call is “to lament and grieve the causes of pollution and scarcity”; for others, it’s a call to learn more, to show greater reverence for water and to conserve its use, or to get involved by lobbying for greater protections of rivers, lakes and oceans.

“Perhaps you’ll ‘hear’ connections between issues and one or more Stations of the Cross or one or more of Jesus’ last words. For example, millions of people are being condemned to death by water pollution and scarcity. Many are forced to say: I am thirsty,” she said.

MacKenzie’s “I Thirst” resource offers similar reflections for the remaining weeks of Lent. Additional resources on water issues are also available. In a November 2013 interview with “Democracy Now” Kevin Anderson and Alice Bow-Larkin of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research in England observed “we’ll have to consume less” as they discussed remedies to lowering carbon emissions. Their “simplify life” message contained hints of the same themes echoed in MacKenzie’s resources and the words of Pope Francis, his namesake St. Francis of Assisi, and other creation care proponents.

In the interview, which took place during the United Nations climate change summit in Warsaw, Poland, the researchers addressed a number of environmental issues, including excessive air travel and water usage. Anderson and Bow-Larkin showed they walk the talk of their message, telling host Amy Goodman that they take trains wherever they can, even if it means traveling 11 days to get somewhere, as opposed to a few hours on a plane.

Regarding water, Anderson said people will have to think about issues often difficult to accept, such as normalized hygiene practices like showering once or twice a day.

“That means we have to wash -- change our clothes every day, and then we have to use more washing machines,” he said. “So you see this sort of build up, one thing after another, that over the last 10 or 15 years we’ve moved from what were quite high carbon lifestyles to these completely profligate, extraordinarily high carbon lifestyles, and we’ve made them normal.”

The new normalcy related to water use, lifestyle choices and their ramifications that Anderson and Bow-Larkin discuss offers ripe spiritual and conscience discussion topics as Lent approaches.

A third resource on water use comes from Christiana Peppard, an assistant professor of theology, science and ethics at Fordham University. In a recent interview the blog Catholic Ecology, she [discussed her new book](#) “Just Water: Theology, Ethics and the Global Water Crisis,” Peppard placed water in the context of justice and as a “right-to-life issue.”

“The fact is that, globally, the people who generally bear the brunt of fresh water scarcity are people living in situations of poverty and/or subsistence existence. They lack water through no fault of their own, but rather as a result of the location of their birth,” she said.

“How do we, as U.S. citizens sitting atop the global economic structure, grapple with that iniquity?” she asked. “... It’s destabilizing to think that my access to fresh water is the exception,

not the norm, worldwide—just because I happened to be born in a particular place and time, to a middle-class family with a house and reliable municipal infrastructure.”

Peppard also explored the issues of water in a series of TED talk videos, one looking at [where we get the water we use](#), and the other examining the [problem of water scarcity](#).

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/lent--reflection-pool-diving-water-usage-issues>

March 4, 2014

First Ever Fatwa Issued Against Wildlife Trafficking

Invoking the Koran, Indonesia's top clerical body declares wildlife trafficking to be forbidden.

By Bryan Christy
National Geographic

Indonesia's top Muslim clerical body has issued a fatwa, or edict, against illegal wildlife trafficking.

This unprecedented step by the [Indonesian Council of Ulama](#), in the country with the world's largest Muslim population, declares illegal hunting or illegal trading of endangered species to be *haram* (forbidden).

For many the word "fatwa" took on ominous tones in 1989 when Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini issued a death threat [against Salman Rushdie for blasphemy](#) in his novel *The Satanic Verses*.

But the [fatwa](#) itself is merely a call to action. Invoking passages from the Koran, the fatwa (which you can read in full below) is believed to be the first of its kind in the world.

The fatwa requires Indonesia's 200 million Muslims to take an active role in protecting and conserving endangered species, including tigers, rhinos, elephants, and orangutans.

"This fatwa is issued to give an explanation, as well as guidance, to all Muslims in Indonesia on the sharia law perspective on issues related to animal conservation," said Hayu Prabowo, chair of the Council of Ulama's environment and natural resources body.

The fatwa supplements existing Indonesian law. "People can escape government regulation," Hayu said, "but they cannot escape the word of God."

The Creations of Allah

The fatwa was inspired in September 2013 by a field trip to Sumatra for Muslim leaders co-organized by Indonesia's [Universitas Nasional \(UNAS\)](#), [WWF-Indonesia](#), and the U.K.-based [Alliance of Religions and Conservation](#). Indonesia's Ministry of Forestry and [HarimauKita](#) (the Indonesian Tiger Conservation Forum) offered additional consultation.

During a community dialogue with village representatives to discuss conflicts between villagers and Sumatran elephants and tigers, some of the villagers asked about the status in Islam of animals such as elephants and tigers.

The Muslim leaders replied: "They are creations of Allah, as we are. It is haram to kill them, and keeping them alive is part of the worship of God."

Hayu emphasizes that the fatwa applies not only to individuals but also to the government, noting that corruption can be an issue when wildlife, forests, and the interests of such industries as the oil palm business come into conflict.

The fatwa specifically calls upon the government to review permits issued to companies that harm the environment and to take measures to conserve endangered species.

A Time of Unprecedented Wildlife Crime

The fatwa comes at a time when transnational wildlife crime has reached unprecedented levels, with special burdens on countries—such as Indonesia—that are still rich in rare or unusual wildlife and plants.

It comes at a time, too, when governments are struggling to craft laws and pay for enforcement officers to fight criminal wildlife trafficking syndicates that are increasingly sophisticated and violent.

The Council of Ulama hopes its fatwa, which bridges the gap between formal law and crime and gives strong guidance to Indonesian Muslims, will help reduce wildlife trafficking.

Indonesia's action is a response to concern for the country's ecosystems rather than any Islamic practices involving wildlife. Still, throughout history, religion has played an important role as a driver in the consumption of animal species, some now critically endangered.

In 2005, [the Dalai Lama called upon his followers to end wildlife trafficking](#). Recently, the men of South Africa's Nazareth Baptist (Shembe) Church, a traditionalist Zulu church, [began using faux leopard skins](#) in their religious ceremonies. As shown in [National Geographic magazine's "Ivory Worship,"](#) Buddhists in Thailand and China, as well as Catholics around the world, who collect ivory religious statues continue to play a role in the smuggling and illegal consumption of elephant ivory.

Following is the full text of the fatwa pertaining to wildlife issued by the Indonesian Council of Ulama, the country's top Muslim clerical body.

<http://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/1049328/indonesias-wildlife-trafficking-fatwafull-text.pdf>

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/03/140304-fatwa-indonesia-wildlife-trafficking-koran-world/?now=2014-03-04-00%3A01>

March 16, 2014

Religion and Conservation Do Mix

By Bradnee Chambers

Inter Press Service News Agency

Bradnee Chambers, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Environment Programme's Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals, believes wildlife conservation is a goal that religions must take on.

BONN - They say religion doesn't mix well with certain subjects, but in the case of conservation and religion this old rule of thumb doesn't seem to apply.

Conservationists have been increasingly aligning with different religious groups to further their work, either by promoting conservation projects on the ground, or by working with religious groups to promote good conservation principles to their flocks of followers.

High in the Tibetan Plateau where some of the last snow leopards roam, Buddhist monks regularly send out patrols to ensure that the highly endangered cats are not taken by poachers. According to George Schaller, who works for a conservation group called [Panthera](#), Buddhism has as a basic tenet – the love, respect and compassion for all living beings. For the last 3,000-4,000 snow leopards this is welcomed help to ensure their continued existence.

In Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country in the world, Islamic clerics working with the World Wildlife Fund have issued a fatwa, a code of law under which violations are considered immoral and forbidden, to protect endangered animals. This fatwa could play an important role in protecting species such as the Asian Elephant sought after for its ivory, and even aquatic mammals such as dugongs, dolphins and whales.

Pope Francis, who took his name from the St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals and the environment, has on many occasions made strong statements on the subjects of climate change and nature protection. For example, upon meeting the Ecuadoran President, he is reported to have advised him to “take good care of creation. St. Francis wanted that. People occasionally forgive, but nature never does. If we don't take care of the environment, there's no way of getting around it.”

Some conservation groups say that there is still more to be done as there are links between the ivory trade and religious artefacts such as crosses and rosaries.

The Shembe Church of South Africa, officially a Baptist group but deeply immersed in Zulu customs, recently agreed to replace its leopard and animal hides seen as a symbol of wealth and prestige with faux skins.

Environmental organisations are increasingly seeing the advantage of working with different faiths to protect endangered wildlife. Most of the largest religions promote harmony with nature.

Christianity teaches that humans are meant to be stewards over God's creation with a moral obligation to protect nature. Hindus believe that the Divine is everywhere and we are not separate from nature. Muslims have many elements in their religion advocating environmental protection. Over 80 percent of the world population follow one religion or another so the potential alliance is potentially very powerful.

In 1995, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh recognising the common goals between religion and conservation, founded ARC, the Alliance of Religions and Conservation. The group based in the United Kingdom works with religious groups to develop environmental programmes founded on their own core teachings, beliefs and practices. GreenFaith does similar work promoting social and environmental justice in the U.S.

The alliance between religion and conservation couldn't come at a better time, because the threats to international wildlife have never been greater. The Convention on Migratory Species is one of the few global wildlife conventions in place; it protects species moving between countries, but finds its tasks increasingly difficult to carry out with regard to the most iconic animals in the world.

Big cats, dolphins, whales, sharks, gorillas, elephants, bats, birds of prey and even monarch butterflies which have roamed the Earth for millennia are in danger either from direct threats such as poaching, illegal trade, overfishing, bycatch or loss of their habitat. Then there are indirect threats from climate change affecting their breeding and feeding patterns.

In the face of these threats unprecedented in human history, conservationists are exploring new avenues to protect these species. So why not religion? Conservation and wildlife organisations see the opportunity. Religion is not a threat to wildlife, but it could be a major ally for wildlife conservation because it can change and influence our fundamental values.

A question often asked is, why protect wildlife? Development can improve lives so why forgo it in place of killing off a few species? One can go through all the different arguments – its economic worth, its value importance for future generations or simply its beauty. But the powerful answer must be because it is part of our culture and therefore part of our beliefs and even our own identity. Once it's second nature and part of a value system, no one will ever again ask the question why protect it.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/03/religion-conservation-mix/>

March 24, 2014

Indonesia's fatwa shows religious duty can be a route to sustainable behaviour

The edict on wildlife trafficking is leading secular organisations to recognise that environmentalism is embedded in most scripture

By Kathryn Werntz
The Guardian

In January, a holy voice rang out across [Indonesia](#)'s archipelago of lush, tropical forests and teeming mangroves. It came in the form of a fatwa, an Islamic edict, which instructed Muslims [to stop the illegal trafficking of wildlife](#).

Believed to be the first fatwa broadly covering ecosystem conservation, it seeks to make people do what the law could not. As the head of the fatwa-issuing council said: "People can escape government regulation, but they cannot escape the word of God." This notion is being recognised more and more by secular organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nations, which partner religious-based environmental [sustainability](#) programmes.

Will the fatwa work? Perhaps yes, given that other religious decrees have succeeded where secular conservation campaigns have failed. In Zanzibar last year, for example, an [Islamic-based environmental campaign](#) finally convinced fishermen to stop dynamiting coral reefs. Initiated by the aid and development organisation [Care](#), which recognised that its secular efforts were not achieving results, the campaign raises the question: do religious-based environmental programmes have practical and psychological advantages over secular organisations for inducing behaviour change?

Practical advantages include the global religious community owning about 8% of the planet's land, being the world's third largest stakeholder group and wielding huge media and consumer power. Many religious groups have strong networks, credibility, intergenerational audiences and financial backing that is less dependent on donors' funding cycles and whims than other types of organisations. A group's followers are likely already to be interested in protecting the planet - as environmentalism is often embedded in religious values. Moreover, the religious milieu reinforces key psychological constructs needed for behaviour change.

Psychological pressure can, admittedly, be key, with fatwas and other religious edicts resting on this to a degree. But, is a holy decree only successful in so much as it conjures fire and brimstone, inducing fear among followers? The complexity of the psychological effect of a faith-based decree seems to go beyond this. In fact, perhaps the reason religious-based appeals are so successful is their comprehensive psychology.

Beyond brimstone, religious-based teachings use other, extrinsic as well as intrinsic motivations to affect followers' behaviours. While secular environmentalists debate the influential power of these motivations, some supporting intrinsic motivation (awakening people to the joy of nature, and making saving the planet fun, ie gamification), and some supporting extrinsic motivation (rewards of lower heating bills or punishments of environmental destruction fees), [religion](#) often

inherently blends the two, creating less polarising and more comprehensive messages and experiences.

"Our organisation asks followers to put a 'religious lens' on their environmental ethics and reflect on the joy of connecting to nature," says Rianne C ten Veen of the [Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences](#). "So, we say enjoy saving the planet, but we also throw in something about judgment day," she adds with laughter. Academia is also looking seriously at the "religious lens" effect. Mary Evelyn Tucker, co-founder of [the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University](#), researches what she refers to as people's relationality to the Earth.

"There are four types of relationality," echoes Martin Palmer, secretary general of the [Alliance of Religions and Conservation](#). "People's relationships with themselves, with the divine, with neighbours and with the rest of nature." Palmer asserts that most secular environmental organisations focus only on the latter, therefore failing to create long-term change. "We also need people to celebrate together and rejoice in their accomplishments."

Will Muslim duty supersede economic interest and stop illegal wildlife trafficking, giving Indonesians a reason to rejoice? Probably. As Dekila Chungyalpa, director of the [WWF Sacred Earth Program](#), explains about general religion–ecology relationships, "When a holy figure – the person who a follower has safeguarded their innermost being to – asks for change... a follower is obliged to act. This type of behaviour change you simply cannot buy." It is this sacred willpower, combined with networks – the Dalai Lama has 8.1m likes on Facebook – which is driving more secular environmental organisations to partner with religious-based ones.

Hurdles to partnership include fears of proselytisation and resistance to "mixing" religion and natural science, although it is already seamless in most scripture. There are intra-faith resisters, worried that environmentalism jeopardises the religion's bank account, for example oil shareholders – increasingly being countered by religions seeking ["value-based" investing](#).

Staunch opponents to religious-based environmentalism often cite the historian [Lynn White's argument](#) that religion actually distances people from nature and encourages an attitude of domination over it. Upon closer inspection, however, White also argued that religion would be the only way to get us out of our ecological mess. Will a wildlife fatwa, issued in the country with the world's largest Muslim population, demonstrate once again the sacred power of faith?

[Kathryn Werntz](#) is a food sovereignty and human rights advocate based in Germany and Senegal. Through film, writing, farming and teaching she explores global and local issues with audiences of all ages. She is happy to receive comments at kap@sahelcalling.com.

<http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/religion-environment-wildlife-trafficking-indonesia-fatwa-sustainable>

March 30, 2014

Former archbishop of Canterbury reveals global climate change fears

Rowan Williams blames western lifestyle for 'pushing environment towards crisis' ahead of IPCC report

The Guardian

[Rowan Williams](#) has spoken of his fears for the global climate, saying the winter flooding was a portent of what is to come.

Writing in the Sunday Telegraph, the former archbishop of Canterbury blamed the lifestyle of western countries, which he said was "pushing the environment towards crisis".

He said the floods in Britain and similar weather-related catastrophes around the world are the clearest indications yet that predictions of "accelerated warming of the Earth caused by the uncontrolled burning of fossil fuels... are coming true."

His warning came on the eve of a ground-breaking report on the impact of [climate change](#), and a declaration from the energy secretary, Ed Davey, that Britain must spearhead the worldwide battle against it.

Climate change is ["hugely threatening" to life both in the UK and globally](#), Davey told the [Observer](#), saying that not to lead the fight against it would be "deeply irresponsible".

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) will this week to release a major report that is expected to warn of catastrophic consequences to food supplies, livelihoods, health and security across the world if climate change is allowed to continue unchecked.

Leaked versions of the report, published in Japan on Monday, warn that changing temperatures, droughts and heatwaves will threaten food supplies and human health, while hundreds of millions of people will be affected by coastal flooding.

Climate change will cause economic losses, make poverty worse and increase migration and risks of violent conflict. It will also harm wildlife and habitats, the study by experts from around the world is expected to say.

In Europe, heatwaves, droughts and heavy rainstorms will increase and there will be a greater risk of coastal and river flooding, it is expected to say, while heat-related deaths will also increase.

The report, which collates work by thousands of scientists from across the world, is likely to state that climate change has already left its mark on all continents and oceans, and is expected to warn that even a small rise in temperatures could lead to irreversible changes.

Williams, who stepped down as leader of the Anglican church just over a year ago, said Monday's report put "our local problems into a deeply disturbing global context".

Writing in his capacity as chairman of Christian Aid, he said: "We have heard for years the predictions that the uncontrolled burning of fossil fuels will lead to an accelerated warming of the Earth.

"What is now happening indicates that these predictions are coming true; our actions have had consequences that are deeply threatening for many of the poorest communities in the world.

"Rich, industrialised countries, including our own, have unquestionably contributed most to atmospheric pollution. Both our present lifestyle and the industrial history of how we created such possibilities for ourselves have to bear the responsibility for pushing the environment in which we live towards crisis."

Campaigners said on Saturday that the world faced a "bleak future" without action to tackle climate change and leading environmentalists called on politicians to break the world's dependency on fossil fuels.

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/mar/30/archbishop-canterbury-rowan-williams-climate-change-fears/print>

March 31, 2014

IPCC Report: A changing climate creates pervasive risks but opportunities exist for effective responses

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
Press Release

Responses will face challenges with high warming of the climate

YOKOHAMA, Japan, 31 March – The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a report today that says the effects of climate change are already occurring on all continents and across the oceans. The world, in many cases, is ill-prepared for risks from a changing climate. The report also concludes that there are opportunities to respond to such risks, though the risks will be difficult to manage with high levels of warming.

The report, titled *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, from Working Group II of the IPCC, details the impacts of climate change to date, the future risks from a changing climate, and the opportunities for effective action to reduce risks. A total of 309 coordinating lead authors, lead authors and review editors, drawn from 70 countries, were selected to produce the report. They enlisted the help of 436 contributing authors, and a total of 1,729 expert and government reviewers.

The report concludes that responding to climate change involves making choices about risks in a changing world. The nature of the risks of climate change is increasingly clear, though climate change will also continue to produce surprises. The report identifies vulnerable people, industries and ecosystems around the world. It finds that risk from a changing climate comes from vulnerability (lack of preparedness) and exposure (people or assets in harm's way) overlapping with hazards (triggering climate events or trends). Each of these three components can be a target for smart actions to decrease risk.

"We live in an era of man-made climate change," said Vicente Barros, Co-Chair of Working Group II. "In many cases, we are not prepared for the climate-related risks that we already face. Investments in better preparation can pay dividends both for the present and for the future."

Adaptation to reduce the risks from a changing climate is now starting to occur, but with a stronger focus on reacting to past events than on preparing for a changing future, according to Chris Field, Co-Chair of Working Group II.

"Climate-change adaptation is not an exotic agenda that has never been tried. Governments, firms and communities around the world are building experience with adaptation," Field said. "This experience forms a starting point for bolder, more ambitious adaptations that will be important as climate and society continue to change."

Future risks from a changing climate depend strongly on the amount of future climate change. Increasing magnitudes of warming increase the likelihood of severe and pervasive impacts that may be surprising or irreversible.

"With high levels of warming that result from continued growth in greenhouse gas emissions, risks will be challenging to manage, and even serious, sustained investments in adaptation will face limits," said Field.

Observed impacts of climate change have already affected agriculture, human health, ecosystems on land and in the oceans, water supplies and some people's livelihoods. The striking feature of observed impacts is that they are occurring from the tropics to the poles, from small islands to large continents, and from the wealthiest countries to the poorest.

"The report concludes that people, societies and ecosystems are vulnerable around the world, but with different vulnerability in different places. Climate change often interacts with other stresses to increase risk," Field said.

Adaptation can play a key role in decreasing these risks, Barros noted. "Part of the reason adaptation is so important is that the world faces a host of risks from climate change already

baked into the climate system, due to past emissions and existing infrastructure,” said Barros.

Field added: “Understanding that climate change is a challenge in managing risk opens a wide range of opportunities for integrating adaptation with economic and social development and with initiatives to limit future warming. We definitely face challenges, but understanding those challenges and tackling them creatively can make climate-change adaptation an important way to help build a more vibrant world in the near-term and beyond.”

Rajendra Pachauri, Chair of the IPCC, said: “The Working Group II report is another important step forward in our understanding of how to reduce and manage the risks of climate change. Along with the reports from Working Group I and Working Group III, it provides a conceptual map of not only the essential features of the climate challenge but the options for solutions.”

The Working Group I report was released in September 2013, and the Working Group III report will be released in April 2014. The IPCC Fifth Assessment Report cycle concludes with the publication of its Synthesis Report in October 2014.

“None of this would be possible without the dedication of the Co-Chairs of Working Group II and the hundreds of scientists and experts who volunteered their time to produce this report, as well as the more than 1,700 expert reviewers worldwide who contributed their invaluable oversight,” Pachauri said. “The IPCC’s reports are some of the most ambitious scientific undertakings in human history, and I am humbled by and grateful for the contributions of everyone who make them possible.”

The Working Group II contribution to the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (WGII AR5) is available at www.ipcc-wg2.gov/AR5 and www.ipcc.ch.

For more information, contact:

IPCC Press Office, Email: ipcc-media@wmo.int

Jonathan Lynn, [+ 81 45 228 6439](tel:+81452286439) or Nina Peeva, [+ 81 80 3588 2519](tel:+818035882519)

IPCC Working Group II Media Contact, Email: media@ipcc-wg2.gov

Michael Mastrandrea, [+1 650 353 4257](tel:+16503534257)

Notes for editors

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the international body for assessing the science related to climate change. It was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

Working Group II, which assesses impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability, is co-chaired by Vicente Barros of the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Chris Field of the Carnegie Institution for Science, USA. The Technical Support Unit of Working Group II is hosted by the Carnegie Institution for Science and funded by the government of the United States of America.

At the 28th Session of the IPCC held in April 2008, the members of the IPCC decided to prepare a Fifth Assessment Report (AR5). A Scoping Meeting was convened in July 2009 to develop the scope and outline of the AR5. The resulting outlines for the three Working Group contributions to the AR5 were approved at the 31st Session of the IPCC in October 2009.

A total of 309 coordinating lead authors, lead authors, and review editors, representing 70 countries, were selected to produce the Working Group II report. They enlisted the help of 436 contributing authors, and a total of 1729 expert and government reviewers provided comments on drafts of the report. For the Fifth Assessment Report as a whole, a total of 837 coordinating lead authors, lead authors, and review editors participated.

The Working Group II report consists of two volumes. The first contains a Summary for Policymakers, Technical Summary, and 20 chapters assessing risks by sector and opportunities for response. The sectors include freshwater resources, terrestrial and ocean ecosystems, coasts, food, urban and rural areas, energy and industry, human health and security, and livelihoods and poverty. A second volume of 10 chapters assesses risks and opportunities for response by region. These regions include Africa, Europe, Asia, Australasia, North America, Central and South America, Polar Regions, Small Islands, and the Ocean.

http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/ar5/pr_wg2/140330_pr_wgII_spm_en.pdf

April 2014

SAFCEI - South African Faith Communities Institute Newsletter

<http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=a1a3486222&e=d85b57a294>

April 2014

Sacred Sites Research Newsletter (SSIREN)

http://sacrednaturalsites.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/SSIREN_April_2014.pdf

April 2014

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=48&key=8a30399f5d38ee0ef1eff2bbae4c5297&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

April 2014

Come with Me into the Fields: Inspiring Creation Ministry among Faith Communities

By Erin Lothes Biviano

New Theology Review Vol. 26, No. 2 (2014)

Abstract

Climate change is a dominant reality of our time, a series of physical changes to earth's systems that will impact human wellbeing, social stability, biodiversity, and the familiar patterns of harvest and storms on God's green earth. The Fifth Assessment Report clearly states that climate change is already having an impact on our planet and will worsen the lot of the poor in particular. A critical link between this scientific assessment of the state of the planet and Christian faith is thereby found in the gospel invitation to care for the poor. Yet arguably many Christians have not internalized this reality, and the central symbols of Christian faith are not yet consciously intertwined with the reality of climate change in the ways needed to summon strong action. Therefore, the critical question addressed here is how ministers can help lead their communities to understand the links between climate change and faith -- and then inspire them to act.

My focus group research among over 135 faith-based environmentalists show that the motivation for environmental advocacy is effectively created through group discussion in the kinds of trusted groups that congregations and faith communities exemplify. Congregations and faith communities are privileged places for engaging potential environmental leaders, and for supporting the work of already active environmentalists.

Research Objectives: Empirical research was conducted while a fellow of the Earth Institute, Columbia University, and was approved by the Columbia University Institutional Review Board. The objective was to engage environmental decision theory as well as theological analysis to understand the factors that motivate faith-based environmentalists.

Methods: Participants were chosen from mainstream congregational sustainability committees. The Christian groups included Baptists (WA), three groups of Catholics (suburban NJ, urban NY, rural WA), two groups of Episcopalians (suburban and urban NJ), megachurch

Christian Evangelicals (FL), Reformed Christians (NJ), two groups of Presbyterians/ PCUSA (MD), Unitarian-Universalists (NJ), and southern pastors (NC).

Participant statements provided the primary starting point for analysis. I asked questions about congregational activity, personal motivations, how beliefs developed, and behavior change, and employed semi-structured questions to permit systematic comparison and analysis. Discussions were transcribed and coded both inductively and deductively using NVivo 8 content analysis software (QSR Software, Melbourne) to compare and rank the responses. This essay represents analysis of a small portion of the data collected and the conclusions drawn from it.

Download a PDF of the full article:

<http://newtheologyreview.org/index.php/ntr/article/view/998>

April 4, 2014

Evangelicals Organize 'Day of Prayer,' Call for Action on Climate Change

Young Evangelicals for Climate Action is highlighting the effects of global warming.

By Alan Neuhauser
USA Today

Hundreds of evangelical Christians gathered across the country Thursday for a “Day of Prayer and Action” on climate change.

The event, made up of vigils, speeches and discussions, was part of a weeklong series being held on 20 Christian college campuses this week, all geared toward spurring churches and local communities to reduce harmful carbon emissions, educate local residents about the effects of climate change, and fight the rise of temperatures and greenhouse gases worldwide.

“This may not be an issue that evangelicals in the U.S. have been known for being out in front on, but there are a lot of evangelicals in this country, and not everybody speaks for everybody,” says Ben Lowe, national spokesman for the event’s organizer, Young Evangelicals for Climate Action. “Those of us 30 and younger, we’ve come of age in a world that’s dealing with the reality of global warming.”

The National Association of Evangelicals, which represents evangelical churches, has also called for action on climate change.

A 2013 survey found that while 61 percent of evangelicals agreed that global warming was occurring (compared to 78 percent of non-evangelicals), less than half thought it was being caused by human activities (compared to 69 percent of non-evangelicals).

Nevertheless, most of the evangelicals surveyed said they supported taking action to fight climate change.

“Despite some stereotypes of evangelical Christians as anti-environmental or dismissive of climate change, it is important to note that majorities of evangelicals do believe global warming is happening, human caused, and are at least somewhat worried about it,” authors Neil Smith and Anthony Leiserowitz, of University College London and Yale University, wrote in their [paper](#), which was published in the journal Global Environmental Change.

As Lowe describes, “This is first and foremost a moral issue and a spiritual issue. The impacts of climate change, we’re starting to understand more and more, are very diverse and very far-reaching. As some of the relief and development organizations we’re working with are telling us, this is a major challenge to the work the church does around the world.”

While “for many other social issues, including fighting AIDS and reducing poverty, evangelicals exhibit widespread agreement with each other,” climate change has become “as divisive within this group as it has among the broader American public,” Smith and Leiserowitz found.

By the time the study came out, Young Evangelicals for Climate Action had in fact already been active for more than a year. Founded by a group of evangelicals during a February 2012 retreat in Washington, D.C., it achieved a national presence in just a matter of months, and soon won support from the Christian Reformed Church, an evangelical denomination.

“There is a near-consensus in the scientific community that climate change is occurring and very likely is caused by human activity,” the CRC [declared](#) at a June 2012 conclave. Delegates there concluded that global warming is “an ethical, social justice, and religious issue,” and therefore “the CRC is compelled to take private and public action to address climate change, especially since those who are already most impacted by it live in poor countries.”

The National Association of Evangelicals, which represents evangelical churches, and David Neff, former editor-in-chief of the Billy Graham-founded magazine Christianity Today, have also called for action on climate change.

<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/04/03/evangelicals-organize-day-of-prayer-call-for-action-on-climate-change>

April 5, 2014

Climate Change Threats To 'The Least Of These' Compel Evangelical Christians To Act

By Lynne Peeples
Huffington Post

"Climate change is a really bad reason to get divorced."

Katharine Hayhoe, a leading climate scientist, recalled the trial she and her husband Andrew, an evangelical Christian pastor, faced when they discovered they weren't on the same page about global warming.

After a number of intense discussions, mediated by shared values and beliefs, their marriage persevered. Andrew accepted the overwhelming scientific evidence, and they even went on to co-write a [book](#) for Christians on climate change. But in evangelical churches across the U.S., a faith community to which Hayhoe herself belongs, many pastors and parishioners continue to perceive an incompatibility between their faith and the climate science.

This kind of dissonance is unnecessary, according to Hayhoe, and an unhealthy roadblock to much-needed action.

"The [climate change] issue is not inconsistent with Christian values," Hayhoe, director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University, told The Huffington Post. "In fact, Christian values demand we take action. Climate change disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable -- the very people Christians are called to care for and love."

That the poor bear the brunt of global warming's effects, from food insecurity to waterborne diseases, is one of the key takeaways from the United Nation's latest [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\) report](#), released this week. The same theme emerges in a new Showtime series, "[Years of Living Dangerously](#)," set to premiere April 13. Co-produced by James Cameron and starring celebrities including Harrison Ford and Matt Damon, the documentary addresses the entanglement of politics, faith and science that impedes acceptance and action on climate change.

Hayhoe is a prominent figure in the first episode.

Evangelicals, who currently represent about a quarter of the U.S. population and wield significant political clout, aren't necessarily worried about the Earth itself, noted Rev. Mitchell Hescox, president of the [Evangelical Environmental Network](#), a ministry dedicated to caring for the natural world.

But a growing number, himself among them, "realize the overwhelming impacts of climate change on human life, both here and around the world," said Hescox, who worked for 14 years in the coal industry and 18 years as an evangelical pastor before taking the helm of the EEN.

"It affects all the social concerns of the church -- poverty, immigration, and the list goes on," he said. "What the IPCC report really helped to highlight is that this is a people problem, not an Earth problem."

The environmental movement among evangelical Christians -- also known as "creation care" -- isn't new. Dedicated leaders such as [Rev. Richard Cizik](#) have been working to engage fellow evangelicals for more than a decade. And despite resistance from colleagues, they've made progress. In a study published last year, researchers found that about [half of evangelicals](#) now

believe climate change is happening and that we should adopt policies to reduce it. The majority of evangelicals surveyed, however, did not think human activity is to blame.

"Within the community, there are still some stark differences of opinion," said Anthony Leiserowitz, director of the [Yale Project on Climate Change Communication](#) and an author of the study. "A lot of that falls on political grounds."

Leiserowitz called the relationship between evangelicals and right-wing politicians "symbiotic."

"If all of a sudden, Mitch McConnell, Speaker [John] Boehner, Rush Limbaugh and 'Papa' [Bill] O'Reilly all started to say, 'You know what? We've been wrong all these years about climate change,' then that would dramatically change the conversation," he said. "At the same time, most of those folks are going to respond to what their constituents and key influencers are telling them."

"No doubt, evangelicals are still a powerful force within the Republican Party," added Leiserowitz.

Rev. Hescox, too, underscored the need to uncouple science from politics in order to move forward on the issue. Other evangelicals echoed the call.

"A thermometer is not Republican. A thermometer is not a Democrat," Andrew Farley, an associate professor of applied linguistics at Texas Tech, tells Don Cheadle, a celebrity correspondent, during the first episode of "Years of Living Dangerously." (The show will also be available online April 7.)

Farley, of course, is Hayhoe's husband -- her first climate change convert. She sits next to him during the conversation with Cheadle in their Lubbock, Tex., home. Later in the show, Hayhoe travels to Plainview, Tex., one town over, where she gives a talk to residents on climate change's role in the devastating drought of 2013. About 10 percent of the area's workforce lost their jobs when the heat and lack of rain drove the Cargill meat plant to shut down. The popular view in the small town was that the drought was God's will, or part of a natural cycle.

Cheadle interviews a cattle rancher in town before Hayhoe's visit. "There's only one man who knows how much rain we're gonna get," the rancher said. "That's God, and he's not a scientist."

One of the roadblocks to climate change becoming a nonpartisan issue, and to opening up more ears to the science, according to Hayhoe, is the evangelical community's lack of strong hierarchical leadership. There are influential people like Cizik, but unlike with other faith traditions, there is no pope, archbishop or other central figure that everyone can look to.

"We have this leadership vacuum that I think has been filled with conservatives who aren't necessarily Christian. People get their opinions from AM talk radio, or from Fox News," Hayhoe told HuffPost.

"This is also a generational issue. If you talk to the average 20- or 30-year-old, you might get a very different perspective," she added.

Anna Jane Joyner and her father, Rick Joyner, an evangelical megachurch preacher, exemplify that age gap.

"Growing up, the focus of the conversation was always on sin and salvation and the afterlife," recalled Anna Jane, 29, of her upbringing. "There wasn't a big emphasis on our experience in this life and this world, other than what you shouldn't do."

During college, much to Rick's initial chagrin, Anna Jane became an environmental activist.

The fourth episode of "Years of Living Dangerously" profiles Anna Jane's attempt to convince her father that climate change is real. He had already followed his daughter's lead on some environmental issues, such as pollution. While Anna Jane said she couldn't yet disclose to HuffPost where her father landed on climate change at the end of the show, she offered one hint: "I underestimated the power of ideology when we're talking about this issue, for sure."

This week, more than 20 Christian colleges across the country hosted climate change events in response to the IPCC report, including a nationwide ["Day of Prayer and Action"](#) on Thursday. Ben Lowe, national spokesman for the event's organizer, [Young Evangelicals for Climate Action](#), suggested there are many reasons he and his peers are embracing the issue.

"I consider myself pro-life," he said. "I see this as an issue affecting lives and health of people all around world."

Recent work by Leiserowitz and his colleagues identified two key messages from the Bible that appear to compel evangelists to take up the issue. In the Old Testament, God calls on people to be stewards of his creation. In the New Testament, Jesus commands people to care for "the least of these" -- the poor, the sick, the elderly, the powerless.

"Many of these churches invest millions of dollars, and their young people often go abroad, to try to help people who are in dire straits of poverty, disease," said Leiserowitz. "So they say, 'How could we in good conscience ignore a problem that is going to push millions more people into those exact same circumstances?'"

Hescox and Lowe noted that their organizations led a [trip to Malawi](#) last May for evangelical leaders and youth to witness firsthand the effects of climate change on the poor.

As people across America have seen and experienced in recent years, climate-related problems are escalating in the U.S., too. Hayhoe is an author of the [U.S. National Climate Assessment](#), due out at the end of April, which will document the impact on Americans' health and livelihoods of climate events like intense storms, extreme heat and more frequent wildfires.

"When I look at the information we get from the planet, I look at it as God's creation speaking to us," Hayhoe told residents of Plainview during her visit. "And in this case, there's no question that God's creation is telling us that it's running a fever."

The message resonated with people in the audience. "You know, when you have somebody who believes the same way as you," one man told Cheadle, "when you see that conservative side telling you the message -- it sure makes a lot of difference."

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/05/climate-change-evangelicals-poverty-health_n_5088537.html

April 8, 2014

Young people seek an earth restored

If the church wants to remain relevant for students and the youth generation, it should increase and amplify its call to action on climate change, says a young Christian leader.

By Emily Wirzba
Faith and Leadership

As a 22-year-old politically engaged Christian woman, I want to be a part of a church that takes seriously its mandate to protect God's creation and the vulnerable. For me, one of the most important ways to fulfill this mandate is to address climate change.

I take seriously Numbers 35:33-34, which says, "You shall not pollute the land in which you live. ... You shall not defile the land in which you live, in which I also dwell" (NRSV).

Proverbs 31:8-9 also deeply resonates with me when it proclaims, "Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy." For me, a church that fails to do these things is hypocritical and therefore unattractive.

I am not alone but part of a powerful youth movement desiring action on climate change. As the next generation that will inherit the world, young people speak with intense moral authority on the issue of climate change.

If the church wants to remain relevant for students and the youth generation, it should increase and amplify its call to action on climate change. By speaking from a moral perspective on a national level, the church can show young people across the country that it is a relevant place where youth can be supported in their quest to seek an earth restored.

I've worked with many student groups -- most from religious backgrounds -- and I see how passionately young people desire to engage with others on climate change. In early February, as part of my job as a program assistant with the Friends Committee on National Legislation, I

engaged with students, faith leaders and Quakers across the Research Triangle area on our moral obligation as people of faith to act on climate change.

While in North Carolina, I gathered with Randall Williams, a Carolina Friends School (CFS) teacher, and Susannah Tuttle, the director of [North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light](#), to give training and advice to 10 CFS high school students before leaving for a day of lobbying in Raleigh.

The group of students met with Michael Jones, Sen. Kay Hagan's regional liaison in Raleigh, and delivered their challenge: "We are here to ask Sen. Hagan to take a moral stand on action regarding climate change. Will she use the recent coal ash spill on the Dan River as an opportunity to take a strong stance supporting renewable energy and the reduction of coal use?"

Their class on climate advocacy inspired the students to create a [NC Students for Climate Action](#) group. They planned a massive carpool day and created a "Love Our Climate NC" campaign, complete with a video, information sheets, postcards and a social media package.

These students are serious about working for climate solutions. They are motivated by the science, but also something deeper: they are motivated by their faith and the moral call to conscience on climate disruption.

I returned to Washington, D.C., incredibly impressed at the maturity, passion and fierce desire these students had to seek an earth restored.

Many churches today mourn the loss of young people and are searching for ways to be relevant and engaging places for students and youth. Here is an opportunity for churches to do just that. I believe that the faith community is uniquely situated to make the moral call to action on climate disruption. As people of faith, we have a deep concern for God's creation. We are called to care for the least of these, who often will experience the effects of climate change most severely. We have an obligation to future generations.

There are concrete ways that faith leaders and pastors can take action. Churches are making environmental stewardship a priority of their congregations -- physically "greening" their church buildings by undergoing energy audits, purchasing energy-efficient appliances and installing solar panels.

Pastors are writing to and meeting with their political representatives, advocating from a faith perspective why stronger environmental policies are needed.

This call to action is already resonating with congregations across the country. In early February, faith communities coalesced around the National Preach-In on Climate Change, hosted by Interfaith Power & Light, to mobilize the faith voice.

Youth movements are rising up across the planet urging action from a moral or faith perspective. A World Wildlife Federation faith project, Sacred Earth, encourages youth to make the

connection between their faith and conservation, calling upon them to share their stories of how and why they are environmental advocates.

There is data that shows the importance of climate change to young voters. Eighty percent of voters under 35 support President Barack Obama's Climate Action Plan, and 73 percent would oppose members of Congress who got in the way of the plan.

A study done by the Yale Project on Climate Change and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication found that 81 percent of 18- to 34-year-old evangelicals trust religious leaders as an information source on global warming. Faith leaders must not abandon the youth generation by failing to communicate boldly the importance of acting on climate disruption.

What a perfect chance for the church to revitalize its relationship with youth by acknowledging, respecting and reciprocating their passion and voice on this issue. By leading on climate change, the church can once again capture the imagination of the youth movement while fulfilling its mandate to love and protect all of God's creation.

<http://www.faithandleadership.com/content/emily-wirzba-young-people-seek-earth-restored?page=full>

April 8, 2014

Giving up carbon for Lent

Can the Ecumenical Lenten Carbon Fast help reverse climate change and revitalize the church at the same time?

By Joshua Eaton
Faith and Leadership

Katharina Wilkins still passes on things like alcohol and Facebook during the season of Lent, but what's really important to her is giving up needless car rides and investment in fossil fuels. That's because, for the third year in a row, Wilkins is participating in the annual Ecumenical Lenten Carbon Fast.

"I have done Lent before, but in comparison, there's so much more sense of purpose now," said Wilkins, a member of the Congregational Church of Weston, Mass. "It certainly is still an exercise in self-discipline in many ways, but somehow it fits better into a bigger picture."

The [Carbon Fast](#) was started in 2011 by New England Regional Environmental Ministries (NEREM), which describes itself as "a loosely affiliated group of Christian environmental activists from throughout New England."

It asks Christians to deepen their commitment to the fight against climate change between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday.

Participants receive a daily email with suggestions for reducing activities that emit carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases, advocating for change, and connecting with the broader climate movement. This year's Carbon Fast has 3,800 participants by email and 2,350 via Facebook from at least 34 countries.

Traditionalists may dismiss the Carbon Fast as a quirky way for liberals to rebrand the church, but its organizers believe that Christians have a deep, biblical obligation to care for God's creation.

They also hope that the church can reprise its historic role at the forefront of transformative struggles like the civil rights movement -- and maybe even come to have fresh relevance among socially conscious millennials.

"For me to give up chocolate -- sure, it's an exercise in self-discipline, and that's great," Wilkins said. "But is that really the thing that my life needs to happen the most? Or that life in general needs to happen the most?"

Repentance on a larger scale

The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, the conference minister and president of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, helped found NEREM in 2010 and writes the Carbon Fast's daily messages.

"I'm 63 years old," Antal said, "so I think of all the 63 seasons of Lent that I have participated in. Virtually all of them have encouraged individual members to focus on their own personal need for repentance."

At first, the Carbon Fast was little different. That started to change in its second year, when organizers added two entries per day -- one for individuals and the other for congregations.

They also started encouraging participants within congregations to form discussion groups and added more entries aimed at getting participants involved in the broader climate movement.

The goal is to reduce carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas driving human-made climate change. It is created when people burn fossil fuels and clear forests. In 2013, mean atmospheric carbon dioxide reached more than 395 parts per million (ppm), according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Many climate scientists believe that the safe upper limit is 350 ppm.

This year, each week of Lent has a different focus. Themes so far have included public witness, simplicity and fossil fuel divestment. One link has an online calculator so participants can figure out the carbon cost of their current lifestyle and develop a goal to reduce it. Other suggestions range from flying less and living more simply to talking to a congregation about divestment and joining with others to protest the proposed Keystone XL tar sands pipeline.

“That shifts the consciousness of what Lent is all about from me and my personal repentance to a larger scale. It begins to ask questions about, ‘What about us? What about humanity? What about our congregation? What about Christians in general?’ That was an important shift in the Carbon Fast itself, to begin to ask these larger questions,” Antal said.

As a Christian minister, Antal is acutely aware of the questions’ significance. He often tells other ministers that every third sermon should be about the climate. When they look at him in disbelief, Antal lays out what he believes is at stake for religious leaders: if every third sermon isn’t about climate change now, he tells them, then within 15 years every sermon will be about grief.

The gospel of climate change

Antal sees public witness on behalf of the climate as inseparable from the broader work of building the church and proclaiming the gospel.

“The thousands of young people through 350.org who have showed both surprise and respect at my leadership -- getting arrested a couple of times at the White House, and other brands of leadership -- it opens their eyes to say, ‘My goodness, maybe there is something in the church,’” he said.

The Carbon Fast’s popularity has certainly expanded beyond the Massachusetts church, and Antal hopes the Massachusetts Conference’s prominent stand on climate change will convince increasingly secular young people that the church has an important role to play.

“As churches voice their concern for future generations and begin organizing their towns and lobbying Congress and the White House to pass laws to protect the earth, ‘nones’ will begin to partner with church folk,” he said. “It’s already happening in Massachusetts, because the United Church of Christ has been one of the loudest public voices on behalf of the climate.”

That public witness is a big part of what attracted Wilkins, who grew up Roman Catholic, to the United Church of Christ.

“I think the reason I ended up in the UCC is that this church ties in things that I think about anyway with my faith -- social justice issues, the environment,” she said. “For me, [the Lenten Carbon Fast] is really close to my faith, because it’s in the end about loving all people. How could I love all people if I didn’t care about people in island nations or people who get their land taken away by a pipeline?”

Her words recall the verses from the prophet Isaiah that many Christian churches read to mark the beginning of Lent:

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?" (Isaiah 58:6-7 NRSV)

That sentiment is familiar at Wilkins' church, where the Rev. Dr. Joseph Mayher regularly preaches on climate change. The church has a strong environmental action group, and it even hosted two talks by 350.org founder Bill McKibben in 2011.

But Antal still works to convince ministers who are worried about declining church attendance and budget shortfalls that addressing climate change is more solution than distraction.

"The key is to help pastors recognize that it really is about being an anchor for moral witness. It is certainly not about institutions for institutions' sake," explains Antal. "There is a world that needs to be changed. If you spend a lot of time focused on climate the way I do, change can't be big enough and can't be soon enough."

That may seem like mission drift when mainline churches are facing existential threats. According to the Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, the number of white mainline Protestants declined by three percentage points between 2007 and 2012 alone. Church closures tell the same story: the Barna Group found that some 8,000 mainline congregations across the country closed their doors between 1950 and 2009.

Still, Antal believes the church has a critical role to play in creating that change. Drawing on examples from the civil rights movement and other causes, Antal argues that religious leaders have long been at the forefront of America's fights for social change.

"We have the capacity to do it," he said. "We just have to manifest the determination."

It's a message that the Rev. Reebee Girash gets loud and clear. About three years ago, she had a "wake-up moment" that she credits to public witness by Antal, McKibben and Religious Witness for the Earth. Now, she is active in the climate justice movement and serves on the board of directors for the Cambridge-based Better Future Project, which convenes 350 Massachusetts.

"In a time of mainline shrinkage where we're all anxious about our institutional survival, it can be really hard to step out into the world," Girash said. "And yet if we really want to be serving the world and relevant to the world -- and particularly relevant to socially conscious young adults -- this is a place we need to go. God didn't tell us to hide our lamps under bushels."

Institutional commitment to activism

Antal devotes 15 to 20 percent of his time at the Massachusetts Conference to climate work, with the blessing of its board of directors and member congregations. That includes national speaking engagements, running the Carbon Fast and even getting arrested in front of the White House protesting the Keystone XL pipeline with groups like 350.org and the Sierra Club.

In 2009, the Massachusetts Conference became the first religious body in the U.S. to pass a resolution urging elected officials to pass legislation that reduces the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to below 350 ppm.

Last year, the conference took an even bolder stance by spearheading a successful effort to make the United Church of Christ the nation's first religious body -- and the first national body of any kind -- to divest from fossil fuel companies.

People concerned about the scientists' predictions on climate change may wonder whether efforts like the Ecumenical Lenten Carbon Fast aren't too little, too late. Others might accuse it of giving middle-class, white liberals a way to ease their guilt without engaging in real, systemic change. But Antal sees things differently.

"I tell congregations, 'I want to trade a shriveled hope that you will recycle, or maybe walk or bicycle a little more instead of using your car -- I want to trade in that tiny hope for a much grander hope. ... I have 100 percent confidence that the people in this congregation know exactly where the railroad tracks are, and that soon enough you will put your bodies on the tracks and block the transport of oil from the Canadian tar sands to our processing plants,'" he said.

He's fully aware of how radical that sounds.

"I know I'm way out ahead," he said. "That's what leadership is all about. Leadership is about being far enough out ahead to cast a vision, to extend the horizon and to then invite people to come with you."

Questions to consider:

- The Carbon Fast encourages individual and collective repentance. In your organization are there ways to broaden individual practices to a "larger scale"?
- For Jim Antal, innovating on the traditional Lenten practice is a way to make the church relevant. Are there practices that could be made more relevant in your institution?
- The Massachusetts UCC supports Antal's work on climate change, even though it doesn't fall within traditional ministry. If you could spend 15 to 20 percent of your time on a project, what would it be?
- Antal sees his role as a leader as being "way out ahead" of those whom he leads. What are the pros and cons of this leadership style? Would it suit you?

<http://www.faithandleadership.com/features/articles/giving-carbon-for-lent>

April 10, 2014

We need an apartheid-style boycott to save the planet

We must stop climate change. And we can, if we use the tactics that worked in South Africa against the worst carbon emitters

By Desmond Tutu
The Guardian

Twenty-five years ago people could be excused for not knowing much, or doing much, about

climate change. Today we have no excuse. No more can it be dismissed as science fiction; we are already feeling the effects.

This is why, no matter where you live, it is appalling that the US is debating [whether to approve a massive pipeline transporting 830,000 barrels of the world's dirtiest oil from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico](#). Producing and transporting this quantity of oil, via the Keystone XL pipeline, could increase Canada's carbon emissions by over 30%.

If the negative impacts of the pipeline would affect only Canada and the US, we could say good luck to them. But it will affect the whole world, our shared world, the only world we have. We don't have much time.

This week in Berlin, scientists and public representatives [have been weighing up radical options for curbing emissions](#) contained in the third report of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The bottom line is that we have 15 years to take the necessary steps. The horse may not have bolted, but it's well on its way through the stable door.

Who can stop it? Well, we can, you and I. And it is not just that we can stop it, we have a responsibility to do so. It is a responsibility that begins with God commanding the first human inhabitants of the garden of Eden "[to till it and keep it](#)". To keep it; not to abuse it, not to destroy it.

The taste of "success" in our world gone mad is measured in dollars and francs and rupees and yen. Our desire to consume any and everything of perceivable value – to extract every precious stone, every ounce of metal, every drop of oil, every tuna in the ocean, every rhinoceros in the bush – knows no bounds. We live in a world dominated by greed. We have allowed the interests of capital to outweigh the interests of human beings and our Earth.

Throughout my life I have believed that the only just response to injustice is what [Mahatma Gandhi termed "passive resistance"](#). During the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, [using boycotts, divestment and sanctions](#), and supported by our friends overseas, we were not only able to apply economic pressure on the unjust state, but also serious moral pressure.

It is clear that those countries and companies primarily responsible for emitting carbon and accelerating climate change are not simply going to give up; they stand to make too much money. They need a whole lot of gentle persuasion from the likes of us. And it need not necessarily involve trading in our cars and buying bicycles!

There are many ways that all of us can fight against climate change: by not wasting energy, for instance. But these individual measures will not make a big enough difference in the available time.

People of conscience need to break their ties with corporations financing the injustice of climate change. We can, for instance, boycott events, sports teams and media programming sponsored by fossil-fuel energy companies. We can demand that the advertisements of energy companies carry health warnings. We can encourage more of our universities and municipalities and cultural

institutions to cut their ties to the fossil-fuel industry. We can organise [car-free days](#) and build broader societal awareness. We can ask our religious communities to speak out.

We can actively encourage energy companies to spend more of their resources on the development of sustainable energy products, and we can reward those companies that do so by using their products. We can press our governments to invest in renewable energy and stop subsidising fossil fuels. Where possible, [we can install our own solar panels](#) and water heaters.

We cannot necessarily bankrupt the fossil fuel industry. But we can take steps to reduce its political clout, and hold those who rake in the profits accountable for cleaning up the mess.

And the good news is that we don't have to start from scratch. Young people across the world have already begun to do something about it. The fossil fuel divestment campaign is the fastest growing corporate campaign of its kind in history.

Last month, the General Synod of the Church of England voted overwhelmingly to review its investment policy in respect of fossil fuel companies, with one bishop referring to climate change as "the great demon of our day". Already some colleges and pension funds have declared they want their [investments to be congruent with their beliefs](#).

It makes no sense to invest in companies that undermine our future. To serve as custodians of creation is not an empty title; it requires that we act, and with all the urgency this dire situation demands.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/10/divest-fossil-fuels-climate-change-keystone-xl>

April 13, 2014

IPCC Presents Assessment on Measures to Mitigate Climate Change

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Berlin, Germany – The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the group of the world's leading climate change scientists established by the UN General Assembly and working under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization, has just released in Berlin, after 6 years of intensive work reviewing all available science, its 2014 assessment on measures to mitigate climate change.

Among its main findings is that the concentration of Green House Gasses (GHGs) – gasses which cause climate change – have grown more quickly during the last decade than in each of the previous three decades.

Globally, economic and population growth continue to be the most important drivers of increases in CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion. The contribution of population growth between 2000 and 2010 remained roughly identical to the previous three decades, while the contribution of economic growth has risen sharply.

Scenarios show that to have a likely chance of limiting the increase in global mean temperature to two degrees Celsius, means lowering global greenhouse gas emissions by 40 to 70 per cent compared with 2010 by mid-century, and to near-zero by the end of this century.

The panel analyzed the causes for this increase in the main economic sectors: energy, transport, construction, and building, industry, land use, agriculture and forestry among others.

CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion and industrial processes contributed about 78 per cent of the total GHG emission increase from 1970 to 2010, with a similar percentage contribution for the period 2000–2010.

About half of cumulative anthropogenic CO₂ emissions between 1750 and 2010 have occurred in the last 40 years. Annual anthropogenic GHG emissions have increased between 2000 and 2010, with this increase arising directly from energy supply (47 per cent), industry (30 per cent), transport (11 per cent) and buildings (3 per cent). Accounting for indirect emissions raises the contributions of the buildings and industry sectors.

The panel analyzed different scenarios for stabilizing or reducing emissions in each of these sectors and made a number of recommendations to policy makers on this regard. It concluded that without additional efforts to reduce GHG emissions beyond those in place today, emissions growth is expected to persist, driven by growth in global population and economic activities.

Baseline scenarios, those without additional mitigation, result in global mean surface temperature increases in 2100 from 3.7 to 4.8°C compared to pre-industrial levels (median values; the range is 2.5°C to 7.8°C when including climate uncertainty).

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director, welcomed the assessment and said: “UNEP congratulates the IPCC for producing once again a masterpiece of assessment and advice on how to address climate change. Reading this last assessment, the urgent need for making further progress in greening our economies is clear. UNEP stands ready to continue providing advice and support to countries around the world on how to design and implement policies that will move us towards low-carbon economies and societies.”

For more information, contact: UNEP News Desk unepnewsdesk@unep.org

Or visit: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

IPCC Official Press Release: http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/ar5/pr_wg3/20140413_pr_pc_wg3_en.pdf

April 15, 2014

Celebrate Mother's Day by Honoring Mother Earth

Climate Change Film Debuts in NYC May 11

Press Release

"You can't talk about it. Mainstream society doesn't want to hear about our sorrow for life on Earth." Author Joanna Macy's soft voice delivers the heartfelt message of [*The Wisdom to Survive: Climate Change, Capitalism and Community*](#). The new documentary is one of the few to face the impending climate catastrophe head on.

Wisdom to Survive makes its New York City premiere at Judson Memorial Church on May 11, at 2 pm. The filmmakers will be present for Q&A. The screening is free, but donations will be accepted. The church is located at 55 Washington Square South in Manhattan. For more information, [visit the Judson website](#).

The 56-minute film accepts the consensus of scientists that climate change has already arrived, and asks—what is keeping us from action? In discussions with thought leaders and activists, *The Wisdom to Survive* explores how unlimited growth lies behind climate disruption, and is devastating our planet's life support system, our social fabric, and the lives of billions of people. The film features Bill McKibben ([350.org](#)), author Joanna Macy, whale scientist Roger Payne, Herschelle Milford (Surplus People Project), Quincy Saul (Ecosocialist Horizons), and more. They provide insights, answers, and hope. What becomes clear is, we already have the tools we need to change our economy and lifestyle. Our attention must focus on taking action and building community.

Writes Mary Evelyn Tucker of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale: "This film is deeply moving and profoundly engaging. Indeed, it has the potential to transform lives because it provides visions of how we should live in the midst of massive environmental challenges. I cannot recommend it more highly!"

[Bullfrog Films](#) is the educational distributor for *The Wisdom to Survive*; Bullfrog is a premier distributor of environmental films.

Featured in the Film

- Rucha Chitnis, Women's Earth Alliance
- Nikki Cooley, Jihan Gearon and Roberto Nutlouis, Black Mesa Water Coalition
- Ben Falk, Whole Systems Design
- Eugene M Friesen, Composer and Cellist
- Terran Giacomini
- Richard Heinberg
- Rev. Daniel Jantos
- Anya Kamenskaya, Future Farmers

- Stephanie Kaza and Amy Seidl, University of Vermont
- Joanna Macy, Author
- Bill McKibben, Founder of 350.org
- Herschelle Milford, Surplus People Project
- Lawrence Mkhali
- Roger Payne, Whale.org
- Quincy Saul and Joel Kovel, Eco Socialists
- Gus Speth, Co-Founder, National Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
- Seema Tripathi, Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG)

What Viewers Are Saying

“Marvelous and moving. Beautiful work.”—**Fran Korten, *Yes! Magazine***

"A starkly prophetic film. It combines the direst of warnings with deep love of life. Better than any other film I know, it makes clear that our profit-oriented growth economy has caused the climate catastrophe and cannot itself rescue us from disaster. We need new thinking and a new way of life."—**Tom F. Driver, Paul Tillich Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology, Union Theological Seminary**

“Brilliant, achingly poignant. Please SEE THIS FILM—bring it to your community, talk about it, share it with others. It is one of the most artfully-rendered films on the planet's crisis (and how we move through it) I have ever seen. Extraordinarily moving.”—**Shyla Nelson, Founder, One Earth One Voice Campaign**

“Beautiful, heartbreaking, urgent.” —**Organic Soul, Natural & Holistic Living**

Directors' Statement

“Our primary goal for *The Wisdom to Survive* is to recruit activists. We need a big movement. And we have to connect existing movements. Some of what we're showing is hard to watch. Whales being killed. Children starving. We're urging our audience not to look away: take a good look! You must. Otherwise, you won't do anything about it. You can't remain the same, once you know. We want to inspire our viewers. Yes, climate change is horrifying. We need to know the facts and their implications, and then take action. You can be fully involved, fully aware, know that your house is on fire, and still be joyful and committed.”

About the Filmmakers

Ankele divides his time between Accord, NY, and New York City. As a producer of radio and TV programming in the 1960s, Ankele used mass media to empower faith communities advocating for civil rights and against the Vietnam War. During the struggle for independence in southern Africa, he worked with and trained political activists in the use of media to bring about social change. As an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church and as a student in the Zen and Shambhala Buddhist traditions, he has been involved for many years in interfaith dialogue around contemplative practice and social justice.

Macksoud is based in Woodstock, VT, and is co-founder of Sustainable Woodstock. She spent 17 years as a teacher (English literature, photography, and music) before transitioning to film and video production. Once she discovered the “eye-opening” power of the documentary medium, she brought rented documentaries into her classroom on a regular basis. Eventually, Macksoud began helping her students make their own films and slide shows on the issues of the day (civil rights, the Vietnam War, and global poverty, to name a few). She approaches filmmaking from the perspective of an artist as well as an educator.

Through their non-profit company Old Dog Documentaries, Macksoud and Ankele have produced timely documentaries on urgent issues about the environment, social justice, and spirituality for over 25 years. Some of their films, such as *The Global Banquet: The Politics of Food* and *Arms for the Poor*, are classic references for educational use. Like their past films, *The Wisdom to Survive* supports Old Dog’s mission of promoting environmental justice and inspiring viewers to become activists.

For more information about *The Wisdom to Survive* or to view the trailer visit: olddogdocumentaries.org.

For a press screener or to book interviews with the filmmakers, contact Angela Alston at angela@mocamedia.tv or [718-407-0670](tel:718-407-0670).

April 16, 2014

Pope Francis urged to back fossil fuel divestment campaign

Letter from religious groups in Australia and North America says it is 'immoral' to profit from fossil fuels

By Graham Readfearn
The Guardian

Religious groups have urged [Pope Francis](#) to back a campaign to encourage millions of people, organisations and investors to pull their money out of the fossil fuel industry.

Multi-faith groups in [Australia](#) and North America [have sent a letter](#) to the pope saying it is "immoral" to profit from [fossil fuels](#).

The letter, shown exclusively to the Guardian, says 80% of global fossil fuel reserves must "stay in the ground" if dangerous [climate change](#) is to be avoided.

"We urge you, as a person held in high esteem by many millions around the world, to speak clearly about the place of divestment from fossil fuels as one significant means to avert the worst of climate disruption," the letter says.

"You could have a desperately needed influence on the direction humanity takes from here. We urge you to use this influence."

The plea to the Vatican follows a [call from archbishop Desmond Tutu for an anti-apartheid style boycott](#) of the fossil fuel industry. [Writing in the Guardian](#) last week he said, "People of conscience need to break their ties with corporations financing the injustice of climate change."

The letter sent to the pope's offices in February is co-signed by the [Australian Religious Response to Climate Change](#) (ARRCC) and US-based [GreenFaith](#).

Thea Ormerod, chair of ARRCC and a practising Catholic, said: "If the extracting and burning continues, the world's children and grandchildren may have little or no chance of any kind of decent life on this planet, particularly those who live in the global south.

"For corporate bodies to continue seeking to profit from extracting coal, oil and gas in spite of this fact, is institutionalised greed, selfishness and arrogance. I believe as a Catholic that it is sinful."

Both ARRCC and GreenFaith are umbrella organisations working mainly with Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Jewish groups.

The letter was also signed by a New Zealand campaign that has seen five Anglican dioceses pledging to divest from fossil fuels.

GreenFaith executive director, the Rev Fletcher Harper, said: "Pope Francis's support would provide a powerful validation of the moral rightness of divestment and reinvestment in response to the climate crisis, and would immediately signal the need for dramatic action. It would be of vital significance."

Bill McKibben, the US environmentalist and one of the leaders of the divestment campaign, said: "For people of faith, it's become clear that we can't fulfill the commandment to love our neighbors without breaking the fossil fuel addiction.

"That's why so many churches have been divesting from the richest companies on earth. After all, where your treasure is, there is your heart as well."

Scores of religious groups, educational institutions, philanthropic foundations and cities have pledged to go "fossil free", while others, [such as Harvard University](#), have pushed back against requests.

Last September the White House announced it had joined Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden "in ending public financing for new coal-fired power plants overseas, except in rare circumstances."

That followed the US Export-Import Bank tightening its rules on lending to foreign coal-power projects in an attempt to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The World Bank has introduced similar restrictions on its lending.

The Norwegian government is reviewing its US\$838bn sovereign wealth fund, ranked the largest in the world, to consider stopping fossil fuel investments.

In response to moves in Norway, the World Coal Association has said major coal companies who were the potential targets for divestment were also spending money on so-called "clean coal" technologies.

The association said divesting coal assets would not cut demand for the fuel, ignored its contribution to economic development and would "do nothing" to address climate change.

The letter to the pope was sent a week before Australia's Cardinal George Pell was appointed to an influential senior position within the Catholic church and the Vatican as the head of a new secretariat for the economy.

Cardinal Pell has expressed extreme scepticism of the science linking greenhouse gas emissions to climate change.

In 2011 he delivered the annual lecture of the UK's sceptic group the Global Warming Policy Foundation, founded by Lord Nigel Lawson, and claimed carbon dioxide was "not a pollutant" and animals would not notice a doubling of atmospheric CO₂.

He said climate change campaigners were following a "mythology" which he said was attractive to the "religionless and spiritually rootless".

The Vatican declined to comment on the letter.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/apr/16/pope-francis-back-fossil-fuel-divestment-campaign-religions-groups>

April 17, 2014

National Energy Efficiency Network event series to launch in Canberra, April 30th

Catholic Earthcare Australia
Press Release

Energy efficiency is high on the agenda for many households and businesses across Australia, with electricity and gas prices rising sharply over recent years. For the not-for-profit, community sector in particular, identifying cost-effective and practical ways to become more energy efficient is especially critical, as these rising energy costs divert much needed funds away from important programs and operational budgets. It is into this setting, that Catholic Earthcare Australia, in partnership with the Uniting Church, is launching the National Energy Efficiency Network (NEEN).

Supported with funding from the Department of Industry as part of the Energy Efficiency Information Grants, Program, NEEN enables small to medium sized, faith-based and not-for-profit community organisations to respond to the demands of a changing energy landscape with the aim of *using less, to save more*. To meet this end, NEEN members are provided with FREE access to specialist energy efficiency information, energy savings calculators, NEEN+ Community events and a digital open learning & collaboration forum.

The program is launching nationally with a **NEEN+ Community Event series**, kicking off in Canberra on April 30th. Join leaders & change agents from across the community sector in exploring the benefits & opportunities energy efficient practices bring to individual organisations and the communities within which they work.

The NEEN+ Community events combine an energy efficiency seminar, a NEEN+ community workshop & a networking light lunch to enable attendees to connect, explore, collaborate & take action on energy saving opportunities relevant to their organisation.

Following the Canberra launch, NEEN will be hosting events in Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane, Darwin and Sydney.

UPCOMING NEEN EVENTS:

NEEN+ Community Launch Event – Canberra

Venue: The Great Hall, University House, Australian National University, Canberra

Date/Time: April 30th, 9am – 2pm

Cost: FREE

RSVP: [Event Website](#) or to events@neen.org.au

NEEN+ Community Launch Event – Melbourne

Venue: Catholic Leadership Centre, East Melbourne

Date/Time: May 9th, 9am – 2pm

Cost: FREE

RSVP: [Event Website](#) or to events@neen.org.au

NEEN+ Community Launch Event – Hobart

Venue: Baha'i Centre of Learning for Tasmania, Hobart

Date/Time: May 21st, 9am – 2pm

Cost: FREE

RSVP: [Event Website](#) or to events@neen.org.au

NEEN+ Community Launch Event – Adelaide

Venue: Adelaide Catholic Cathedral Hall, 39 Wakefield Street

Date/Time: June 5th, 9am – 2pm

Cost: FREE

RSVP: [Event Website](#) or to events@neen.org.au

NEEN+ Community Launch Event – Brisbane

Venue: Francis Rush Centre, Cathedral Precinct

Date/Time: June 18th, 9am – 2pm

Cost: FREE

RSVP: [Event Website](#) or to events@neen.org.au

* Perth, Darwin & Sydney dates TBC

To keep up to speed with NEEN+ Community event dates and energy efficiency opportunities, subscribe to the NEEN [newsletter](#), or follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#). To learn more about NEEN initiatives and discover a better energy future for the community sector, visit the [NEEN website](#) or contact your NEEN Regional leader.

For further information on the NEEN+ Community event series, please contact Clare Morgans, Communications & Marketing Manager on (02) 8907 9500 or clare.morgans@neen.org.au

April 20, 2014

Archbishop of Wales: Fundamental action needed to combat climate change

By Aled Blake
Wales Online

In his Easter sermon at Llandaff Cathedral, Dr Barry Morgan called on worshippers to make changes to their way of life to protect the planet.

Climate change disaster can be combated by people living by the values of Jesus Christ, the Archbishop of Wales has said.

In his Easter sermon at Llandaff Cathedral, Dr Barry Morgan called on worshippers to make fundamental changes to their way of life in order to protect the planet for future generations.

He said the increasing extreme weather patterns in the UK and abroad meant Christians needed to take climate change and its effects seriously and respond, not bury their heads in the sand.

Dr Morgan said: “The Resurrection is also about the transformation of the universe. That being the case, not only must we care for one another, we must also have a care for God’s world as well.

“That is why, as Christians, we have to take climate change and its effects seriously. Rising global temperatures are causing droughts, melting glaciers, warming of permafrost, heat waves and coastal floods in almost every part of the world. Already this year we have seen extreme weather patterns, not just in distant far flung places where it is nothing new, but here in Wales and the rest of the UK – this is no longer someone else’s problem. It is ours.

“And we cannot bury our heads in the sand and pretend we don’t know about it and the part we play in it anymore.

“Just a couple of weeks ago, a report published by the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change pulled no punches as it outlined the dire consequences to food supplies, livelihoods, health and security across the world if global warming was allowed to continue unchecked.

“It warned that climate change will cause economic losses, exacerbate poverty and increase migration and risks of violent conflict, as well as causing damage to wildlife and habitats.

“And we can and we ought to do something about it for all the evidence points to the fact that climate change is indeed primarily a result of our behaviour, particularly in the West.

“The UN Report’s Chair, Dr Chris Field, said there was nothing inevitable about the worst impacts of climate change on people and nature and urged people to think creatively about how they could change their lives and improve the lives of others.

"Clearly, governments can do much to limit the damage by cutting emissions and local air pollution, for example, by ending, as Christian Aid suggests, the £314bn the world spends on fossil fuel subsidies.

"At the same time, we can adapt to changes by building sea defences and creating decent homes for people in countries such as Bangladesh.

“The question for us is how do we respond as a church and as Christians? How can we not only give up ingrained habits but make fundamental changes to our way of life?

“There are practical actions some of our churches are already doing – such as installing solar or photovoltaic panels.

“We need to make fundamental changes to our lifestyle by living and working sustainably. That means promoting social justice and equality through Fair Trade, foodbanks, outward giving, night shelters and helping those in need; leading communities on ideas and learning about sustainable living; and seeking to reduce the use of resources through recycling, car sharing or making our graveyards havens for wildlife.

“Caring for creation means enjoying the gifts that God has given us, but also ensuring that they are there for future generations and that we do not destroy our planet.

“Resurrection is about a new humanity, a new world, a new creation – a new order of being as a result of the Resurrection of Jesus.

“Our task now is to live by the values of His risen life – to bring about God’s kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven. And that is good news for all people and for the whole of creation.”

<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/archbishop-wales-fundamental-action-needed-7010852>

April 21, 2014

Getting Out of Oil

By Doug Demeo

America: The National Catholic Review

Catholic universities can make a difference through divestment.

Catholic colleges and universities have a long and storied history of providing full scholarships and affordable higher education to low income, minority and immigrant students. In addition, they continue to fulfill their mission to develop the whole person (*cura personalis*) by linking liberal arts and professional studies to critical moral thought, promoting retreats, building faith-centered community service and justice programs and more. But today there are key issues that challenge the fidelity of Catholic colleges and universities to their core mission. John R. Wilcox, emeritus professor of religious studies at Manhattan College, has made a compelling case in these pages that there is an urgent need to address the “erosion” of the “Catholicity” of Catholic colleges and universities (**Am.** 9/6/13). He argues that the best way to do this is through the creation of “mission communities” on Catholic campuses. Primarily, their call would be to “play a prophetic role, at times ‘speaking truth to power’” for the purpose of “keeping Catholicity vital in all areas of [institutional] life.”

Professor Wilcox offers several examples of how Catholic mission communities might work to maintain and strengthen the Catholic character of colleges and universities. The investment and management of Catholic universities’ financial endowments is one such area in which a new “living endowment” could preserve and promote Catholic mission. In particular, he suggests that mission communities would “offer reviews of college policy and strategic planning and foster a palpable Catholic culture as shaped by the religious heritage of the founders.” While it would be interesting to examine more fully the issues, practices and value perceptions of “mission-based” investing at Catholic institutions, the singularly urgent issue of climate change—and the powerful momentum that has been growing within the fossil fuel divestment movement—deserves attention in this moment.

Considering the strength of Catholic teaching on climate change and ethical investing, the divestiture of stocks and bonds from fossil fuel corporations taking place in a growing number of secular and non-Catholic religious organizations is bringing Catholic higher education—which,

with a few exceptions, has been largely absent from the national conversation—to a crossroads of mission. At this critical junction of institutional integrity, mission communities could play an important role in helping university administrators and trustees to envision a new way of being faithful to Catholic mission and to grasp the prophetic (and arguably financial) urgency of divesting from fossil fuel corporations.

The Catholic Church accepts that human actions like burning fossil fuels have a negative impact on the earth's climate, and it understands that the effects of climate change raise crucial ethical issues as to how we tend to God's creation. In his message for the World Day of Peace in 2010, Pope Benedict XVI highlighted the "urgent moral need for a new solidarity...in the face of signs of a growing [ecological] crisis which it would be irresponsible not to take seriously." He called for "strengthening the linkage between combatting climate change and overcoming poverty." At the same time, scientists warn that our planet is rapidly reaching a level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that will likely cause permanent, accelerating climate change. As described in numerous scientific reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a vast majority of climate scientists agree that humanity can emit only 565 more gigatons of carbon dioxide by 2050 if it is to avoid a catastrophic level of climate change. Yet, the world's largest fossil fuel corporations still plan to burn the 2,796 gigatons of carbon dioxide in their reserves, a business strategy that would result in levels of human suffering and ecological degradation unmatched in human history.

In order to address the systemic causes of climate change, an increasingly global array of religious groups, colleges and cities are moving to divest from fossil fuel corporations in order to diminish their political and economic influence. Some are also pursuing reinvestment in clean technology and energy efficiency initiatives within their own facilities and holdings. The movement has been spearheaded by the Go Fossil Free campaign, which calls on institutions to "immediately freeze any new investment in fossil fuel companies, and divest from direct ownership and any commingled funds that include fossil fuel public equities and corporate bonds within 5 years."

While the divestment campaign's ostensible goal is to decrease the value of fossil fuel corporations' stocks, it carries deeper implications. The campaign's proponents recognize that the political process has failed to produce a legislative response to the grave threat represented by climate change, largely because of the outsized influence of the fossil fuel lobby. Campaigners believe that divestment represents a way to turn public opinion against this lobby. At a time when there is no prospect for climate legislation, the fossil fuel divestment movement seeks to rekindle debate on a critical moral issue and to create an environment in which genuine solutions become possible.

In that light, this campaign resembles past divestment campaigns, like the anti-apartheid efforts of the 1980s, in which impassioned divestment debates in educational, governmental and religious institutions played a vital role in undermining the legitimacy of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Through a similar approach, the fossil fuel divestment campaign seeks to redraw society's collective moral boundaries by asserting that institutions with a moral or educational mission should no longer profit from the fossil fuel industry. Its primary method is to force a morally challenging debate about the long-term impacts of climate change, the entrenched power

of the fossil fuel industry and the incompatibility of these with a thriving future for humanity and the wider community of life.

To date, the divestment movement is supported by several faith communities, including the national United Church of Christ, the Anglican Diocese of Wellington, New Zealand, the Episcopal Dioceses of Olympia in Washington State and Massachusetts, individual Lutheran and Unitarian churches in the United States and GreenFaith, an interfaith alliance devoted to environmental stewardship, where I am a fellow. On the Catholic side, the Franciscan Action Network recently made the bold decision to join the movement and is encouraging Franciscan colleges and universities to support growing student and faculty activism for divestment, which is already occurring on several Jesuit campuses.

Corporate Responsibility

In its statement “Economic Justice for All” (1986), the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops points out that while economic markets can encourage beneficial economic development, markets alone do not “automatically produce justice” that protects the common good of all people, to which our climate is unmistakably linked, especially with respect to the poorest among us. The church therefore insists that when economic activity in free markets damages the common good, free markets must be circumscribed by “ethical norms” grounded in Catholic teaching. Thus, the U.S. bishops’ document “Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines” urges investors to draw on “the values, directions and criteria which guide its financial choices from the Gospel, universal church teaching and Conference statements.”

In “Ex Corde Ecclesiae” (1990), Pope John Paul II insisted that in order to remain faithful to the church, “Catholic ideals, attitudes and principles [must] penetrate and inform university activities” across all areas of an institution. This necessarily includes the investment and management of a Catholic university’s endowment. Given the magnitude of the climate crisis, as well as other destructive impacts of fossil fuel extraction, such as mountaintop removal and groundwater contamination, Catholic university administrations should at the very least enter into the fossil fuel debate. Some, like the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass.—my alma mater—have taken steps in this direction.

The Duties of Justice

In response to the claim that Catholic institutions should divest from fossil fuel holdings in order to uphold their Catholic mission, at least three rebuttals can be anticipated—and refuted.

First, college and university administrators and trustees might argue that the best way for Catholic institutions to address climate change is to focus on reducing their own carbon footprints. Although such direct activities to alleviate injustices are important and commendable, the U.S. bishops point out that their program The Two Feet of Love in Action calls for micro-level actions coupled with macro-level efforts (i.e., social justice) to address the systemic dynamics that cause and perpetuate what John Paul II, in “On Social Concerns” (1987), called structures of sin. Pope Pius XI cautioned in “Divini Redemptoris” (1937) that “no one [should] attempt with trifling charitable donations to exempt himself from the great duties imposed by

justice.” Since fossil fuel corporations are at the heart of the systemic perpetuation of climate change, Catholic institutions should take steps to divest from fossil fuel companies even as they continue to reduce their own carbon footprints and remain faithful to their mission at large.

A second possible argument against fossil fuel divestment is that this activity may compromise institutional endeavors (like scholarships and facilities expansion) by restricting endowment growth. This is essentially an appeal to fiduciary responsibility. In response, it should first be mentioned that the highly-respected Chronicle of Higher Education reports that divesting from fossil fuel companies is unlikely to harm the endowments of colleges and universities. Many other financial studies likewise argue the fiduciary responsibility of divestment, given the looming prospects of “stranded assets” or a “carbon bubble”—meaning the future of fossil fuels is highly tenuous, at best. But even if fossil fuel divestment were to restrict endowment growth, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that for a given action the “end does not justify the means” (No. 1753). In reference to Catholic colleges and universities, the end of institutional advancement does not justify investment in fossil fuel companies that profoundly contradict Catholic teaching. This is especially true when the quality of the future of graduating students is at stake—a big reason why more of our students are raising their voices on behalf of divestment.

A third argument is that socially responsible investment, rather than divestment, is the best way to mitigate climate change from an equity ownership perspective. Socially responsible investing, as described by Christian Brothers Investment Services Inc., a leader in Catholic S.R.I., involves shareholder advocacy and “a multi-strategy approach—stock screening, proxy voting, corporate dialogues and shareholder resolutions.”

While S.R.I. has achieved notable successes with respect to influencing corporate behavior, two points should be highlighted about S.R.I. and the fossil fuel industry. First, scientists say that fossil fuel corporations must keep 80 percent of their carbon reserves in the ground in order to keep climate change from causing runaway harm. For all intents and purposes, this means that oil companies will have to stop drilling for oil and coal companies will have to stop mining coal. These activities are the principal ways that fossil fuel companies make their profits, and shareholder advocacy is unlikely to effect changes to core corporate practices to the degree required to reverse the most unthinkable effects of climate change.

Furthermore, S.R.I. in fact recognizes a role for “screening companies from our investment portfolios,” as Christian Brothers Investment Services says. This means that even investors actively committed to corporate engagement and advocacy sometimes acknowledge that circumstances may justify or even require the refusal to invest in a company or companies in order to remain faithful to Catholic teaching. Conscious of the way fossil fuel corporations manifestly undermine Catholic teaching by fostering climate change for profit, fossil fuel corporations are a prime example of companies (not unlike manufacturers of weapons of mass destruction) in which Catholic mission requires the use of such “avoidance screens.”

Although fossil fuel divestment is a crucial tool to address climate change, this strategy alone is an insufficient response to climate change for the Christian community. Local, national and global leaders as well as the U.S. bishops have advocated that responses to climate change must provide transitional and adaptation funding. Additionally, divestment must be accompanied by

the type of reinvestment in clean energy technologies advocated by GreenFaith's campaign Divest and Reinvest Now.

While climate change and endowment investment are both complex issues demanding careful thought, Catholic mission requires that financial returns not foster or exacerbate climate change. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells his followers: "No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (6:24).

Climate change has brought Catholic colleges and universities that invest in fossil fuel corporations to a moral crossroads. These institutions must now decide whether they will prioritize the integrity of their mission or the status quo of their investments in fossil fuels. Climate change shows the two to be mutually exclusive.

One of the most important ways that mission communities can preserve and promote Catholic fidelity at colleges and universities is to advocate that administrators and trustees divest their endowments from an industry whose essential practices blatantly contradict and undermine the teachings and mission of the Catholic Church.

Doug Demeo, a fellow with GreenFaith, an interfaith coalition for the environment, is an adviser on socially responsible investments.

Links:

[1] <http://americamagazine.org/toc-past/2014-04-21>

[2] <http://americamagazine.org/users/doug-demeo>

<http://americamagazine.org/issue/getting-out-oil>

April 24, 2014

Celebrities Gisele Bündchen, Don Cheadle, Yaya Touré and Ian Somerhalder Issue Call to Action for World Environment Day

United Nations Environment Programme

NAIROBI – Supermodel Gisele Bündchen, Actors Don Cheadle and Ian Somerhalder and footballer Yaya Touré – all Goodwill Ambassadors for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – have launched a challenge to see who can rally the most registered activities for World Environment Day 2014.

Their call to action, Message in the Bottle, asks individuals around the world to join one of the celebrities' teams and make a difference by pledging to take action in support of World

Environment Day. These pledges can be registered at wedchallenge.com.

The campaign features a variety of Public Service Announcements in 7 languages which will run on CNN, large format billboards in Times Square in New York City and Piccadilly Circus in London, and on-line. (To view the videos, please visit https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZ4sOGXTWw8GqnygMSOxWirZN_m-Gphn9)

In a unique creative approach, viewers get to see Don Cheadle playing trumpet to prepare for his upcoming directorial debut and lead role as Miles Davis, Gisele practicing her beloved martial art, Kung Fu, and Yaya Touré getting mentally prepared for the run up to the World Cup.

“These global celebrities are giving fans a unique glimpse into the private moments that make them who they are,” said Jeffrey Nachmanoff, director of the Public Service Announcements, screenwriter for the climate blockbuster “The Day After Tomorrow” and writer/director of “Traitor” and the CBS series “Hostages”.

“They are then interrupted in these moments by a message in the bottle which is an unexpected play on their roles and provides a twist that should get the viewer’s attention and encourage them to want to go to the site to get involved,” he added.

This is the second time that Nachmanoff has lent his talent to create a UNEP public service announcement, the first was for the Seal the Deal Climate Campaign in 2009. He worked alongside accomplished cinematographers, Jim and Nicole Whitaker, on both UNEP projects. Game 7 Films of New York City produced the films.

Notably, the award-winning band The Police donated the sound track of the iconic song, “Message in the Bottle”, to support the campaign

World Environment Day (WED) is the United Nations’ principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the environment.

Over the years, it has grown to be a broad, global platform for public outreach that is widely celebrated in over 100 countries. It’s the “people’s day” for doing something good for the environment, and for galvanizing individual actions into a collective power that generates a substantial positive impact on the planet.

In support of the UN’s designation of 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States, WED 2014 has adopted Small Island Developing States as its theme in the broader context of climate change.

The objective is to encourage a greater understanding of the importance of Small Island Developing States and the urgency to help protect the islands in the face of growing risks and vulnerabilities, particularly as a result of climate change, and to demonstrate the connections between these ecosystems and ours.

From Trinidad and Tobago to Tonga, Samoa to Suriname, the problems that these small islands face – climate change, waste management, unsustainable consumption, degradation of natural resources, extreme natural disasters in the midst of overpopulation and continuing industrialization – are the problems that face us all.

For Small Island Developing States, climate change is foremost among these challenges, as global warming is causing ocean levels to rise. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global sea levels are rising at an increased rate. This is projected to be increase even further this century. When the global temperature warms, seawater expands and occupies more space. Sea levels also rise when polar ice melts.

Coastal communities in every country are then threatened with floods and storm surges, to which Small Island Developing States are the most exposed. Many of these islands' inhabited areas and cultural sites are potentially in danger of being lost to sea-level rise.

WED 2014 underscores that we all face similar challenges and are connected and united by a common goal: a sustainable and prosperous life for everyone on this planet. Every action, pledge, and activity counts and, when multiplied by a global chorus, becomes exponential in its impact. Make your voice heard and register at www.unep.org/wed and wedchallenge.com.

How to Get Involved:

Each celebrity Goodwill Ambassador is championing his or her own cause in support of this year's WED theme, "Raise Your Voice not the Sea Level". YOU can cast your own vote by pledging support to one of their activities at wedchallenge.com or on Twitter. You can also support via social media networks:

Hashtags

#WorldEnvironmentDay #WED2014 #WEDchallenge

Teams:

GiseleBüchsen Twitter account: @giseleofficial

Yaya Touré Twitter account: @Toure_yaya42

Don Cheadle Twitter account: @IamDonCheadle
Ian Somerhalder Twitter account: @iansomerhalder

Facebook/Google +

For #WorldEnvironmentDay this year Gisele Bündchen will work against food waste, Don Cheadle wants you to power down, Ian Somerhalder asks you to go greener and Yaya Touré to purge plastics. Which team will you join? #WEDchallenge

UNEP Goodwill Ambassadors have taken up #WorldEnvironmentDay challenge. How will you step up to the challenge? Join a team and register your activity!

Notes to Editors:

Upon request, behind-the-scenes footage is available of Don Cheadle playing trumpet with his band and Gisele Bündchen practicing Kung Fu with her instructor, Yao Li.

Available language versions are: Arabic, Chinese, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

Song credit

"Message In A Bottle"

Performed by The Police

Written by: Sting

Courtesy of SonyATV Music Publishing & Universal Music

By arrangement with Suzanne Hilleary for WACBIZ

Special thanks to Nicole VanGiesen & KSM, Inc.

In addition to the current campaign, UNEP Goodwill Ambassadors Don Cheadle and Ian Somerhalder will also feature in a groundbreaking series on the television channel Showtime, known as "Years of Living Dangerously".

The series harnesses the power of these and other celebrities – including Jessica Alba, Mark Bittman, Matt Damon, America Ferrera, Harrison Ford, Thomas Friedman, Michael C. Hall, Chris Hayes, Olivia Munn, M. Sanjayan, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Lesley Stahl – to travel the globe as "celebrity investigators", uncovering the intimate experiences of people directly affected by climate change.

The first episode of the nine-part series can be viewed online at
<https://www.youtube.com/user/Years>.

Don Cheadle's episode can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gh9lxyalVDY>.

A separate communiqué on this innovative series will be issued by UNEP in the coming weeks.

Learn more at <http://yearsoflivingdangerously.com>

For more information, contact: UNEPnewsdesk@unep.org

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.

<http://www.unep.org/NewsCentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2787&ArticleID=10834&l=en>

May 2014

SAFCEI - South African Faith Communities Institute Newsletter

<http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=b599289ac9&e=d85b57a294>

May / June 2014

Renewing our Relationship with the Earth

Spirituality & Health

Interview with John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker

Interview by Sam Mowe

Read this article at:

http://www.journeyoftheuniverse.org/storage/Tucker_Grim_Interview.pdf

May 2, 2014

Vatican hosts five-day sustainability summit

By Brian Roewe

National Catholic Reporter

A Vatican conference kicking off Friday has brought together academics and experts from across the globe to address sustainability issues related to both people and the planet.

The conference -- "[Sustainable Humanity, Sustainable Nature, Our Responsibility](#) [1]" -- is a joint venture of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. It runs through the weekend and concludes Tuesday.

Participants include scientists and experts from 14 countries and a range of backgrounds: microbiology, law, labor, economics, philosophy, business and astronomy. In addition, 31 people are attending as outside observers, including Dan Misleh, executive director of the Catholic Climate Covenant.

Honduran Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga [gave the opening address](#) [2] Friday morning on ethics, what he viewed as an emerging crisis.

"Every great economic or political crisis is coupled with a disruption of principles: societies feel that the ground has been shaken from under their feet, and that they have lost their knowledge of priorities and the very meaning of things," Maradiaga said.

"Nowadays man finds himself to be a technical giant and an ethical child," the archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, said.

In his conclusion, he said the solution to sustainability issues must not be improvised but found through developing discerning citizens that are committed with the ideals of democracy, justice, and respect for one another and the environment."

The Pontifical Academy of Sciences is live streaming the event on its [website](#) [3] and [You Tube channel](#) [4].

An [introductory document](#) [5] offers a glimpse at the types of questions guiding the workshop: Are humanity's dealings with nature sustainable? How should we perceive nature and what is a good relationship between humanity and nature? Should we expect global economic growth seen in recent decades continue for the foreseeable future?

"There is no single environmental problem, there is a large collection of interrelated problems," states the organizers, offering numerous ways to view the problems, in terms of population growth, economic growth, through urban pollution or poverty.

But cataloguing environmental problems is not the intent of the sustainability summit.

"We propose instead to view Humanity's interchanges with nature through a triplet of fundamental, but inter-related Human needs -- Food, Health, and Energy -- and ask our respective academies to work together to invite experts to speak to the various pathways that both serve those needs and reveal constraints on nature's ability to meet them. That requires a collaborative effort of natural and social scientists," the organizers said.

The document noted that the world's growth, in terms of population, economy, energy use, consumption, has pushed nature to its constraints. While economic and environmental interests are often pitted against one another, the document suggests positive links. For instance, increases in scientific knowledge, technology and public infrastructure has made more known about environmental hazards and ways to avoid or mitigate them.

"There should be no question that Humanity needs urgently to redirect our relationship with nature so as to promote a sustainable pattern of economic and social development," the organizers said.

At the [Catholic Ecology blog](#) [6], William Patenaude said what makes the gathering special is not that the Vatican is tackling the subject of sustainability but that it has brought together two academic fields -- natural sciences and social sciences -- that aren't always talking to one another.

"The hope is that in bringing together leaders in these respective fields, the subsequent dialogue will encourage new and bold insights about how we all might live in sustainable, healthy, and environmentally friendly ways," he wrote.

The workshop spends a large portion of Friday on examining the drivers of food, health and energy needs, with a discussion on climate change spilling into Saturday.

Day two will focus on competing demands on nature, the cryosphere, and the biosphere. On Monday and Tuesday, attention turns to societal questions, from the response to current unsustainable growth rates, to issues of inequality, the ownership of nature,

Andy Revkin, author of *The New York Times'* [Dot Earth blog](#) [7], will offer closing comments. He will also be tweeting ([@Revkin](#) [8]) and providing updates on his blog. Misleh of the Catholic Climate Covenant will be tweeting ([@dan_misleh](#) [9]) and [blogging insights](#) [10], as well.

[Brian Roewe is an *NCR* staff writer. Follow him on Twitter: [@BrianRoewe](#) [11].]

Source URL (retrieved on 05/17/2014 - 14:21): <http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/vatican-hosts-five-day-sustainability-summit>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.casinapioiv.va/content/accademia/en/events/2014/sustainable.html>
- [2] <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/RODRIGUEZ-MARADIAGA-Sustainable-Humanity-English.pdf>
- [3] <http://www.casinapioiv.va/content/accademia/en.html>
- [4] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1VbsGMGKFw#t=1703>
- [5] http://www.casinapioiv.va/content/dam/accademia/booklet/booklet_sustainable.pdf
- [6] <http://catholicecology.blogspot.com/2014/05/feeding-multitudes-vatican-conference.html>
- [7] <http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/?module=BlogMain&action=Click®ion=Header>

[&pgtype=Blogs&version=Blog%20Main&contentCollection=Opinion](#)

[8] <https://twitter.com/Revkin>

[9] https://twitter.com/dan_misleh

[10] <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/dans-blog-from-rome/>

[11] <http://ncronline.org/www.twitter.com/brianroewe>

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/vatican-hosts-five-day-sustainability-summit>

May 3, 2014

Why Should Evangelical Christians Care About Climate Change?

Here are five reasons from an evangelical Christian climate scientist.

By Chris Mooney

Slate

Climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe, an evangelical Christian, has had quite a run lately. A few weeks back, she was featured in the first episode of the Showtime series *The Years of Living Dangerously*, meeting with actor Don Cheadle in her home state of Texas to explain to him why faith and a warming planet aren't in conflict. (You can watch that episode for free [on YouTube](#); Hayhoe is a science adviser for the show.) Then *Time* magazine [named her](#) one of the 100 most influential people of 2014. Cheadle wrote the entry. "There's something fascinating about a smart person who defies stereotype," Cheadle observed.

Why is Hayhoe in the spotlight? Simply put, millions of Americans are evangelical Christians, and their belief in the science of global warming is well below the national average. And if anyone has a chance of reaching this vast and important audience, Hayhoe does. "I feel like the conservative community, the evangelical community, and many other Christian communities, I feel like we have been lied to," explains Hayhoe on the latest episode of the [Inquiring Minds podcast](#). "We have been given information about climate change that is not true. We have been told that it is incompatible with our values, whereas in fact it's entirely compatible with conservative and with Christian values."

Hayhoe's approach to science—and to religion—was heavily influenced by her father, a former Toronto science educator and also, at one time, a missionary. "For him, there was never any conflict between the idea that there is a God, and the idea that science explains the world that we see around us," says Hayhoe. When she was 9, her family moved to Colombia, where her parents worked as missionaries and educators, and where Hayhoe saw what environmental vulnerability really looks like. "Some of my friends lived in houses that were made out of cardboard Tide boxes, or corrugated metal," she says. "And realizing that you don't really need that much to be happy, but at the same time, you're very vulnerable to the environment around you, the less that you have."

“In terms of addressing the climate issue,” says Hayhoe, “we don’t have time for everybody to get on the same page regarding the age of the universe.”

Her research today, on the [impacts of climate change](#), flows from those early experiences. And of course, it is inspired by her faith, which for Hayhoe puts a strong emphasis on caring for the weakest and most vulnerable among us. “That gives us even more reason to care about climate change,” says Hayhoe, “because it is affecting people, and is disproportionately affecting the poor, and the vulnerable, and those who cannot care for themselves.”

The fact remains, though, that most evangelical Christians in the United States do *not* think as Hayhoe does. [Recent data](#) from the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication suggests that while 64 percent of Americans think global warming is real and caused by human beings, only 44 percent of evangelicals do. Evangelicals in general, explains Hayhoe, tend to be more politically conservative, and can be quite distrusting of scientists (believing, [incorrectly](#), that they’re all a bunch of atheists). Plus, some evangelicals really do go in for that whole “the world is ending” thing—[not an outlook likely to inspire much care for the environment](#). So how does Hayhoe reach them?

From our interview, here are five of Hayhoe’s top arguments, for evangelical Christians, on climate change:

1. Conservation is conservative. The evangelical community isn’t just a religious community, it’s also a politically conservative one on average. So Hayhoe speaks directly to that value system. “What’s more conservative than conserving our natural resources, making sure we have enough for the future, and not wasting them like we are today?” she asks. “That’s a very conservative value.”

Indeed, many conservatives don’t buy into climate science because they don’t like the “big government” solutions they suspect the problem entails. But Hayhoe has an answer ready for that one too: Conservative-friendly, market-driven solutions to climate problems are actually all around us. “A couple of weeks ago, Texas ... smashed the record for the most wind energy ever produced. It was 38 percent of our energy that week, came from wind,” she says. And Hayhoe thinks that’s just the beginning: “If you look at the map of where the greatest potential is for wind energy, it’s right up the red states. And I think that is going to make a big difference in the future.”

2. Yes, God *would* let this happen. One conservative Christian argument is that God just wouldn’t let human activities ruin the creation. Or, as Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma [has put it](#), “God’s still up there, and the arrogance of people to think that we, human beings, would be able to change what he is doing in the climate, is to me, outrageous.” You can watch Inhofe and other religious right politicians dismissing climate change on biblical grounds in this video.

Hayhoe thinks the answer to Inhofe’s objection is simple: From a Christian perspective, we have free will to make decisions and must live with their consequences. This is, after all, a classic Christian solution to the [theological problem of evil](#). “Are bad things happening? Yes, all the

time,” says Hayhoe. “Someone gets drunk, they get behind the wheel of a car, they kill an innocent bystander, possibly even a child or a mother.”

Climate change is, to Hayhoe, just another wrong, another problem, brought on by flawed humans exercising their wills in a way that is less than fully advisable. “That’s really what climate change is,” she says. “It’s a casualty of the decisions that we have made.”

3. The Bible does not approve of letting the world burn. Hayhoe agrees with the common liberal perception that the evangelical community contains a significant proportion of [apocalyptic or end-times believers](#)—and that this belief, literally that judgment is upon us, undermines their concern about preserving the planet. But she thinks there’s something very wrong with that outlook, and indeed, that the Bible itself refutes it.

“The message that, we don’t care about anybody else, screw everybody, and let the world burn, that message is not a consistent message in the Bible,” says Hayhoe. In particular, she thinks the apostle Paul has a pretty good answer to end-times believers in his second epistle to the [Thessalonians](#). Hayhoe breaks Paul’s message down like this: “I’ve heard that you’ve been quitting your jobs, you have been laying around and doing nothing, because you think that Christ is returning and the world is ending.” But Paul serves up a rebuke. In Hayhoe’s words: “Get a job, support yourself and your family, care for others—again, the poor and the vulnerable who can’t care for themselves—and do what you can, essentially, to make the world a better place, because nobody knows when that’s going to happen.”

4. Even if you believe in a young Earth, it’s still warming. One reason there’s such a tension between the evangelical community and science is, well, science. Many evangelicals are young-Earth creationists, who believe that the Earth is 6,000 or so years old.

Hayhoe isn’t one of those. She studied astrophysics and quasars that are [quite ancient](#); and as she notes, believing the Earth and universe to be young creates a pretty problematic understanding of God: “Either you have to believe that God created everything looking as if it were billions of years old, or you have to believe it is billions of years old.” In the former case, God would, in effect, seem to be trying to trick us.

But when it comes to talking to evangelical audiences about climate change, Hayhoe doesn’t emphasize the age of the Earth, simply because, she says, there’s no need. “When I talk to Christian audiences, I only show ice core data and other proxy data going back 6,000 years,” says Hayhoe, “because I believe that you can make an even stronger case, for the massive way in which humans have interfered with the natural system, by only looking at a shorter period of time.”

“In terms of addressing the climate issue,” says Hayhoe, “we don’t have time for everybody to get on the same page regarding the age of the universe.”

5. “Caring for our environment is caring for people.” Finally, Hayhoe thinks it is crucial to emphasize to evangelicals that saving the planet is about saving people ... not just saving animals. “I think there’s this perception,” says Hayhoe, “that if an environmentalist were driving

down the road ... and they saw a baby seal on one side and they saw a human on the other side, they would veer out of the way to avoid the baby seal and run down the human.” That’s why it’s so important, in her mind, to emphasize how climate change affects *people* (a logic once again affirming the perception that the polar bear was a [terrible symbol](#) for global warming). And there’s bountiful evidence of this: The just-released Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s [“Working Group II” report on climate impacts](#) emphasizes threats to our food supply, a risk of [worsening violence](#) in a warming world, and the potential displacement of vulnerable populations.

So is the message working? Hayhoe thinks so. After all, while only 44 percent of evangelicals may accept modern climate science today, she notes that that’s considerable progress from a [2008 Pew poll](#), which had that number at just 34 percent. Ultimately, for Hayhoe, it comes down to this: “If you believe that God created the world, and basically gave it to humans as this incredible gift to live on, then why would you treat it like garbage? Treating the world like garbage says a lot about how you think about the person who you believe created the Earth.”

To listen to the full interview with Katharine Hayhoe, you can stream below.

Chris Mooney is the author of *The Republican War on Science* and, with Sheril Kirshenbaum, *Unscientific America: How Scientific Illiteracy Threatens Our Future*.

http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/climate_desk/2014/05/conservative_christians_and_climate_change_five_arguments_for_why_one_should.html

May 4, 2014

Youths sue U.S. government over climate inaction

An unprecedented massive legal campaign led by young Americans is playing out in courtrooms across the nation

By Amel Ahmed
Aljazeera America

Young people across the country are suing several government agencies for failing to develop a climate change recovery plan, conduct that amounts to a violation of their constitutional rights, says their lawyer Julia Olson.

Their futures are at stake, say the young plaintiffs.

“Climate change is the biggest issue of our time,” said 13-year-old Xiuhtezcatl Roske-Martinez, a member of nonprofit Kids vs. Global Warming, a plaintiff in the suit.

“It’s not every day you see young people getting involved politically, but the climate crisis is changing all that. Every generation from here on out is going to be affected by climate change,” added Roske-Martinez, who founded environmental nonprofit Earth Guardians and organized successful actions in his hometown of Boulder, Colorado.

The federal suit, which has made its way to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, is part of a groundbreaking nationwide legal campaign spearheaded by youth and backed by some of the world’s leading climate scientists and legal scholars.

The case, filed by five teenagers and two nonprofits — WildEarth Guardians and Kids vs. Global Warming — representing thousands more youth, relies on the public trust doctrine, which requires government to protect resources essential to the survival of all generations.

“With the United States as the largest historic emitter of carbon dioxide, the atmospheric resource cannot be restored without government action,” Olson told Al Jazeera.

Supported by more than 30 environmental and constitutional professors, the young plaintiffs name six federal agencies in their suit — the Environmental Protection Agency and the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Energy and Defense departments.

“The welfare of youth is directly affected by the failure of government to confront human-made climate change, and unless the government acts immediately to rapidly reduce carbon emissions ... youth will face irrevocable harm: the collapse of natural resource systems and a largely uninhabitable nation,” reads the complaint.

In addition to the federal suit, actions were filed in all 50 states, with help from Our Children’s Trust, an Oregon-based nonprofit that supports young people through legal efforts.

The scale of the campaign is unprecedented, according to law professor Mary Wood, faculty director at the Environmental and Natural Resources Law Program at the University of Oregon.

“Never before in the history of our laws have we seen a coordinated set of legal actions on this scale,” she said.

The monumental campaign matches the magnitude of the problem, supporters say.

Read the full article here:

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/5/4/youth-sue-governmentforclimateinaction.html>

May 6, 2014

HASC lauds the White House on Unveiling Dire Warning - Climate Change Is Here

Action Needed Now - EcoDharmic Justice!

Hindu American Seva Communities Press Release

Washington, D.C.: Hindu American Seva Communities (HASC) supports and complements efforts elaborated in the President's Climate Action Plan. Today, delivering on a major commitment in the Climate Action Plan, the White House unveiled the third U.S. National Climate Assessment—the most comprehensive scientific assessment ever generated of climate change and its impacts across every region of America and major sectors of the U.S. economy. A “game changer”, this [Assessment](#) lays out, at an unprecedented level of comprehensiveness, clarity, and detail, how climate change is affecting every region in our country and key sectors of our national economy. A single bottom line is crystal clear: climate change is not a distant threat; it is affecting the American people now in important ways.

Developed over four years by hundreds of the Nation’s top climate scientists and technical experts—and informed by thousands of inputs from the public, and technical workshops across the country, the third National Climate Assessment represents the most authoritative and comprehensive knowledge base about how climate change is affecting America now, and what’s likely to come over the next century. "They get that climate change is happening, they get that it is caused by human activity and support the solutions to climate change but they don't feel that sense of urgency," John Podesta, an adviser to President Obama.

An example of the seriousness of the problem, the impacts of climate change on human health and wellbeing:

*“Climate change threatens human health and well-being in many ways, including through impacts from increased extreme weather events, wildfire, decreased air quality, threats to mental health, and illnesses transmitted by food, water, and disease carriers such as mosquitoes and ticks. Some of these health impacts are already underway in the United States. Climate change will, absent other changes, amplify some of the existing health threats the Nation now faces. Certain people and communities are especially vulnerable, including children, the elderly, the sick, the poor, and some communities of color. **Public health actions, especially preparedness and prevention, can do much to protect people from some of the impacts of climate change. Early action provides the largest health benefits.**” (NCA Highlights: Human Health)*

“Our Dharmic teachings not only guide and inspire us, but they also expect action of us. If we strive to do our best, our karma will shape the future of our children and grandchildren. We can start with small steps such as ensuring our homes and temples become more energy-efficient” said EcoDharmic Seva Associate Project Director, Arjun Bhargava.

We, at HASC, urge you to study the [highlights](#) of this report so that we are better prepared to protect our communities and lead the EcoSeva Justice nationally rooted in our Dharmic values. This report makes the outcomes of climate change less abstract to all Americans. Let us highlight this issue in each corner of our country, to garner support for federal and state actions.

May 6, 2014

Remarks by Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director at the 2014 Joint Workshop of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences

Towards an Inclusive "Green Economy": Rethinking Ethics and Economy in the Age of the Anthropocene

United Nations Environment Programme

Rome - Sometimes, to look afresh at the problems of today, we need to take a wider view. Not just decades, or centuries. Not even millennia.

Geologists divide the Earth's existence into periods called epochs. These can be tens of millions of years long. Each is marked by a radically different climate, and most culminate in some kind of mass extinction. The Holocene, for example, started some twelve thousand years ago, when the glaciers started to retreat from the temperate lands we know today, and mammoths and sabre-toothed tigers disappeared from our planet.

Some scientists suggest that we have entered into an entirely new epoch. Nobel Prize laureate Paul Crutzen was the one to give this period its name: the Anthropocene. And this name may soon be formalised, as the Stratigraphy Commission of the Geological Society of London will decide in 2016 if the Anthropocene will indeed become a formal unit of geological epoch divisions. Dating back to the Industrial Revolution, this is the period in which the human race became the single most influential factor in our planet's future. The mass extinction has already started: it is estimated that species of flora and fauna are presently going extinct at 1000 times the rate we could otherwise expect.

To put that into perspective, that places the human race in the same category as the asteroid which wiped out the dinosaurs, and 75% of all Earth's species, 66 million years ago.

We are not the inheritors of the Earth's natural resources, but rather, the custodians. We have a duty of care to the poor, the weak and disenfranchised; to our children and to their children, to protect and nurture creation.

This responsibility presses upon us as individuals, as communities and as nations. The treasures of creation are the very base that allows human society to develop and grow. If we exhaust these resources, there can be no sustainable social and economic growth. To foster these resources and thrive, we need to evolve our development ethic and vision. Alongside that, our very survival as a species could depend upon the adoption of a new paradigm for transforming the ever dominant

economic rationale of our times which has guaranteed a great deal of wealth but has also begun to impoverish our societies and is rapidly compromising the well-being of future generations. .

A New Development Ethic and Vision

As individuals and communities we need to respond to a different set of realities and responsibilities in the Anthropocene. 250 years of consumption have magnified, not reduced, inequality. We need to correct the irrationality of valuing economic growth and material wealth over happiness, security and wellbeing.

Yet in decoupling the definition of development from Gross Domestic Product (GDP), we must ensure we provide a set of positive solutions, rather than a mere critique of the *status quo*.

Moving the world's 1.2 billion poorest to a life of dignity for all will require recognition that environmental conservation is not an impediment to development, but in fact the key to a future of economic prosperity, human wellbeing, and food and energy security for all.

In the lead up to Rio+20 UNEP worked with partners, including the UN University, to introduce the Inclusive Wealth Indicator (IWI) as an alternative to GDP as a measure of sustainable development.

The IWI is among a range of potential replacements which world leaders can consider as a way of bringing greater precision to assessing wealth generation in order to realize sustainable development and eradicate poverty.

The wellbeing of humanity and the functioning of the economy and society ultimately depend upon the responsible management of the planet's finite natural resources.

Living within the Earth's safe operating space ? its planetary boundaries ? safeguards humanity from crossing ecological or social thresholds that could undermine or even reverse development gains.

To achieve sustainable development without crossing ecological thresholds, countries will need to transition to a low-carbon economy, adopt sustainable consumption and production patterns, become more resource efficient and decouple economic growth from the over-exploitation of natural resources.

A New Paradigm for Economic Progress and Prosperity

This is the goal of a Green Economy: an inclusive system which creates jobs and prosperity for all by safeguarding the Earth's life support systems.

Sustainable consumption and production can yield economic, social and health benefits, including greater access to markets, social innovation, job creation and empowerment.

Sustainable consumption is not necessarily about consuming less. It is about consuming better - in an intelligent and environmentally sustainable way.

The dominant consumption pattern of affluent societies is a major stress on natural resources. According to a report by the International Resource Panel, total resource use grew eight-fold between 1990 and 2000, from 6 billion to 49 billion tonnes.

By 2050, humanity could devour an estimated 140 billion tonnes of minerals, ores, fossil fuels and biomass per year - three times its current appetite - unless economic growth is "decoupled" from natural resources consumption.

More emphasis is required on resource efficiency in government policies, public and private sector management practices, technology choices, and investments, so as to deliver more output per unit of input, as well as less associated environmental damage.

The success of a new paradigm for economic growth will ultimately be seen in four principle areas: Food, Water, Energy, Natural Capital and Human Capital.

Food

The world is struggling to feed its 7 billion citizens. Figures from The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) indicate that 842 million people went hungry between 2011 and 2013, most of them in the developing world. By 2050, we must find a way to feed an additional 2.6 billion people. This means that agricultural production must increase by 70 per cent, according to World Bank figures

The goal of food security for all cannot be achieved by expanding croplands in pursuit of increased food production, which would bring its own problems. Agriculture already accounts for more than two thirds of the world's freshwater use and is a contributor to deforestation.

Reducing the 1.3 billion tonnes of food lost or wasted each year, equivalent to one third of all food produced and enough to feed the world's hungry, is one of many sensible ways of tackling the problem?particularly when one considers that 1.4 billion hectares of cropland, as well as water and other agricultural inputs, are needed to produce this discarded food.

Pope Francis in June last year said this waste was 'like stealing from the table of the poor and hungry'.

UNEP and the FAO last year launched *Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint?* a campaign encouraging consumers and business to rethink their practices.

Meanwhile, two billion hectares of agricultural land is currently degraded. Rehabilitating this land, which lies largely in areas where local food insecurity is highest, could increase food production by 79 per cent. This has the potential to feed an extra 2.25 billion people.

Intelligent solutions are required to establish a sustainable future. A combination of restoring degraded lands, preventing further degradation, and reducing waste will have a more positive impact than attempting to boost production through expansion.

Water

Feeding the projected 2050 population will require approximately 50 per cent more water than is currently used in agriculture globally. Yet more than 2 billion people live in countries with absolute water scarcity.

Research suggests that with current practices, the world will face a 40 per cent global shortfall between forecast demand and available water supplies by 2030.

Governments are taking steps to improve the management of water resources. In a survey of 130 countries carried out by UNEP and partners, it was reported that over 80 per cent of countries have reformed their water laws in the past twenty years as a response to growing pressures on water resources from expanding populations, urbanization and climate change.

In many cases, such water reforms produce significant impacts on development, including improvements to drinking water access, human health and water efficiency in agriculture.

But global progress has been slower where irrigation, rainwater harvesting and investment in freshwater ecosystem services are concerned.

Energy

Clean, efficient and reliable energy options are indispensable for a sustainable future for all with multiple benefits for development, human health, environment and climate change.

At the moment, over 1.2 billion people—most in rural areas—don't have access to electricity. 2.8 billion rely on wood or other biomass to cook and heat their homes, causing millions of deaths each year as a result of indoor air pollution.

Although 1.7 billion people gained access to electricity between 1990 and 2010, this is only slightly ahead of population growth of 1.6 billion over the same period.

Energy from renewable resources—bioenergy, geothermal, hydro, ocean, solar, wind—is local, clean, inexhaustible and free. In 2013, almost half of total new electricity generating capacity came from renewable sources, but by 2030, the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix will need to grow to 36 per cent, up from 18 per cent in 2010.

Energy efficiency improves energy security, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and increases productivity. Between 1990 and 2010, improvements in energy efficiency have cut over 25 per cent from cumulative global energy demand. But energy efficiency rates need to double by 2035, otherwise energy-related CO₂ emissions will increase by around 20 per cent, according to World Bank estimates.

A global transition to efficient lighting could be significantly reduce CO2 emissions. Lighting accounts for approximately 15 per cent of global power consumption and 5 per cent of worldwide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Through the *en.lighten* project, a key contribution to the Secretary General's Sustainable *Energy for All* initiative, UNEP assists countries to make the switch to efficient lighting technologies.

A country such as India, for example, could cut its lighting electricity consumption by over 35 per cent, which is equivalent to closing 11 large coal-fired power plants or taking over 10 million cars off the road. Annual savings would be over USD \$2 billion.

Globally, this transformation would yield annual cost savings of over US\$140 billion and can achieve annual CO2 reductions of 580 million tonnes.

Natural Capital

Natural capital not being valued is a large part of the reason land and water systems are being degraded. The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, or TEEB, aims to change this. The initiative, supported by UNEP, is encouraging governments to accurately account for the present and future benefits of their countries' natural resources.

The share of the poor in global GDP is marginal and is reduced with the erosion of natural capital. The share of the bottom 40 per cent of the population in global wealth remains less than 5 per cent.

These people mainly live on small farms, coastal areas and around forests, and depend on natural capital for their livelihoods, nutrition and health.

Some 2.6 billion people worldwide draw their livelihoods either partially or fully from agriculture, 1.6 billion from forests, 250 million from fisheries, and 200 million from pastoralism. It has been estimated that ecosystem services and other non-marketed goods make up 50 to 90 per cent of the total livelihoods of poor rural households.

Degradation of natural resources creates a poverty trap, which leads to a reinforcing loop of further degradation and worsening poverty. Any reduction in natural capital stocks negatively affects the wellbeing of the poor disproportionately and leads to growing inequalities.

On the other hand, investing in natural capital protects livelihoods and creates green jobs.

For example, a stimulus package for sustainable forest management could create an additional 10 to 16 million jobs globally at an estimated cost of US\$36 billion. It is estimated that non-timber forest products can generate some 4 million person-years of employment annually, along with US\$14 billion in international trade and income for subsistent households. Which leads us to our next point.

Human Capital

A shift towards sustainable production can contribute to green, inclusive and decent employment. For example, sustainable agricultural systems tend to be more labour intensive, as this input replaces often-toxic or polluting chemical inputs.

Innovative economic and environmental policy reforms, fiscal measures and green investments can prevent the loss of employment opportunities in both urban and rural areas, expand and diversify the local job market, and contribute to the transfer of the technology and skills that are necessary for long-term poverty eradication and sustainability.

The Partnership for Action on Green Economy, or PAGE, is an inter-agency initiative founded by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

By taking a country by country approach, PAGE will catalyze up to 30 national economies between now and 2020, and thus contribute to the global transition to a sustainable future for all.

Today, countries such as Burkina Faso, Peru, Mauritius, Mongolia, and Senegal are set to boost their economies through a shift of investment and policies towards a new generation of assets that include clean technologies and resource efficient infrastructure, green skilled labour, well-functioning ecosystems, and good governance. Such a transformation will pay significant dividends in social, environmental and economic terms.

A package of green investments - coupled with policy reforms that are aimed at making growth socially inclusive - offers economically viable options to reduce poverty and hunger, and address challenges of climate change and degradation of natural resources, while simultaneously providing new and sustainable pathways to economic development and prosperity.

Towards a Green Economy

In a Green Economy, growth in income and employment is driven by public and private investment that reduces carbon emissions and pollution, enhances energy and resource efficiency, and prevents the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

These investments need to be catalyzed and supported by targeted public expenditure, policy reforms and regulation changes.

At Rio+20, world leaders adopted the Ten-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP). This global framework for cooperation and capacity building is designed to accelerate the shift towards sustainable patterns and to promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems.

The text adopted was explicit that the 10YFP should build on existing initiatives and policies, must contribute to all three pillars of sustainable development, and that developed countries should provide leadership in promoting the shift to SCP patterns.

The first 10YFP programme, on Sustainable Public Procurement, just got underway. Governments spend trillions of dollars each year on procuring goods and services, and redirecting this money into green goods and services can drive the transition to a more resource-efficient world.

Climate Change: the threat of the Anthropocene

While much of the world's private capital is locked up in carbon-intensive investment across the developed world, developing country investment in a low-carbon future is on the rise. Clean energy investments reached US\$244 billion in 2012, while outlays in developing countries reached US \$112 million, according to estimates by REN 21 (Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century).

World Economic Forum estimates suggest that investment in infrastructure of an estimated US \$6 trillion annually is needed over the next 16 years to deliver a low-carbon economy. Of this, nearly US \$1 trillion is over and above the business-as-usual trajectory.

This investment is worth it, however, to head off the worst impacts of climate change, which fall most heavily on those who are least able to respond, and often on those who have contributed very little to its causes.

Delayed action on climate change means a higher rate of climate change in the near term and likely more near-term climate impacts, as well as the continued use of carbon-intensive and energy-intensive infrastructure, according to the Emissions Gap report launched by UNEP and over 44 research institutes from 17 countries ahead of the Warsaw COP, last year.

UNEP research shows that even if nations meet their current climate pledges, greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 are likely to reach up to 12 gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent above the level that would provide a likely chance of remaining on the least-cost pathway.

The stepping stone of the 2020 global target can still be achieved by strengthening current pledges and further action, including scaling up international cooperation initiatives in areas such as energy efficiency, fossil fuel subsidy reform, renewable energy and reforestation schemes.

Redefining the Anthropocene

Pope Benedict XVI said: "The ecological crisis offers a historic opportunity to develop a common plan of action aimed at orienting the model of global development toward greater respect for creation and for an integral human development inspired by the values proper to charity in truth."

Caritas can be understood as a duty of love for God; for creation; and for one's neighbour. In this interconnected world, our neighbour could be on a different continent. Or indeed, yet to be born. Our duty of care is no longer bounded by traditional spatial or temporal limits.

Almost all faiths and societies share similar notions of responsibility. Embracing this duty will provide a bridge to common understanding between groups which have, at times, found it easier to focus upon their differences.

We don't have the luxury of millennia to think about it: we need to zoom right back in to the here and now, and start making changes to the way we live on, use and understand our planet. But let us take some hope from our definition of the Anthropocene. If we live in a human-made age, we may have the power to re-make it, too.

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2788&ArticleID=10844&l=en>

May 6, 2014

Can a Pope Help Sustain Humanity and Ecology?

By Andrew C. Revkin
Dot Earth

VATICAN CITY — For four long days, several dozen physical, environmental and social scientists hunkered here with theologians, philosophers, economists and a poverty campaigner to explore ways to balance human ambitions with the planet's limits. The rare joint meeting of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences — “[Sustainable Humanity, Sustainable Nature, Our Responsibility](#)” — helped demarcate where science leaves off and the rest of society, including organized religion, plays a role in shaping the quality of human life and environmental conditions in this century.

A subtext, of course, was that [Pope Francis](#), who made time to meet briefly with the participants for photographs and a short chat, is working on a possible encyclical letter on the environment and sustainable development. (The columnist John L. Allen, Jr., [provides some helpful background in the Boston Globe](#).)

Presentations focused on deepening inequality, the evidence for dangerous climate change, population trends, urban problems, new economic models and more. [*There's a problem with the link to the presentations; I'll add it here when it's working.*]

Although this meeting was planned before Francis was selected, many participants were hoping some of the themes might influence that document, particularly with the United Nations closing in on [a set of Sustainable Development Goals](#) and a fresh effort to [negotiate a new climate treaty](#) coming to a head in late 2015. On hand were some remarkable people, including four Nobel laureates.

I was invited to present a summary of my impressions as the meeting drew to a close tonight. I found much to be optimistic about. You can [watch my remarks on YouTube](#) or read them below as prepared for the interpreters and participants.

For a different take on the climate challenge, watch Naomi Oreskes, the Harvard historian*, describe [her research on scientists as sentinels and her new book](#) of fictional future climate history, “[The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future](#),” co-written with Erik M. Conway. [*Her section begins at 11:10:50.*]

Here’s the text of my remarks, which I titled “Charting a Sustainable Human Journey – The Roles of Data, Values, Will and Love”:

It was a great honor to be invited to attend this remarkable workshop, and it is a more humbling honor to be invited now to reflect on these remarkable presentations and conversations — spanning a range of fields from glaciology to psychology and a range of experience from that of a 96-year-old oceanographer to that of a 30-year-old advocate for street workers.

As a generalist informed by [three decades of reporting](#) on the interface of science and society, from the North Pole to the Amazon, I approach this task with the advice of the Nobel laureate Murray Gell-Mann in mind.

When faced with complex problems, he has said, the wisest course is to take a “[crude look at the whole](#).” That’s what I’ll attempt to do.

In convening experts from across the natural and social sciences under the mantle of one of the world’s great faiths, Chancellor Sorondo and the other organizers have beautifully reflected the realities underpinning our species’ challenge at the dawn of an era of Earth history that is increasingly under our influence.

That [Pope Francis](#) chose to greet us today reflects his passion for harmonizing human relations and our relationship with this living planet. In this focus, the Pope is building on a foundation laid by Saint Francis, who – as several here have noted –called creatures and creation kin.

Our predicament in an age some have named for us — the Anthropocene — was nicely [captured by Cardinal Óscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga](#) on the first day here when he said, “Nowadays man finds himself to be a technical giant and an ethical child.”

Humanity, in essence, is in a race between potency and awareness. The outcome will determine the quality of our species’ journey and will leave an indelible mark, for better or worse, on the planet we inhabit.

A few years ago, I proposed that we are experiencing “[puberty on the scale of a planet](#).” Global trends echo that awkward, sometimes damaging, transition from [teenage-style ebullience](#) to the more measured norms of adulthood.

And just as a teenager resists calls from elders to grow up, societies – only naturally – have been initially resistant to scientists’ warnings of irreversible damage to the planet’s biological patrimony, risks attending unabated climate change and long-distance impacts of consumptive resource appetites.

In many ways, science has done its job.

The physical and biological sciences, along with revolutionary advances in technology – from satellites to supercomputers – have provided a clarifying picture of human-driven environmental changes.

Psychological studies* and surveys have revealed deeply ingrained human traits, many shaped by our evolutionary history as a “here and now” species, that prevent us from acting rationally in the face of threats with long time scales, dispersed impacts and inherent complexity.

Possible paths have been delineated in recent decades using ever more sophisticated models.

But that is where science’s task ends. It is up to individuals and societies to choose which paths to pursue.

Scientific knowledge reveals options. Values determine choices.

That is why the Roman Catholic Church — with its global reach, the ethical framework in its social justice teachings and, as with all great religions, the ability to reach hearts as well as minds — can play a valuable role in this consequential century.

This is particularly true for planet-scale problems like human-driven climate change, in which governments tend to put national interests ahead of planet-scale interests.

Decisions at the scale of cities, towns, school boards, corporate boards – even households – will, in a cumulative way, be enormously influential and are more apt to be directly shaped by the worldviews and priorities of individuals.

In a prismatic way, those gathered here have made the compelling case that it is a combination of knowledge, faith, will and love that will determine the quality of the human journey in this consequential and complicated century.

Yes, *love*. More on that in a moment.

Of course, as so many of the participants have conveyed, sustaining humanity on a verdant planet is not an either/or choice.

While data matter enormously, number crunching will not determine the resulting balance.

While choices are shaped by values, values are shaped by upbringing and experience. That means there is room for positive change, particularly through commerce in ideas and information.

As Nancy Knowlton explained in the context of the ailing oceans, revealed connections between causes and effects, together with empathy and a menu of solutions, can spark shifts in behavior.

But the commitment to remain *true* to a choice and to pursue it through thick and thin requires more than values. It is a function of individual and communal *will*, as well, as Archbishop Minnerath aptly noted.

The research and ideas presented here revealed another important reality. Given the variegated nature of cultures, worldviews and conditions around the world, it's clear that humanity will follow many paths in the decades ahead.

Calls for global and enforceable standards are creditable, but face huge hurdles.

Just consider Stefano Zamagni's point about the many different forms of ethics in different countries, or Professor Schellnhuber's description of the wickedly complex array of interests and development stages perennially clashing in climate treaty negotiations.

Another reality is that global environmental and social challenges are not the work of a single generation, not problem to fix – but issues to work on perennially as a normal part of how we live and develop.

I've written before that what the world needs is an improbable mix of "[urgency and patience](#)."

To grasp why this will take time, consider Edith Brown Weiss's sobering conclusion that "Earth has become a global commons" knowing that, as Charles Perrings explained, "If we value things at zero they'll be wasted."

And consider Joe Stiglitz's sobering data on the widening gulfs between haves and have-nots.

Navigating these questions can lead one feeling sapped and paralyzed.

But in these sessions I also saw abundant reason for optimism, empowerment and, most importantly, *action*.

There were Gretchen Daily's [many examples](#) of successful efforts to incorporate previously unmeasured values of living resources into decision-making at many levels.

There was Ram Ramanathan's [extraordinary work](#) grounding atmospheric science in the sooty kitchens of Himalayan villagers.

Then there was [Dan Kammen](#)'s description of university students' efforts to convince boards of trustees that true fiduciary responsibility transcends a strictly financial calculation of a university's return on investments.

The most important merit of the growing focus on climate-related divestment, to my mind, is that it prompts us all more deeply to consider the definition of an institution's "endowment." Is it stocks and bonds alone or something bigger?

The work of Partha Dasgupta also puts a spotlight on this question.

Finally, [Janice Perlman's work](#) reveals the vitality and potential in those caught up in humanity's astounding high-speed reorganization into a mainly urban species and [Juan Grabois's](#) efforts to give a say to those carving an unaccounted living amid that urban rush show that inclusion matters enormously.

My personal enthusiasm derives mainly from the work of people like [Antonio Battro](#) on expanding educational opportunity with a mix of online tools and novel teaching practices.

In a world with 1 billion teenagers and 1 billion more younger children, [you can't build schools fast enough](#), or train teachers fast enough, to keep up. And failing to keep up will lead to unemployment, disaffection, turmoil.

As Professor Battro noted, the key is expanding basic resources like Internet access — not educational content. In the end, those of us who are professors may be an endangered species. And that can be a good thing, as long as there is equal opportunity for all to become lifelong learners on a planet bathed in information.

Along with alleviating energy poverty, a prime challenge at this moment should be alleviating “information poverty.”

Some factions will fight this, as is the case in Nigeria, where the Boko Haram extremists, whose very name (the translation is “[Western education is a sin](#)”) stands against a basic right, are threatening to sell hundreds of kidnapped schoolgirls into slavery.

But there's never been a greater chance, through collaboration and communication, to imbue our varied human journeys with a shared sense of priorities – including the importance of conserving Earth's biological bounty, spreading the gifts that come with access to information and safe sources of energy, and limiting the scope of human-driven climate change.

We are building the “[noosphere](#),” the “[planetary mind](#)” envisioned in the early 20th century by the Jesuit priest Teilhard de Chardin.

But it is up to each of us to use this set of tools for good, not just gain.

This is what the Passionist priest Father Thomas Berry meant when he wrote of “[The Great Work](#)” – “to carry out the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner.”

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.

[Disclosure note: *My travel costs are being covered by the [United Nations Foundation](#), but there are no constraints on what I write or say.*]

http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/05/06/can-a-pope-help-sustain-humanity-and-ecology/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_php=true&_type=blogs&_php=true&_type=blogs&src=rec_hp&_r=2

May 7, 2014

Faith leaders need to find their voice on climate change

By Christiana Figueres
The Guardian

Religious institutions need to find their voice and set their moral compass on one of the great humanitarian issues of our time

Saving the Earth and its peoples from dangerous climate change is an economic, social and environmental issue – and a moral and ethical one too that goes to the core of many if not all of the world's great faiths.

Unchecked, the rise in greenhouse gas emissions is likely to visit ever higher levels of suffering on the vulnerable, the marginalised and indeed people everywhere.

The Himalayan country of Nepal, which I have just visited, is a case in point: here unstable lakes are forming from melting glaciers high in the mountains. Some have already burst their banks sending the equivalent of vertical tsunamis down valleys washing away power lines, homes and lives.

Many forward-looking cities, progressive companies and concerned citizens are urging their governments to ink 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.

Overcoming poverty, caring for the sick and the infirm, feeding the hungry and a whole range of other faith-based concerns will only get harder in a climate challenged world.

In supporting greater ambition by nations, religious and faith groups can assist in shaping a world that is less polluted and damaged and healthier, safer and more secure for every man, woman and child.

There are a myriad of ways in which churches and mosques to synagogues and temples can assist towards an ambitious climate agreement.

Ourvoices.net is a new ‘prayer platform’: it will offer a pathway for contemplation, empowerment and action across faiths east and west, north and south.

A world-wide campaign by universities and cities, aimed at divesting pension and endowment funds from fossil fuel shares, is also gaining ground.

South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu [recently called](#) for an anti-apartheid style boycott and disinvestment campaign against the fossil fuel industry.

Some smaller churches are already moving including in Australia and New Zealand.

In the US, 12 religious institutions have already divested from the fossil fuel industry.

In 2013, the United Church of Christ (UCC) in the US became the first national faith communion [to vote to divest from fossil fuel companies](#), with the support of its major investment institution, United Church Funds (UCF). UCF manages investment funds of over 1,000 churches, conferences, associations and other ministries, with more than half a billion dollars in assets.

In February this year, the congregation of Trinity-St Paul’s United in Toronto [voted unanimously](#) to ensure that its own funds are not invested in any of the world’s 200 largest fossil fuel companies.

Multi-faith groups in Australia and North America [recently sent a letter to Pope Francis](#) saying it is "immoral" to profit from fossil fuels.

The World Council of Churches at its last Assembly in Busan, Republic of Korea urged its members to act on fossil fuels by 2018.

The Synod of the Church of England recently voted to review its investment policy in respect to fossil fuels – again a step in the right direction and a potentially powerful signal to its 28 million followers.

Divestment may be a question of morality, but it is prudent too.

Experts estimate that greenhouse gas emissions need to peak in around ten years’ time and then come down sharply afterwards.

The organisation [Carbon Tracker estimates](#) that in order to achieve this, 60-80% of the fossil fuel reserves of public listed companies need to stay in the ground, unburnt. It means that many fossil fuel investments could rapidly become devalued and ‘stranded assets’ undermining the value and the return to pensioners of those funds which are heavily exposed.

Many mainstream funds are also going one step further, seeing higher rates of return from a switch into renewables.

Pension Denmark, which divested and then re-invested into clean energy in Europe and the developing world, says this has boosted profits while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The good news is that governments have agreed to secure a new universal agreement on climate change when they meet in Paris, France at the end of next year – that is not the challenge. If the world and its people are to be spared dangerous climate change that agreement needs to also be *meaningful* with policies and pathways for carbon neutrality in the second half of the century if a global temperature rise is to be kept under 2C.

Leaders of faith groups, from Christians and Muslims to Hindus, Jews and Buddhists have a responsibility and an opportunity over the next 18 months to provide a moral compass to their followers and to political, corporate, financial and local authority leaders. It is a point I will underline this week when I address a special gathering of church leaders, City of London financiers, security experts and the public at St Paul's Cathedral in London.

In doing so, faiths and religions can not only secure a healthy and habitable world for all but contribute to the spiritual and physical well-being of humanity now and for generations to come.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/may/07/faith-leaders-voice-climate-change>

May 7, 2014

Interfaith leaders launch Blessed Tomorrow to catalyze people of faith on climate change

The new national coalition will empower congregations with concrete steps to address climate change in their communities

PR Newswire

LONGWOOD, Fla. -- Today marks the launch of [Blessed Tomorrow](#), a new national interfaith coalition of religious leaders committed to inspiring and engaging people of faith to lead on climate solutions in their congregations, communities and homes.

Blessed Tomorrow brings together some of the nation's most preeminent religious leaders from the Evangelical, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic and Protestant faiths who are personally dedicated to leading by example on stewardship within their organizations and engaging their faith communities to respond to climate change.

"Faith leaders and their communities have been at the forefront of moving America forward throughout our nation's history. From abolition to human rights, we have been there to answer our call to care for all of God's creation. Blessed Tomorrow builds on that tradition by bringing together a diverse group of leaders from across the country who are committed to making an impact on one of the greatest moral imperatives of our time -- climate change," said Joel Hunter, senior pastor of Northland, a Church Distributed, and founding leader of Blessed Tomorrow.

The goal of Blessed Tomorrow is to make leading on climate change effective by providing leaders and people of faith with a platform to participate in climate solutions that aligns with their faith tradition and values. Blessed Tomorrow offers a community for faith leaders who are compelled to lead on climate based on the needs of their congregations. It provides simple, proven resources faith leaders can use right away to empower their members and communities. Central to this initiative is helping congregations create a [*Path to Positive*](#) plan, which will guide them to be better stewards of God's creation, for the sake of the most vulnerable populations and future generations.

Learn more about how people of faith and congregations can create their own *Path to Positive*: <http://blessedtomorrow.org/path-to-positive>

Blessed Tomorrow [founding faith leaders](#) are:

- [Rev. Dr. Jim Antal](#): United Church of Christ Massachusetts Conference
- [The Rev. Canon Sally Bingham](#): Interfaith Power and Light
- [Mr. Joshua DuBois](#): Values Partnerships
- [Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley](#): Retired from the Providence Missionary Baptist Church
- [Ms. Tyler Edgar](#): Creation Justice Ministries
- [Dr. Chris Elisara](#): World Evangelical Alliance
- [Mr. Jay Faison](#): ClearPath Foundation
- [Rabbi Steve Gutow](#): Jewish Council for Public Affairs
- [The Rev. Fletcher Harper](#): GreenFaith
- [Dr. Joel Hunter](#): Northland: A Church Distributed
- [The Rev. Stephanie Johnson](#): Province 1 of the Episcopal Church
- [Imam Mohamed Magid](#): Islamic Society of North America
- [Bishop Vashti McKenzie](#): African Methodist Episcopal Church
- [Mr. Jonathan Merritt](#)
- [Mr. Dan Misleh](#): Catholic Coalition on Climate Change
- [Rev. Gabriel Salguero](#): National Latino Evangelical Coalition
- [Dr. Matthew Sleeth](#): Blessed Earth
- [Mr. Richard Stearns](#): World Vision
- [Rabbi Warren Stone](#): National Religious Coalition on Creation Care
- [Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins](#): Disciples of Christ
- [Rev. Dr. Nancy Wilson](#): Metropolitan Community Churches

About Blessed Tomorrow

Blessed Tomorrow is a coalition of diverse religious partners united under a call to be faithful stewards of creation. As people of faith in America, they are committed to engaging their communities and calling on fellow leaders to support practical solutions to create a healthy future for us all. As a key initiative of [MomentUs](#) and [ecoAmerica](#), Blessed Tomorrow provides a program by people of faith, for people of faith, offering ideas, tools, resources, and language that are familiar, compelling, and effective for engaging congregations in climate solutions. Learn more: <http://blessedtomorrow.org/>

Logo - <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20140506/85169>

May 8, 2014

UN to back Pope Francis statement on ‘human ecology’

By Sophie Yeo

Responding to Climate Change (RTCC)

The UN will back a letter from the Pope on man’s relationship with the environment, its climate chief Christiana Figueres said on Wednesday.

The [Vatican confirmed](#) in January that Pope Francis was preparing a statement on “human ecology” describing how man must defend nature. The UN’s support is likely to bestow further influence on his comments, which will already be observed by the 1.2 billion Catholics worldwide.

Speaking to RTCC on the sidelines of an event held at St Paul’s Cathedral in London yesterday, Christiana Figueres said that the UN is “trying to figure out how to use the opportunity” of the Pope’s encyclical, which is the highest form of papal writing.

The statement is unlikely to be released until next year, rendering it too late for the Vatican to deliver it as a pledge at a [climate summit](#) to be hosted by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in September, where other countries are expected to announce new national measures to tackle climate change.

But Figueres added that “everyone’s expecting it”, and that the UN was working on an alternative venue in which to make use of the Pope’s comments.

Pope Francis has already spoken publically on his concern over environmental destruction. Speaking after his election, he said he had taken the name of St Francis of Assisi because he “teaches us profound respect for the whole of creation and the protection of our environment”.

Holy See

The attention of the UN could raise the pressure on the Vatican to deliver concrete action on climate change, at the same time as other countries are working towards their contributions towards a UN climate change treaty.

This treaty will be signed off in Paris at the end of 2015, but all parties must deliver their national pledges by March. This does not apply to the Holy See, which is not a party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, although it does have official observer status.

A Holy See official told RTCC that its non-party status is for “technical reasons”, and that “the Holy See shares the aim of the Convention”, which is to limit global warming to less than 2C, at which stage the impacts of climate change become more severe.

Speaking at the end of the UN’s climate conference in Warsaw last year, the Holy See’s head of delegation Archbishop Celestino Migliore [echoed the Pope](#) in declaring that the new agreement should work towards the “safeguarding of the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology.”

He also criticised the number of delays to a UN-brokered legally binding climate treaty. The last attempt to sign off a deal famously faltered in Copenhagen in 2009.

“There is still a long and complex way to go in a relatively short time,” he said.

Tough love

[Speaking to an audience](#) of over a thousand under the dome of St Paul’s Cathedral last night, Christiana Figueres called on faith groups from “North and South, East and West” to lead in a “policy pilgrimage” that will culminate in Paris next year with the signing of the UN treaty.

She highlighted some of the contributions made by the religious community to date, including a review by the Church of England’s General Synod of its fossil fuel investments, and the commitments of 12 religious institutions across the US. She also celebrated the efforts of the multi-faith groups who have sent a letter to Pope Francis on the [“immorality” of investing in fossil fuels](#).

The challenge is equal to many other social revolutions that have been witnessed by the Cathedral, including slavery, apartheid and women’s rights, she said, and climate change has now become the issue which should set the world’s “moral compass”.

She said that while the world needs to undergo a “complex transformation with “myriad components”, love would be central to the journey. “I am not talking about feeble love,” she said. I am referring to tough love, the love that is strong enough to make tough decisions because we know it is the right thing to do.

“I am certain we all harbour more love than we are expressing toward the future of our children and our planet.”

<http://www.rtcc.org/2014/05/08/un-to-back-pope-francis-statement-on-human-ecology/>

May 9, 2014

Pope to UN: Resist the economy of exclusion, serve the poor

Vatican Radio

Pope Francis met with executives from the United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes on Friday, led by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Emer McCarthy reports:

Speaking to the men and women who manage the UN's vast network of humanitarian offices, he urged them to challenge "all forms of injustice" and resist the "economy of exclusion", the "throwaway culture" and the "culture of death" which nowadays – he said – "sadly risk becoming passively accepted".

Reflecting on the UN's target for *Future Sustainable Development Goals*, he questioned whether in today's world, a spirit of solidarity and sharing guide all our thoughts and actions:

"Future Sustainable Development Goals must therefore be formulated and carried out with generosity and courage, so that they can have a real impact on the structural causes of poverty and hunger, attain more substantial results in protecting the environment, ensure dignified and productive labor for all, and provide appropriate protection for the family, which is an essential element in sustainable human and social development".

The Pope also pointed the executives to the Gospel story of Zacchaeus the Tax collector, as an example of how it's never too late to correct injustice

"Today, in concrete terms, an awareness of the dignity of each of our brothers and sisters whose life is sacred and inviolable from conception to natural death must lead us to share with complete freedom the goods which God's providence has placed in our hands, material goods but also intellectual and spiritual ones, and to give back generously and lavishly whatever we may have earlier unjustly refused to others".

Below please find the full text of Pope Francis' address to the UN delegation

Mr Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you, Mr Secretary-General and the leading executive officers of the Agencies, Funds and Programmes of the United Nations and specialized Organizations, as you gather in Rome for the biannual meeting for strategic coordination of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board.

It is significant that today's meeting takes place shortly after the solemn canonization of my predecessors, Popes John XXIII and John Paul II. The new saints inspire us by their passionate concern for integral human development and for understanding between peoples. This concern was concretely expressed by the numerous visits of John Paul II to the Organizations headquartered in Rome and by his travels to New York, Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi and The Hague.

I thank you, Mr Secretary-General, for your cordial words of introduction. I thank all of you, who are primarily responsible for the international system, for the great efforts being made to ensure world peace, respect for human dignity, the protection of persons, especially the poorest

and most vulnerable, and harmonious economic and social development.

The results of the Millennium Development Goals, especially in terms of education and the decrease in extreme poverty, confirm the value of the work of coordination carried out by this Chief Executives Board. At the same time, it must be kept in mind that the world's peoples deserve and expect even greater results.

An essential principle of management is the refusal to be satisfied with current results and to press forward, in the conviction that those gains are only consolidated by working to achieve even more. In the case of global political and economic organization, much more needs to be achieved, since an important part of humanity does not share in the benefits of progress and is in fact relegated to the status of second-class citizens. Future Sustainable Development Goals must therefore be formulated and carried out with generosity and courage, so that they can have a real impact on the structural causes of poverty and hunger, attain more substantial results in protecting the environment, ensure dignified and productive labor for all, and provide appropriate protection for the family, which is an essential element in sustainable human and social development. Specifically, this involves challenging all forms of injustice and resisting the "economy of exclusion", the "throwaway culture" and the "culture of death" which nowadays sadly risk becoming passively accepted.

With this in mind, I would like to remind you, as representatives of the chief agencies of global cooperation, of an incident which took place two thousand years ago and is recounted in the Gospel of Saint Luke (19:1-10). It is the encounter between Jesus Christ and the rich tax collector Zacchaeus, as a result of which Zacchaeus made a radical decision of sharing and justice, because his conscience had been awakened by the gaze of Jesus. This same spirit should be at the beginning and end of all political and economic activity. The gaze, often silent, of that part of the human family which is cast off, left behind, ought to awaken the conscience of political and economic agents and lead them to generous and courageous decisions with immediate results, like the decision of Zacchaeus. Does this spirit of solidarity and sharing guide all our thoughts and actions?

Today, in concrete terms, an awareness of the dignity of each of our brothers and sisters whose life is sacred and inviolable from conception to natural death must lead us to share with complete freedom the goods which God's providence has placed in our hands, material goods but also intellectual and spiritual ones, and to give back generously and lavishly whatever we may have earlier unjustly refused to others.

The account of Jesus and Zacchaeus teaches us that above and beyond economic and social systems and theories, there will always be a need to promote generous, effective and practical openness to the needs of others. Jesus does not ask Zacchaeus to change jobs nor does he condemn his financial activity; he simply inspires him to put everything, freely yet immediately and indisputably, at the service of others. Consequently, I do not hesitate to state, as did my predecessors (cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42-43; *Centesimus Annus*, 43; BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 6; 24-40), that equitable economic and social progress can only be attained by joining scientific and technical abilities with an unfailing commitment to solidarity accompanied by a generous and disinterested spirit of gratuitousness at every level. A contribution to this equitable development will also be made both by international activity aimed at the integral human development of all the world's peoples and by the legitimate redistribution of economic benefits by the State, as well as indispensable cooperation between the private sector and civil society.

Consequently, while encouraging you in your continuing efforts to coordinate the activity of the

international agencies, which represents a service to all humanity, I urge you to work together in promoting a true, worldwide ethical mobilization which, beyond all differences of religious or political convictions, will spread and put into practice a shared ideal of fraternity and solidarity, especially with regard to the poorest and those most excluded.

Invoking divine guidance on the work of your Board, I also implore God's special blessing for you, Mr Secretary-General, for the Presidents, Directors and Secretaries General present among us, and for all the personnel of the United Nations and the other international Agencies and Bodies, and their respective families.

Listen to the audio at:

[http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/05/09/pope_to_un: resist the economy of exclusion, serve the poor/en1-797707](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/05/09/pope_to_un:_resist_the_economy_of_exclusion,_serve_the_poor/en1-797707)

May 9, 2014

Desmond Tutu: Opposition to pipelines is a moral choice

By Desmond Tutu
Ottawa Citizen

As I travel the globe – witnessing first-hand the vulnerability of communities most affected by climate change, from South Africa to Canada – the urgency of our responsibility to take action has never been clearer. Every single day hundreds of millions of lives and livelihoods are affected by global warming, a trend that will inevitably and dramatically reduce the quality of life for future generations.

This is why I have become more outspoken in support of citizen-led strategies that will force governments and corporations to move away from our dependence upon fossil fuels and towards safer and cleaner energies that can protect people and our planet.

I stand in solidarity with communities across Canada and the United States that are opposing the proposed oil sands pipelines. The struggle of citizens against the pipelines puts them on the front lines of one of the most important struggles in North America today: stopping the reckless expansion of the oil sands.

The oil sands are emblematic of an era of high carbon and high risk fuels that must end if we are committed to a safer climate. Oil sands development not only devastates our shared climate, it is also stripping away the rights of First Nations and affected communities to protect their children, land and water from being poisoned.

Canada is now faced with a profoundly moral choice: Will the country embrace the oil industry's plans for radical expansion of the oil sands and the pipelines that come with it, or will it slow down the frenzied rush and focus its efforts on another path that leads us as a global community in a more hopeful direction?

In communities across North America today the answer is clear: It is time to draw the line and take a stand. It is time to move away from polluting fossil fuels and towards a safer, cleaner energy future.

In the United States, people are rising up and saying “no” to the proposed TransCanada Keystone XL pipeline. The project is stalled amid growing concerns about the damage it could do to water, land and the global climate.

British Columbia First Nations, coastal communities, and millions of people across the country have created a united wall of opposition against the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline.

And now, TransCanada has proposed the Energy East pipeline. This is the latest pipeline to be facing mounting people-powered opposition.

If built, it would be the longest and largest oil sands pipeline on the continent. It would pump 1.1 million barrels of oil from Northern Alberta to New Brunswick, putting at risk communities, rich agricultural land, diverse ecosystems, as well as major cities like Ottawa and treasured waterways like the Ottawa and Rideau rivers.

It is a recipe for disaster and a project that presents incredible risk to our climate and communities with no reward.

Oil sands growth is standing in the way of Canada’s climate commitments. Expansion plans for Canada’s fastest growing source of greenhouse gas pollution, enabled by pipelines like Energy East, are impossible to reconcile with Canada’s international promise to do their fair share to tackle climate change. By putting oil sands development front and centre, Canada is turning its back on international cooperation to deal with climate change and contributing significantly to global climate devastation.

Who can stop this? We can – you and I can. And it is not just that we can stop it, we have a responsibility to do so. Those countries and companies primarily responsible for emitting carbon and accelerating climate change are not simply going to give up on fossil fuels; they are too beholden to short-sighted profit.

We have to push them to do the right thing. Just as Canadians reached out to help South Africans rid themselves of the scourge of apartheid, we can work together again to protect our shared planet from the worst of dangerous climate change. Time is running out, but we can do this.

Luckily while this may be an issue of profound moral consequence, it also has clear solutions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has shown that by 2050, 80 per cent of the world’s energy supply could be from renewable sources — and that the sooner we act, the less it will cost us.

The Canada I know is compassionate and cares about the world we share. And this is the Canada that the world needs right now.

Climate change is the moral struggle that will define this time and I hope dearly that you will join the growing global movement that will find itself on the right side of history by saying no to the Energy East pipeline and the oil-sands oil that would fill it.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/business/energy/Desmond+Tutu+Opposition+pipelines+moral+choice/9823193/story.html>

May 9, 2014

Pope Francis wants to save the planet

By Michael Trimmer
Christian Today

Pope Francis is reported to be wanting to galvanise Catholic Church's response to climate change.

Christiana Figueres, head of the UN's climate change secretariat, told an audience at St Paul's Cathedral that a new encyclical on the environment was forthcoming.

A Papal encyclical, a letter explaining the Catholic Church's views on a subject, sent out to the approximately 5,100 Catholic bishops worldwide, is an indication that a particular issue has become of great importance to the Church.

Ms Figueres expected that it would be released before the UN's climate change summit in Paris, in November and December of 2015.

However she was unsure if it would be released before the summit in September 2014 where UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon is encouraging world leaders to draw up ambitious plans ahead of the 2015 summit.

Regardless of timing however, Ms Figueres was quoted in Business Green as saying that she believed that such an encyclical "could provide a strong signal to governments, cities, companies and citizens everywhere of the moral, ethical and responsibility dimensions of climate action".

Ms Figueres also praised the work of a number of faith groups actions on climate change in recent times, including the Church of England's review of its fossil fuel investments, UK Quakers divesting themselves of fossil fuel investments, and Multi-faith groups in Australia and North America who wrote to Pope Francis insisting that profiting from fossil fuels was immoral.

The Vatican has not offered any comment on the possibility of an encyclical on climate change. However in January, Pope Francis was reported to have begun drafting a text on ecology and the environment, which could become an encyclical.

Father Federico Lombardi, director of the Holy See Press Office, said to Vatican Radio that Pope Francis "intends to put particular emphasis on the theme of 'human ecology,' a phrase used by Pope Benedict to describe not only how people must defend and respect nature but how the nature of the person – masculine and feminine as created by God – must also be defended".

In Pope Benedict XVI's 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* – Charity in Truth, he speaks often of the importance of the environment to the Church: "The Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere.

"In so doing, she must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction."

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/pope.francis.wants.to.save.the.planet/37321.htm>

May 12, 2014

Why China will solve the world's environmental problems

By James Miller
Sustainable China

Quick! Picture China's biggest environmental problem.

I bet you saw in your mind the polluted skies of Beijing and its citizens wearing face masks as they go to work. The western news media have been filled with alarming [stories of China's poor air quality](#), especially in the north, where China relies more heavily on coal-fired power stations.

But a recent Toronto Star story entitled [China Wakes Up to its Water Crisis](#) gets to the heart of an even more serious problem: China has only 7% of the world's fresh water, but 20% of its population. While electricity can, in the long run, be produced by more renewable means, water cannot be manufactured out of nowhere.

China's massive population and its relative scarcity of natural resources magnifies the impact of China's environmental problems. As the world marches towards a population of 10 billion people, the reality that Chinese people face today will soon become the reality faced by the most of the world. China is now beginning to export its pollution to neighbouring countries and even to Africa and Latin America, which, like the Canadian tar sands, are undergoing massive natural resource development in part to meet China's demands.

Soon the grim environmental reality that China's citizens face could be shared by the rest of the world.

But here's the good news.

There is no debate in China as to whether climate change is real. While some American leaders act like King Canute watching the ever rising tides that will eventually submerge them, the Chinese are already preparing [sustainable megacities](#), and the massive sustainable agriculture systems that will feed them over the coming century. All of the world's leading architectural and engineering practices are undertaking revolutionary work in China on the sustainable design of buildings and cities, and the whole world will benefit from the massive experimentation that is currently taking place in China.

Since 2011, China's environmental policies have been declared better than those of North America by [Oxford University's Smith School](#). While not as good as some countries, they are definitely moving in the right direction.

China has accepted that lower economic growth is the price worth paying for not destroying the planet, and in March this year China's premier [declared war on pollution](#) just as China once declared war on poverty. It's hard to imagine Western leaders declaring that their policy objective is to have lower economic growth than in previous years. The fact that this is occurring in a developing country makes this all the more remarkable.

China's consumers are the second greenest out of seventeen countries measured in [National Geographic's Greendex](#). The report measures consumers' attitudes towards recycling, eating vegetarian food, using public transport and other important lifestyle choices. Remarkably, Chinese consumers have become even more green as they have become rich. As the Greendex report highlights:

Chinese consumers' Greendex score has consistently increased since 2008 despite rapid development in China. Consumers in the other emerging markets surveyed, including Brazil, Russia, and India, have not seen this upward trend in scores.

If this trend continues, it will be one of the most significant developments in consumer culture in the world.

Finally, China's ancient cultural traditions, long neglected in the rush for modernization and development, have the capacity to underpin China's postmodern engagement with a new and more sustainable form of civilization. While American [Christians go to war on environmentalism](#), Chinese Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists have a long and complex history of recognizing the significance of the natural world for human wellbeing, as my new co-edited book on [Religion and Ecological Sustainability in China](#) demonstrates.

In the end, China will solve the world's environmental problems, because it has to. While Canadians and Americans debate the reality of climate change, and wonder whether they can afford to invest in public transport infrastructure, Chinese people have no such luxury. Their investment in sustainability is already taking place. If it is successful, it will be a boon for the whole world.

May 13, 2014

Environmental Injustice and Economic Issues: WCC's Working Group on Climate Change

By Grace Ji-Sun Kim
Huffington Post

A great tragedy of our present time and context is the act of "profiting from destroying the earth." Individuals and large corporations are making billions from this ecological vandalism. We are constantly taking the earth's finite resources without replenishing or restoring them. We are wasting and using up our water, causing pollutants to enter our environment, without thinking about the consequences our actions may have on the earth. Nothing seems able to stop this destruction as long as corporations make a profit and powerful people live comfortable lives.

Climate change is an urgent issue for the global community as a whole to tackle. Many religious organizations and faith communities are taking the heed of this ethical and existential challenge, and making climate change a priority.

The [World Council of Churches \(WCC\)](#) is one of the leading international faith-based organizations to have taken up this challenge, addressing it from the perspective of ecological justice and a deep engagement in 'eco-theology.' In so doing, WCC is recognizing that climate change is an issue of both ecological and economic justice. Climate change is affecting the poorest of the poor and displacing the most vulnerable communities. One can only deal with the issue holistically, addressing all of its causes and consequences.

Around 30 religious leaders working on [Climate Change from around the globe](#) have gathered in Wuppertal, Germany as part of the World Council of Churches' Working Group on Climate Change, meeting from May 12-16, 2014. This gathering has been organized by Guillermo Kerber (WCC) in partnership with Jochen Motte from [United Evangelical Mission](#).

As the Climate Change Working Group meeting progresses, many urgent and overwhelming statistics, concerns and tasks are being presented to the group.

On May 13, 2014, I moderated a panel on "A Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, Contributions from the WGCC." During this panel, lots of pertinent issues of working towards social and environmental issues were presented and discussed.

Raphael Sartorius from Bread for the World, Germany, presenting the ETCF (Ecotheology Climate Justice and Food Security) project, said that the purpose of the project is to

link all the Christian educational resources to create easier access to knowledge, examples and curricular models. Networking is important to work towards climate justice.

[Peter Pavlovic from the Conference of European Churches and the European Christian Environmental Network](#) (CEC-ECEN) impressed upon us that it is of

immense importance for churches to translate the positive message of the gospel into practical aspects of life in individual and small communities and to dialogue with political decision makers.

[Peter Prove, Director of WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs](#), reported that we are now

faced with the millennial consequences of climate change and the inadequacy of our short term political processes to engage with that issue in an effective way. In this context, the involvement of faith communities and religious leaders becomes even more critical. Faith communities provide the millennial perspective and the social capital for sustainable change in addressing climate change.

It is becoming ever more important to recognize the urgency of climate change within our religious outlook on life. We cannot continue to ignore the topic of climate change while all of God's creation is suffering. We must be able to continue to fight for the freedom of all people from environmental injustice. We need to give climate change the high priority it demands. The WCC is taking a lead in this regard, and hopes to inspire all churches and faith communities to do likewise.

The global challenges we currently face are inextricably interlinked. Saving the planet cannot be separated from addressing economic issues. The two are intertwined and are not exclusive of each other as they are different sides of the same coin. We all need to work together to make a difference.

Creation must be saved and all of us need to take concrete actions. There must be serious plans for advocacy, theological engagement and enactment for any changes to occur in working towards saving the earth.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/grace-jisun-kim/environmental-injustice-a_b_5315120.html

May 13, 2014

A day in the life of a water bank

By Natasha Khan
PublicSource

For two years, a Presbyterian Church near hard-to-pronounce Connoquenessing Township, Pa., has been a bank — a water bank to be precise.

The church distributes water to 34 families whose wells went bad around the time hydraulic fracturing started in the region. The coincidence can't be proven, but residents of the Woodlands, a poor rural community in the township, said they can tell by taste, smell, color and skin reaction that their water hasn't been right.

The neighborhood received a lot of press back in 2011 and 2012. Documentaries were made. Reporters from around the world wrote stories. But as the years went on, the press faded.

It all started in early 2011, when people noticed their well water began tasting bad and smelling like "rotten eggs" and "burnt plastic," residents said. The water turned a murky orange color and dark sediment floated in it.

Some people even got strange rashes. Others threw up. Animals stopped drinking the water. Eventually, many people in the community stopped, too.

At the time they blamed "frackers"—companies searching for shale gas—that had drilled several natural gas wells next to the community. For a while, Rex Energy, a main driller in the area, provided drinking water to residents who complained their water was tainted.

But water testing conducted in 2011 by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and Rex Energy showed that pre- and post-drilling samples didn't differ enough. Both Rex and the state concluded that the contamination was not caused by fracking, and the driller didn't have to provide water to the community.

The DEP received 398 complaints alleging oil or natural gas drilling polluted private water wells in 2013 in Pennsylvania compared with 499 in 2012, according to an analysis of state records by the [Associated Press](#) in January. There have been at least 106 confirmed cases of well-water contamination since 2005.

To date, no one knows for sure what happened to the water at the Woodlands.

Some residents are still angry and blame the drillers; others seem to have accepted life without clean water and no longer point fingers.

The community is considered private, so neither township, county or state are under any obligation to provide public water to residents. The Woodlands residents have private wells, and Pennsylvania is one of only a few states with no standards regulating well water. Your well, your problem.

In early April, PublicSource and 90.5 WESA reporters visited the water bank at the White Oak Springs Presbyterian Church a few miles away from the Woodlands.

Read full story:

<http://publicsource.org/investigations/day-life-of-water-bank#.U3poSi8Rx4a>

May 19, 2014

Advocacy and Action on Climate Change: World Council of Churches

By Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Guillermo Kerber
Huffington Post

This piece is co-authored by Dr. Guillermo Kerber, the World Council of Churches Programme Executive for Care for Creation and Climate Justice.

At the beginning of a recent meeting in the global South on climate change with church leaders in a region severely affected by climate change, everyone took turns to introduce themselves. One participant said that he had come to this meeting because he had no choice in the matter. For him, climate change was not a priority. He argued, "Some said that the rise of sea level will make communities relocate. But I don't agree. God told Noah after the flood, that there would be no other floods and he gave him the rainbow as sign of this covenant. So, I don't think this will be a problem."

This incident is just one example of the many challenges that the [World Council of Churches](#) faces when addressing climate change. This particular church leader is representative of a number of church leaders and laity who do not yet consider climate change as 'real' and therefore do not feel it should be addressed by the churches.

This failure to recognize the reality of climate change can be due to one's views on the Bible and faith. It can be because of climate skepticism that is culturally conditioned. Others believe that it is not the role of the church to address climate change, feeling that it is not religion's job to engage political issues.

People question, why should churches address environment or climate change issues? Why should Protestants join Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals in caring for creation initiatives? Why should Christians look to join interfaith work with Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and other faith traditions? Why should they advocate for climate justice and peace with the earth? These are just some of the questions that the WCC is facing while addressing climate change.

In light of these challenges, the WCC is addressing climate change for two specific reasons. First, churches in various parts of the world are recognizing how climate change consequences are affecting the lives and livelihoods of their communities. In an effort to respond to these challenges, churches are helping develop resilient communities, which are equipped to adapt to climate change. These churches benefit by learning from the work of other faith communities from around the world. The WCC has a unique ability to build networks and relationships between churches around the globe, and enhance their work in solidarity with all the churches of the world.

Second, at the community level, churches of different denominations are coming together to respond to the impacts of climate change and to advocate at local and national levels policies that respond to the needs and rights of vulnerable populations. The WCC receives a growing number of requests for advice, theological reflection, worship materials and a holistic approach to these global concerns.

Many members of the WCC Climate Change working group are also engaged in various work to fight for climate justice. A few examples demonstrate the breadth and diversity of these efforts. Fletcher Harper who is the executive director at [GreenFaith](#) describes:

In anticipation of the UN Climate Summit in New York this September, GreenFaith, a U.S.-based interfaith environmental organization, will be hosting a day-long public event in NYC in September to rally religious support for a strong UN climate treaty. GreenFaith will also collaborate with Union Theological Seminary to organize Religions for the Earth, a two-day event for 200 religious leaders from around the world immediately preceding the UN Summit. And, in addition to continuing its efforts to promote fossil fuel divestment and clean energy reinvestment among faith communities, GreenFaith will also be launching an interfaith, international campaign following the September UN Summit, offering faith communities around the world the opportunity to call for a strong climate treaty.

Julia Edwards who is the Climate Change and Relocation Researcher at [The Pacific Conference of Churches \(PCC\)](#) believes that:

The rights and dignity of people displaced by climate change need to be protected and upheld. The Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) offers hope through accompaniment during these uncertain times. The Nansen Initiative, a state led global project will support PCC to hold a Pacific civil-society workshop to raise awareness of the climate-change displacement issue.

There were a few young people within the WCC Climate Change working group who are active workers in climate justice. Pawel Pustelnik, who is a member of the Campaign Coordination Team at the [Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe \(EYCE\)](#) shared:

The EYCE is an ecumenical umbrella organization consisting of national ecumenical youth councils, denominational youth councils or bodies or international Christian youth organizations. Our recent work has been focused on the Campaign to Promote Ecological Justice. Given the growing concern related to climate change and need to encourage initiatives regarding ecological justice we decided to launch a campaign to raise ecological awareness, empower youth to advocate for greener Churches and greener Europe as well as to explore the relation between ecology, economy, politics and numerous conflicts. We led several international training courses, study visits and a "Be Eco Heroes" project to make our network more sustainable and ecologically aware.

Climate change is affecting the most vulnerable in our society. Climate change is intertwined with issues of land, food, work, devastation and human flourishing. The most vulnerable are losing their land and are forced to live in other areas which have not yet been devastated by

climate change. The poor are losing their means and ways of preserving the land. These threats to humanity and to the earth as a whole will only get worse.

Religious leaders and church organizations must embrace the climate change challenge rigorously and with upmost priority. This is the focus of the [Interfaith Summit on Climate Change](#) to be held in New York on September 23, 2014. We must work towards influencing policy and actions to prevent Earth's temperature from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius. Unlimited carbon pollution must be stopped. Advocacy for the earth must become a priority.

Climate change skeptics must join in the journey for the protection and sustainability of the earth. We all need to gain hope in joining the task of climate justice. As the WCC continues to engage in the work towards protecting the integrity of creation, all must come together in this task to contribute to sustainability and advocacy for the earth.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/grace-jisun-kim/climate-change-advocacy_b_5344044.html

May 20, 2014

Climate change is church's No. 1 pro-life issue

By NCR Editorial Staff
National Catholic Reporter

There may have been a time when moving from a point of indecision on the matter of climate change, to a decision on whether it is real and caused by humans or not, required leaps of faith of somewhat equal proportions. But that was a long time and a lot of science ago.

The science, as it has developed, may not be perfect, but it is long past time that the question turn from whether human activity is causing climate change to what do we do about it. The Catholic church should become a major player in educating the public to the scientific data and in motivating people to act for change.

The case for the reality of human-caused climate change was made in the strongest terms to date in the recently released [third National Climate Assessment](#), a report exhaustive in its detail and the manner of its preparation. It was compiled by a team of more than 300 experts, including policymakers, decision-makers from the public and private realms, researchers, representatives of business and nongovernmental organizations, as well as representatives of the general public.

It was reviewed extensively, including by a panel of the National Academy of Sciences, the 13 federal agencies of the U.S. Global Change Research Program, and the federal Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Sustainability.

As columnist Michael Gerson [wrote of suspicions](#) that the rising awareness of climate change was a product of scientific fraud: "In this case the conspiracy would need to encompass the

national academies of more than two dozen countries, including the United States." The larger point he makes is that we need to get on with the questions that only science can address.

The National Climate Assessment report doesn't speak of the crisis as a moment to anticipate but as increasingly evident today. The most frightening point is that climate change "is projected to continue, and it will accelerate significantly if global emissions of heat-trapping gases continue to increase." Those changes, in turn, will increasingly threaten humans "through more extreme weather events and wildfire, decreased air quality, and diseases transmitted by insects, food, and water."

In an opportune coincidence, about the same time the U.S. government was releasing the National Climate Assessment, the Vatican was releasing a far shorter summary of [its five-day summit](#) on "Sustainable Humanity, Sustainable Nature: Our Responsibility."

While the church has taken it on the chin for centuries-old condemnations of scientific truths, the reality today is that it stands uniquely in a position to not only aid the science but also to engage in the ethical discussions essential to any consideration of global warming.

If there is a certain wisdom in the pro-life assertion that other rights become meaningless if the right to life is not upheld, then it is reasonable to assert that the right to life has little meaning if the earth is destroyed to the point where life becomes unsustainable.

Cardinal Oscar Andres Rodríguez Maradiaga [described the problem](#) during a talk opening the Vatican conference. He described nature as neither separate from nor against humanity, but rather existing with humans. "No sin is more heartless than our blindness to the value of all that surrounds us and our persistence in using it at the wrong time and abusing it at all times."

Humans, he said, have become technological giants while remaining ethical children.

Humans have been driven to a point of decision by the consequences -- good and bad -- of two centuries of technological development. [In his closing remarks](#) at the Rome meeting, *New York Times* writer Andrew C. Revkin stated, "Scientific knowledge reveals options. Values determine choices."

"That is why the Roman Catholic church -- with its global reach, the ethical framework in its social justice teachings and, as with all great religions, the ability to reach hearts as well as minds -- can play a valuable role in this consequential century."

The problem is enormous, but so is the opportunity for the church to use its resources, its access to some of the best experts in its academies and the attention of those in its parochial structures to begin to educate. This is a human life issue of enormous proportions, and one in which the young should be fully engaged. The Climate Assessment document as well as the recent discussion at the Vatican are excellent starting points for developing curricula materials for education programs in parishes and schools.

Catholic high schools and colleges have the freedom to explore these vital issues from both the scientific and ethical perspectives. They can bring theological perspectives to bear on the issues. Educators and students could devise ways to become active at all levels, from homes, to communities, to states, to advocating for legal measures to offset the effects of global warming.

Finding a fix for climate change and its potentially disastrous consequences, particularly for the global poor, is not the work of a single discipline or a single group or a single political strategy. Its solution lies as much in people of faith as in scientific data, as much or more in a love for God's creation as it does in our instinct for self-preservation.

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/editorial-climate-change-churchs-no-1-pro-life-issue>

May 21, 2014

Protecting the Amazon for Life

The largest tropical forest conservation project in history is good news for the Amazon and the planet

World Wildlife Fund

It has taken millions of years for the Amazon to evolve into the most biologically diverse place on Earth. In just a tiny fraction of that amount of time humans have radically changed our natural world, and not for the better. The government of Brazil, working in partnership with WWF and others, envisioned a better way forward, a bold and aggressive move in how large-scale conservation is achieved.

In 2002 Brazil launched the largest tropical forest conservation project in history known as ARPA (Amazon Region Protected Areas). The goal: take 150 million acres of the Brazilian Amazon rainforest—an area larger than all the US national parks combined—and turn it into a combination of sustainable-use and strict protected areas. No easy task. But in a little over a decade ARPA has protected a California-sized portion of the Amazon across nearly 100 different sites.

Permanent Protection

With national and international funding and the leadership of the Brazilian government, ARPA will achieve its ultimate goal and help protect a place that helps stabilize our planet's climate, harbors one in ten known species, and provides a home for 30 million people. "There's nothing bigger than ARPA. It's the biggest conservation project of all time," said Carter Roberts, President and CEO of WWF.

The next phase of this history-making endeavor, known as ARPA for Life, involves the implementation of an innovative conservation finance approach that WWF and its partners envisioned a few years ago. “It’s a collective international force with unbelievable cooperation,” said Adriana Moreira, Senior Environmental Specialist and ARPA project manager for the World Bank, who has been with the project since its inception.

This approach, known as “project finance for permanence,” builds on the success of the ARPA while taking advantage of the growth of the Brazilian economy. As part of this approach, ARPA for Life partners have created a \$215 million “transition fund” from which Brazil will receive financing over a period of time that is sufficient for the government eventually to cover fully the significant costs of maintaining ARPA sites. “ARPA for Life wouldn’t have been possible without diverse and unique collaboration among numerous partners, including the Brazilian Biodiversity Fund (Funbio), the Linden Trust for Conservation, the World Bank, KFW and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation,” said Roberts.

ARPA’s success is also due to the strong participation of those in surrounding Amazon communities who see its benefits and want it to continue to flourish. It is the involvement of people, the determination of a unique partnership, and the use of innovative financing that make ARPA a model of conservation for the world.

<http://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/protecting-the-amazon-for-life>

May 22, 2014

Pope Francis: ‘We Are Custodians of Creation’

By Andrew C. Revkin
New York Times

Pope Francis is digging in on the role of faith and science in shaping a smooth human journey in this turbulent century of cresting appetites and global interconnection.

Echoing [conclusions](#) reached at the [recent Vatican meeting](#) of scientists, theologians and others on sustainable development, he [spoke yesterday](#) about the human responsibility for “wise stewardship” of the environment, both for our own sake (“If we destroy Creation, Creation will destroy us!”) and out of a broader sense of what is right.

The comments are the latest sign that Francis plans to make environmental sustainability an important theme of his papacy, and [potentially the focus of an encyclical letter](#). Here are some excerpts from the [Vatican Radio transcript](#) of his remarks on the value of empirical knowledge and faith in fostering a culture of care for the planet around us:

He spoke of “the gift of knowledge” as constituting both human understanding of the workings of the universe and spiritual knowledge:

When we speak of knowledge, we immediately think of the human capacity to learn more about the reality that surrounds him and to discover the laws that govern nature and the universe. The knowledge that comes from the Holy Spirit, however, is not limited to human knowledge: it is a special gift, which allows us to grasp, through Creation, the greatness and love of God and His profound relationship with every creature....

[T]he gift of knowledge helps us to avoid falling prey to excessive or incorrect attitudes. The first lies in the risk of considering ourselves masters of Creation. 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....

The second incorrect attitude is the temptation to limit ourselves to creatures, as if they can provide the answer to all our expectations. With the gift of knowledge, the Holy Spirit helps us not to give in to all of this.... We are Custodians of Creation. But when we exploit Creation we destroy the sign of God's love for us, in destroying Creation we are saying to God: "I don't like it!. This is not good!" "So what do you like?" "I like myself!" – Here, this is sin! Do you see? Custody of Creation is custody of God's gift to us and it is also a way of saying thank you to God. I am the master of Creation but to carry it forward I will never destroy your gift. And this should be our attitude towards Creation. Safeguard Creation. Because if we destroy Creation, Creation will destroy us! Never forget this!

Here's his core point as distilled by the Vatican:

Dear Brothers and Sisters: In our continuing catechesis on the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, we now consider the gift of knowledge. Through this spiritual gift, we are enabled to see every person, and the world around us, in the light of God's loving plan. In a sense, we see the beauty, harmony and goodness of all creation with the eyes of God its maker. As is clear from the lives of Saint Francis of Assisi and so many other saints, the gift of knowledge gives rise to grateful contemplation of the world of nature and joyful praise of the Creator. The perspective given by this spiritual gift leads us to respect God's gift of creation and to exercise wise stewardship of its resources for the benefit of the whole human family.

In all of this, Francis is reaching into an important space that is too often discounted in discussions of policy and personal choices related to the environment. It's the space between what we know and what we do.

As I said in my closing remarks at the Vatican meeting, "[Scientific knowledge reveals options; values determine choices.](#)"

There are important areas of overlap between religious and secular world views that only are revealed at that interface.

I am not religious, but I often find myself in a state of awe and joy when contemplating the wonders of this planet we inhabit. I'm pretty sure the depth of my feelings is similar to that of my very religious friends — who include an Episcopal priest and a Baptist minister.

I also have become convinced that while the power of science to reveal the nature of things, both external and internal, is extraordinary, there remain enormous realms of unknowability. I'll be thrilled when someone finally discovers how life on Earth came to be or how a new insight emerges in the brain, but I'm not holding my breath.

And I agreed with my departed friend Pete Seeger that while science and the technologies it has produced have powered our species on an extraordinary trajectory so far, no one can demonstrate that [an infinite increase in empirical information is implicitly "good."](#)

A leap of faith is required.

I admired Edward O. Wilson's outreach to people of faith in his 2006 book, "[The Creation](#)," in which he aimed to "[ally religion and science](#) — 'the two most powerful forces in the world today' — in an ethic of 'honorable' self-restraint toward the natural world."

And I admire Pope Francis, from the other end of the spectrum, for doing the same.

<http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/05/22/pope-francis-we-are-custodians-of-creation/?ref=science>

May 23, 2014

Brighthelm URC becomes the first UK church congregation to disinvest from fossil fuels

Ekklesia

Inspired by Operation Noah's Bright Now campaign, Brighthelm URC Church in Brighton is pulling out of investing in fossil fuels. Operation Noah has congratulated Brighthelm on being the first individual UK church to make the decision to disinvest since the launch of the ON campaign.

Brighthelm's minister, the Rev Alex Mabbs, explained, "One of our core values at Brighthelm is sustainability. It is clear that the burning of fossil fuels is not sustainable and increasingly intensive extraction methods are causing extreme damage to the environment and harming animals, plants and humans. We don't want our money to support an industry that is killing the planet. Instead, we want to contribute to a world in which all life can flourish."

Mark Letcher, Vice Chair of Operation Noah commented, 'We are greatly encouraged that Brighthelm has added its voice to the global fossil fuel disinvestment movement spreading across churches around the world. As well as working to bring about change within national denominations we are also encouraging individual churches that hold investments to disinvest. This is an important step, and we are delighted that a mainstream UK church has taken this lead.'

Shortly after the launch of Bright Now in September 2013, Quakers in Britain became the first religious grouping to commit to divestment. Since then, the Church of England has discussed the issue at General Synod and committed to undertake a review of their investments. Several Methodist regional groups have recently put forward requests for the Methodist Church in Britain to divest from fossil fuels, and these will be discussed at the Methodist Conference this July.

Operation Noah will be encouraging further involvement in spreading the fossil free movement across UK Churches at their supporters' day on 7th June in Birmingham.

Operation Noah is an ecumenical Christian charity providing leadership, focus and inspiration in response to the growing threat of catastrophic climate change. It launched *Bright Now: towards fossil free Churches* in September 2013 and calls on Churches and the Christian community in the UK to divest from major fossil fuel companies and to take a leading and influential role in the debate on the ethics of investment in fossil fuels.

* www.operationnoah.org

* www.brightnow.org.uk

<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/20513>

May 23, 2014

New First of its Kind Tool Helps Avoid Global Food Waste

United Nations Environment Programme

London - In a world where over 840 million go hungry every day, achieving food security goes beyond increasing global food production. Better food systems and sustainable consumption and production approaches are needed to achieve food security for all.

A new tool, the *Think.Eat.Save Guidance Version 1.0* - released today by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) as part of SAVE FOOD Initiative and FAO-UNEP Sustainable Food Systems Programme - provides guidance to governments, local authorities, businesses and others on designing effective food waste prevention programmes.

Research shows that at least one-third, or 1.3 billion tonnes, of food produced each year is lost or wasted - an amount corresponding to over 1.4 billion hectares of cropland. Even a quarter of this lost food could feed all the world's hungry people.

According to the FAO, almost half of all fruit and vegetables is wasted each year. About 10 per cent of developed countries' greenhouse gas emissions come from growing food that is never eaten, and food loss and waste amounts to roughly USD 680 billion in industrialized countries and USD 310 billion in developing countries.

"Food waste carries direct economic and environmental costs and depletes the natural resource base that underpins food production," said UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

"Today, diets are becoming more resource-intensive, and the way we buy and consume food is changing due to industrialization, the demands of a growing middle class, and the continued impacts of the economic crisis.

This first-of-its-kind guidance document on food waste prevention provides the technical expertise and impetus needed for a wide range of actors to take advantage of existing wisdom, catalyze action, and get a head start in tackling this critical issue," he added.

Ensuring that all the world's people have enough food is the vision of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's Zero Hunger Challenge, and UNEP and the FAO are jointly charged under the challenge with reducing food loss and waste.

To this end, UNEP in partnership with FAO, Messe Düsseldorf GmbH, WRAP and others, launched *Think.Eat.Save: Reduce your Foodprint* (www.thinkeatsave.org) - a global campaign to galvanize concerted action on food waste. In its first year, this campaign has engaged more than a million participants in awareness-raising activities, reached a diverse global network of followers, and provided a portal to showcase ideas and share resources.

The *Think.Eat.Save Guidance Version 1.0* presents a full journey for users of the tool, beginning with the mapping and measuring of food waste and the development of national or regional policies and measures. In-depth modules then focus on programmes for food waste prevention in households and in the food supply chain.

The guidance document provides clear and comprehensive steps on scoping, planning, delivering and measuring food waste prevention programmes and activities, at national, regional, business and household level. It has been built on proven experiences around the world, including that of the United Kingdom, where avoidable household food waste has been reduced by 21 per cent between 2007 and 2012.

The document published today is "Version 1.0", to be enriched progressively as many more countries around the world begin to take on the challenge and reap the benefits of food waste reduction.

To this end, UNEP and FAO are recruiting pilot countries and cities without existing frameworks for food waste prevention to test the *Think.Eat.Save Guidance Version 1.0* over the coming years. Technical and strategic support will be provided to pilot countries and cities, as they initiate, define, deliver and monitor food waste prevention programmes.

The document will evolve further with the development of the Food Loss and Waste Protocol for food waste measurement to support coherent global data collection, being led by the World Resources Institute (WRI).

This practical guide is launched in anticipation of the forthcoming Committee on World Food Security High Level Panel of Experts *Food Losses and Waste in the Context of Sustainable Food Systems* report, which supports concerted and collective action. It also contributes to the recently agreed development of a new component to the 10 Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production, which will be dealing with "sustainable food systems".

Quotes

FAO

"Sustainable natural resources use is a key FAO priority. Fighting food loss and waste is an area in which partnerships are needed to reach the goal of eradicating hunger. This calls for effective governance systems and involvement of many stakeholders. We face a world with high and volatile food prices, urbanization, and climate change where coordination of strategies to reduce food waste can make a real difference," said Helena Semedo, FAO Deputy Director General for Natural Resources.

WRAP

Dr Liz Goodwin, CEO at WRAP, said: "We're delighted to see this Guidance Version 1.0 being published today, and to have had the opportunity to work in collaboration with UNEP and FAO to develop it. Our work has helped consumers and businesses take significant strides to prevent and reduce their food waste in the UK. We hope that by assembling guidance and best practice from around the world it will encourage more action to tackle this crucial global issue."

Notes to Editors

To download the guidance document, please visit: www.thinkeatsave.org (from 23 May 2014)

Structure of the Guidance Version 1.0

Module 1: Mapping and measuring of food and drink waste

This Module enables the user to scope the problem, by quantifying what is known about food waste, where it arises, and its impacts. Through mapping exercises, users can identify opportunities, barriers, and potential partners for food waste reduction. Aimed at national or regional government, this provides a powerful basis for strategy development.

Module 2: Options for developing national or regional policies and measures for food and drink waste prevention and reduction

This Module provides an overview of the mechanisms that can influence food waste, namely legislative measures, fiscal measures, information provision, and motivational strategies.

Module 3: Developing and implementing programmes to prevent and reduce household food and drink waste

This Module focuses on two proven approaches to reducing household food waste. 1) A household and consumer engagement campaign, raising awareness, encouraging behavior change, and equipping consumers with the necessary information, tools and skills. 2) Changes to product, packaging and labelling, enabling consumers to buy the right amount of food and use what they buy.

Module 4: Preventing and reducing food waste in the food and drink business supply chain (manufacturing, retail, hospitality and food service)

This Module provides guidance both for individual businesses (strategy design, tools and examples, and measurement and reporting) and for voluntary collective action programmes, providing a framework for businesses to work collaboratively across sectors and supply chains.

For further information please contact:

Shereen Zorba, Head of News and Media, UNEP, Tel. +254 788 526 000 or Email: unepnewsdesk@unep.org

Moira O'Brien-Malone, Head, Communications, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, UNEP, Tel +33 1 44 37 76 12, mob +33 6 82 26 93 73, email: moira.obrien-malone@unep.org

UNEP News Desk, unepnewsdesk@unep.org

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 FAO

Achieving food security for all is at the heart of FAO's efforts - to make sure people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives. FAO's three main goals are: eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; elimination of poverty and the driving forward of economic and social progress for all; and, sustainable management and utilization of natural resources, including land, water, air, climate and genetic resources for the benefit of present and future generations. Visit: www.fao.org

About SAVE FOOD: Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction In May 2011 FAO launched the *Global Initiative on food loss and waste reduction* (also called SAVE FOOD Initiative) as a corporate effort together with the private sector trade fair organizer Messe Düsseldorf GmbH (Germany). SAVE FOOD works in partnership with donors, bi- and multi-lateral agencies, financial institutions, public, private sector and civil society for: (i) Awareness raising; (ii) Collaboration and coordination of world-wide initiatives; (iii) Evidence-based policy, strategy and programme development, including a methodology for assessing food loss; (iv) Technical support to investment programmes and projects. UNEP joined SAVE FOOD in January 2013. Visit: www.fao.org/save-food

About the FAO-UNEP Sustainable Food Systems Programme

The FAO/UNEP sustainable food systems program is catalysing partnerships among United Nations agencies, governments, private sector and civil society to promote activities that improve the sustainability of food consumption and production

Visit: <http://www.fao.org/ag/ags/sustainable-food-consumption-and-production/en/>

About WRAP UK

WRAP's vision is a world where resources are used sustainably. It works in partnership to help businesses, individuals and communities improve resource efficiency.

Established as a not-for-profit company in 2000, WRAP is backed by government funding from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

www.wrap.org.uk

@Wrap_UK

About Think.Eat.Save

The Think.Eat.Save campaign of the SAVE FOOD Initiative, is a partnership between UNEP, FAO and Messe Düsseldorf GmbH, and in support of the UN Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge, which seeks to add its authority and voice to these efforts in order to galvanize widespread global, regional and national actions, catalyse more sectors of society to be aware and to act, including through exchange of inspiring ideas and projects between those players already involved and new ones that are likely to come on board.

www.thinkeatsave.org

#ThinkEatSave

The FAO Save Food Initiative: is a joint campaign instituted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Messe Düsseldorf GmbH to fight global food loss.

SAVE FOOD aims at networking stakeholders in industry, politics and research, encouraging dialogue and helping to develop solutions along the food value chain

<http://www.unep.org/NewsCentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2788&ArticleID=10863&l=en>

May 27, 2014

Come Into the Madang: World Council of Churches and Climate Justice

By Grace Ji-Sun Kim
Huffington Post

I remember visiting my grandmother's house when I was a young girl living in Korea. I have fond memories of playing in the *madang* (a Korean term that describes a courtyard within a traditional Korean home). Most Korean homes are protected by a large metal fence around the house with a front gate that leads into the *madang*.

A typical part of Korean homes, the *madang* is much like a family room where family and friends gather to rest, talk, share, and engage with each other. Most of the rooms in the home are entered through the *madang* and thus it serves as a space for encounter and sharing, celebration and fellowship, greeting a visitor and welcoming a stranger. Perhaps the *madang* is something like the courtyard at the Cloisters in NYC, although the surrounding building is far larger than what my grandmother had. My grandmother's home was very small with just 2 rooms leading away from the *madang*. Ancient and medieval European buildings, and many buildings in Europe are built on the same principle today.

The 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held in Busan, Korea from October 30 to November 8, 2013. The churches, ecumenical organizations and groups created a *madang* with informative booths, cultural performers, and workshops. This *madang* became an energetic meeting place where individuals and groups continued ongoing conversations, shared, brainstormed, envisioned and reimaged.

The final message at the [10th Assembly](#) asked churches and Christians to join in a "Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace". The participants in the Assembly adopted the message and many are now working on what it means to be on this "*pilgrimage of justice and peace*."

Part of this journey involves addressing the pressing issue of environmental justice and peace with the earth. Environmental justice is intimately related to economic justice and we need to take both seriously. To emphasize and illustrate the link between these two intertwined issues, the WCC adopted the term eco-justice. There needs to be a strong mitigation of CO2 emissions by wealthy countries, so those countries still developing do not suffer from a burnt out planet, through no fault of their own. The environment affects our economy and the poor are the most affected.

Furthermore, without environmental justice, there cannot be peace. The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, held in Kingston, Jamaica, in 2011, clearly stated that there is "*no peace on earth without peace with the earth.*"

However, the way we have related to the earth is with little conservation and no restraint. We have lost any tradition of being stewards of the earth. This path of violence and domination may not lead to open war, but it is leading to the destruction of the earth.

Therefore, there is an urgent call to join together to work towards climate justice and environmental justice. We need to advocate for the earth and be at *peace with the earth*. We need to come into the *madang* of the earth and be in that space to share, communicate, fellowship, and greet a stranger and welcome a friend. We need to bring Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, individuals, communities, politicians, churches, and corporations into the *madang*, so all can challenge one another to live a life of stewardship rather than of greed, domination, and destruction.

We all need to call out to the God of life and ask God to lead us to justice and peace. We need to join together and work for social justice as the earth is crying out and pleading with us.

The Interfaith Summit on Climate Change, to be held in New York in September 2014, co-organized by the World Council of Churches and Religions for Peace can also be seen as a *madang* where religious leaders from different traditions come together to express their commitment for climate justice and peace with the earth. Furthermore, there will also be a call to the Heads of States to attend the [Climate Summit](#) organized by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, to respond effectively to the threats posed by the climate crisis.

The *madang* can be a place for the world-wide church to work together and do something together to make a change in the world. We need to work towards transformation and discipleship so that there will be peace with earth and then we can all have peace on earth. The *madang* is open, let us come in, converse, envision and reimagine.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/grace-jisun-kim/come-into-the-madang-worl_b_5383555.html#es_share_ended

May 29, 2014

U.S. Bishops Urge Action on Carbon Pollution To Stem Climate Change

United States Conference of Bishops

Reduce carbon pollution to mitigate climate change

Consider effects of pollution on poor, vulnerable people nationally, globally

Act now to protect human life and dignity in the future

WASHINGTON—The U.S. bishops urged the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency “to develop standards to reduce carbon pollution from existing power plants and thereby mitigate climate change” in a May 29 letter from Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami, chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

“The USCCB recognizes the importance of finding means to reduce carbon pollution,” Archbishop Wenski said. “These standards should protect the health and welfare of all people, especially children, the elderly, as well as poor and vulnerable communities, from harmful pollution emitted from power plants and from the impacts of climate change.” The letter can be found at www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/environmental-justice-program/upload/letter-to-epa-from-archbishop-wenski-on-carbon-emissions-standards-2014-05-29.pdf.

Archbishop Wenski said that “the best evidence indicates that power plants are the largest stationary source of carbon emissions in the United States, and a major contributor to climate change. Power plants have often been located near low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. Air pollution from these plants contributes to respiratory problems, especially in the young and the elderly.”

He added that there are “damaging impacts from climate-related events in the United States and across the globe, particularly on poor and vulnerable communities. Beyond the regulations, the United States should exercise leadership for a globally negotiated climate change agreement.”

“The communities served by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) are already experiencing the tragic consequences of climate change,” Archbishop Wenski said.

“Increasingly limited access to water, reduced crop yields, more widespread disease, increased frequency and intensity of droughts and storms, as well as conflict over declining resources – all these are making the lives of the world’s poorest people even more precarious,” he said.

Archbishop Wenski urged the EPA to be guided by the following principles, outlined by both the U.S. bishops in their 2001 statement “Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good” and Pope Francis in recent comments.

- Respect for Human Life and Dignity, “especially that of the poorest and most vulnerable: from children in the womb to the elderly,” who feel “the health impacts of climate change, including exposure to climate-sensitive diseases, heat waves and diminished air quality.”
- Prudence on Behalf of the Common Good through “wise action to address climate change”

now “to protect the common good for present and future generations.”

- Priority for the Poor and Vulnerable since “the consequences of climate change will be borne by the world’s most vulnerable people.”
- Social and Economic Justice. Workers should be protected from negative effects on the workforce resulting from the new standards and should receive assistance to mitigate impacts on their livelihoods and families. Any additional costs that such standards may generate must be distributed fairly, without undue burden on the poor.
- Care for creation given the call “to be responsible stewards of the earth and to use the gifts we have been given to protect human life and dignity, now and in the future.”
- Participation of local communities, especially low-income communities, “who should have a voice in shaping these standards based on their local impact.”

Further information on the environmental efforts of the USCCB Environmental Justice Program can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/environmental-justice-program/>

MEDIA CONTACT ONLY:

Sr. Mary Ann Walsh

O: 202-541-3200

[Email](#)

<http://www.usccb.org/news/2014/14-094.cfm>

June 2014

Green Yatra Action Network Newsletter

<http://us4.campaign-archive1.com/?u=7464c18007d8b27795cb0e8ed&id=d441d839aa&e=aa01df4122>

June 2014

SAFCEI - South African Faith Communities Institute Newsletter

<http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=55b4104381&e=d85b57a294>

June-July 2014

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=50&key=062330fdb61782907c6da323be91f9e1&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

June 1, 2014

Catholic Climate Covenant Encouraged by EPA Action, Much More Needed

Catholic Climate Covenant

On May 29, Miami Archbishop Thomas Wenski, Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, wrote to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy urging that the new carbon pollution rules on existing power plants should "protect the health and welfare of all people, especially children, the elderly, as well as poor and vulnerable communities from harmful pollution emitted from power plants and from the impacts of climate change."

Read more here:

<http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Catholic-Climate-Covenant-press-release-on-carbon-standards-FINAL.pdf>

June 3, 2014

When Global Warming Kills Your God

Twenty-three Alaskan tribesmen broke the law when they overfished king salmon, but they claim their faith gave them no other choice.

By Adam Weymouth
The Atlantic

"So there is a black fish swimming up the river, looking for a fish trap to swim into. Cycle of life, right?"

Grant Kashatok was telling me stories the traditional Yup'ik way—his fingers entwined with string, like a child playing cat's cradle. As he spoke, he looped the string into different shapes: it became a hunter, a mountain, a boat, an oar. "And he came to a fish trap that was broken," he said, "and some of the fish in it were dead. The black fish poked his head out of the river to see who it was that owned the trap, and he saw that the village was dirty, and that the dogs were not tied up, and the woman came out to throw out the scraps of a fish dinner and he watched the dogs fight over the bones. The fish did not want his bones fought over. So he carried on swimming up river."

Kashatok is the principal of the only school in Newtok, Alaska—a town of 354 perched at the mouth of the Ninglick River, just a few miles from the Pacific Ocean. In 2009, it was one of 26 indigenous villages listed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as "priority action communities": The ground beneath it is slipping into the sea at such a rate that the village may only have two more years before the first houses fall away.

Throughout the state, climate change is intensifying storm surges and thawing the permafrost—land that previously remained frozen throughout the year. Parts of highways are sinking. Trees around Fairbanks have slipped to such rakish angles that they have become known as drunken forests.

But it's not hard to see why the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, a watershed the size of Britain, is especially vulnerable. Approaching from the air, it's difficult to determine whether this region is a landmass with many lakes or a body of water with many islands. The Yup'ik never intended to live here year-round: They were a nomadic people forced into settlements by missionaries and the government. The villages where the Yup'ik now live year-round were once their summer fishing and hunting grounds.

I went to the Delta to cover the trial of 23 Yup'ik fishermen who had violated a ban on the fishing of king (or Chinook) salmon. In late June and early July, as many as 40 million of the fish have been known to migrate throughout the state, returning from the sea to spawn on gravel beds. They run so thick that the fish swimming on the outer edges of the river are forced onto the banks. King salmon, I am told, can weigh as much as sled dogs.

But over the past few years, their numbers have dropped dramatically. By the beginning of the 2012 season, the Department of Fish and Game was alarmed enough to gather a panel of fishery scientists and ecologists from across Alaska to determine a response.

They came up with seven hypotheses for the decline. Natural cycles are cited, but the report returns again and again to climate change. Rivers are breaking up earlier along their routes, sending more vulnerable juveniles out into the ocean. Changing ocean currents may be spreading disease. There are shifts in other species in the food chain upon which the salmon depend. Warmer waters are depleting the energy of the fish, causing higher mortality rates along the migration route. The impact of each of these factors is currently unknown.

In June 2012, after Fish and Game announced a ban throughout the Delta, State Trooper Brett Scott Gibbens was sent out to patrol the rivers around Bethel, the central hub of the Yukon-

Kuskokwim Delta. He'd learned, through a press release, that a group of Yup'ik fishermen planned to defy the ban, and as he came down the Kuskokwim River, he found a small fleet of boats—somewhere between 12 and 16, he later testified. The gill nets they were using were perhaps 50 fathoms long, which made them illegal under the ban. Many of the fishermen pulled their gear and left as he was identifying and rounding up the others. Some of the fishermen later went on to pay fines. But 23 of them refused, and last summer, they stood trial in a Bethel courtroom.

On the first morning of the trial, the court was standing-room only, crowded with defendants, supporters, families with babies, and a handful of journalists and cops. Behind Judge Bruce Ward, next to the American flag, hung a traditional Yup'ik mask. Someone produced a Ziploc of salmon jerky and passed it down the row. Everyone took a piece and chewed on it, including the two state troopers. The courtroom began to smell like a fish market.

Felix Flynn was the first fisherman to take the stand. "Is it okay if he occasionally breaks into Yup'ik?" asked his lawyer, Jim Davis, pushing back a luxuriant sweep of hair. He is one of the founders of the Northern Justice Project, a private firm that represents low- and middle-income native Alaskans, and had taken this case pro bono.

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," replied the judge.

Flynn raised his hand and swore on the Bible. A short man with drooping moustaches and cheeks scarred by frostbite, he began by telling the court how his father took him out herring fishing when he was a boy. "To start with, all I see is ocean," he said. "Then after a while there's glassy water, and there's other water that's not glassy. And that means the herring are here. That's what I learnt from my father. I'm subsistence. I was born and raised an Eskimo. It's in my blood. It's in my family blood."

"And what does that mean to you, subsistence?" prompted Davis, leaning over with his hands on the podium.

"Subsistence is living from the land," said Flynn. "It's what we've always done. We go hunt ducks and seals in the ocean in the springtime. Ptarmigan. Salmon. My great-grandfather and grandfather told us we have to be very careful what we catch. God made them for everyone. I was living subsistence even when I was in the military. My whole life. I make a fish camp every year and dry 30, 40 kings. I set a net last summer but there was too much closure. Things have been rough."

"And how did it feel not to be able to catch enough?" Davis asked him.

"I have a grandchild, 2 years old—" He paused and rubbed his eyes. Several other men in the gallery also began to cry. "My grandson said to me, 'When we gonna go check the net?' And I couldn't say anything."

Michael Cresswell, a state trooper, leaned over and whispered in my ear: "This is momentous. This is climate change on trial."

A few days later, I flew to the small village of Akiak, population 346, to visit Mike Williams, the current chief of the Yupiit nation. Williams is one of Alaska's most outspoken voices on climate change. In 2007, he was invited to testify before a U.S. Representatives Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming. "If global warming is not addressed," he told them, "the impacts on Alaskan Natives and American Indians will be immense." He spoke to Congress about the Iditarod, the thousand-mile sled dog race from Anchorage to Nome. "To keep the dogs cool, since the days are too warm, we have to mostly mush by night now," Williams told the politicians. "And we also mush more on land and less on frozen rivers because of thawing." The Iditarod's sponsors include, among others, ExxonMobil.

Now, Williams was helping to coordinate the fishermen's defense. To get to his Akiak office, you have to enter through a bingo hall. The doors hang from their hinges, the plasterboard sags from the ceiling. The toilet is broken. During our interview, the Internet was down; he spent much of the two hours trying to check his Yahoo account. "This is my war room," he said, gesturing around himself. "This is where I cause trouble. I'm doing better than Gandhi."

In court, the fishermen's civil disobedience has been framed as a First Amendment issue: The Yup'ik believe they have an obligation to continue their ancestral traditions. As Jim Davis summarized it, in a brief submitted before the trial: "If Yup'ik people do not fish for King Salmon, the King Salmon spirit will be offended and it will not return to the river."

An [amicus brief](#) filed by the American Civil Liberties Union elaborated further:

A Yup'ik fisherman who is a sincere believer in his religious role as a steward of nature, believes that he must fulfill his prescribed role to maintain this 'collaborative reciprocity' between hunter and game. Completely barring him from the salmon fishery thwarts the practice of a real religious belief. Under Yup'ik religious belief, this cycle of interplay between humans and animals helped perpetuate the seasons; without the maintaining of that balance, a new year will not follow the old one.

But now the seasons are out of balance, and the Yup'ik can't stop hold the sea back. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, an estimated 86 percent of indigenous villages in Alaska will need to move within the next 50 years, at a cost of \$200 to \$500 million per village. Newtok is preparing to move to a new site, across the water to Nelson Island, but a struggle against the village leadership has recently stalled the relocation effort.

As Williams drove me back to his house for lunch, he told me how Akiak had lost its graveyard to the water three years earlier. The bones and skulls of their ancestors had started emerging from the banks, drifting down toward Bethel. The community had gathered up what they could and carried the remains to a new mass grave on the other side of town.

Lunch was a soup of whitefront goose, shot by one of Mike's five kids. I sucked at the thin flesh of a boiled head, its eyes cooked to cataracts, its teeth a saw line. Dessert was the local version of ice cream: blueberries, margarine, and sugar, mixed and frozen. The soup was good, the ice cream revolting. The paneled walls were lined with photos of sledding kids bundled up in parkas, dream catchers, graduation portraits, animal hide drums, mushing memorabilia, and a Moravian

church calendar. There was a basketball game on the corner—Montana vs. Indiana. A wood-burning stove in the corner heated the room, fueled with driftwood snagged from the river.

Outside, Williams told me he wanted to show me where he had been born. He led me down to his dog yard by the river. His 30-year-old son, Mike Jr.—who ran his first Iditarod last year and came in 22 places ahead of his dad—was putting eight dogs into their traces and tethering them to a quad bike, the only way to exercise them without snow on the ground. About 40 dogs were pacing on their chains, yelping and yammering—a mottled crew of huskies and malamutes, lean, strong, and eager.

“So where were you born?” I asked, looking at the houses around us: cheap rectangular structures raised on stilts. Their yards were full of buoys and outboards, caribou antlers and skulls, snowmobiles and aluminum skiffs awaiting their respective seasons. Williams pointed out toward the middle of the river.

“Out there.”

That, he told me, is where the hospital once was—where all of Akiak once was. He waved his hand expansively. “I’m continuously moving my dog yard,” he said. I followed him down a dirt track that stopped abruptly at the river. “We lost this whole road last year,” he said. “One day I was driving down it. The next day, it was gone.”

Shrubs had slipped, pointing horizontally across the water. The detritus of a house lay beside them—twisted sheets of corrugated iron, sodden insulation, pipes and tubes and lumber. It looked like the flotsam from a storm.

“Nobody here knows the weather,” said 66-year-old fisherman Noah Okoviak, speaking from the witness stand in the Bethel courtroom. “Nobody here knows how many fish will come. Only the creator.”

Judge Ward listened to Okoviak’s defense and found his beliefs to be sincere. But as with the other 22 fishermen, he found Okoviak guilty. The state had sufficient reason to impose the ban, the judge explained, and the fishermen had violated it. But the sentences were lenient—a year of probation and a fine of \$250 apiece (in one case, \$500) to be paid over the course of a year or sometimes two. At times, the judge was openly sympathetic. “When this case goes up for appeal,” he said, as Okoviak took his seat, “the cold transcript will not reflect that everyone in the courtroom was standing, and that record will not reflect that there are a number of people in the courtroom with tears in their eyes.”

The fishermen’s cases have indeed moved on to the Alaska Court of Appeals, where their oral arguments may be heard as early as this summer. There, state-appointed judges will grapple with the same question the court faced in 1979, when an indigenous hunter named Carlos Frank was charged with illegally transporting a newly slain moose. Frank argued that he had needed the animal for a religious ceremony. Two lower courts found him guilty, but the Alaska Supreme Court reversed the verdict, calling moose meat “the sacramental equivalent to the wine and wafer in Christianity.”

This, in the end, is what's at stake for the Yup'ik fishermen. Their villages may be swallowed up by the sea, but the people themselves won't float away. They'll relocate en masse or drift into the urban diaspora of Anchorage. But if they stop fishing king salmon, the Yup'ik believe they'll lose something far more fundamental than their homes. Harold Borbridge, an indigenous Fairbanks-based consultant with a wife from Newtok, put it this way: "If they can move the things that are important, the language, the culture, the dancing, if they can move the character, they'll have been successful. Anyone can move a few houses."

<http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/06/when-global-warming-kills-your-god/372015/>

June 5, 2014

Sea-Level Rise in Small Island Nations - Up to Four Times the Global Average - to Cost US\$ Trillions in Annual Economic Loss and Impede Future Development: Shift to Green Policies and Investment Critical

United Nations Environment Programme

Global Net Loss of Coral Reef Cover - Worth US\$11.9 Trillion - to Severely Compound Vulnerability of SIDS

Halving Fossil Fuel Dependence by 2035 a Must and SIDS Electricity Prices Soar 500 per cent Higher than US

Bridgetown – Climate change-induced sea-level rise in the world's 52 small island nations – estimated to be up to four times the global average – continues to be the most pressing threat to their environment and socio-economic development; with annual losses at the trillions of dollars due to increased vulnerability. An immediate shift in policies and investment towards renewable energy and green economic growth is required to avoid exacerbating these impacts, says a new report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

In all SIDS regions, coral reefs, the frontline for adaptation, are already severely impacted by rising sea surface temperatures. The global net loss of the coral reef cover - around 34 million hectares over two decades – will cost the international economy an estimated US\$11.9 trillion, with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) especially impacted by the loss.

In the insular Caribbean, for example, up to 100 per cent of coral reefs in some areas have been affected by bleaching due to thermal stress linked to global warming. Climate threats are projected to push the proportion of reefs at risk in the Caribbean to 90 per cent by 2030 and up to 100 per cent by 2050.

The *SIDS Foresight Report* identifies climate change impacts and related sea-level rise as the chief concern among twenty emerging issues impacting the environmental resilience and sustainable development prospects of SIDS— including coastal squeeze, land capacity, invasive alien species and threats from chemicals and waste.

“Rio+20 emphasized that SIDS have unique vulnerabilities and require special attention during the evolution of the sustainable development agenda in order to achieve the gains required to lift people out of poverty, create green jobs and provide sustainable energy for all,” said UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

“For example, these 52 nations, home to over 62 million people, emit less than one per cent of global greenhouse gases, yet they suffer disproportionately from the climate change that global emissions cause.”

“Fortunately, studies demonstrate that we have the tools and capabilities to head off future developmental setbacks. It is up to the international community to support SIDS—not least through building momentum towards a robust climate agreement — to be agreed in 2015, which will cut emissions and minimize the threat of climate change for these nations,” he added.

The report – launched in Bridgetown on World Environment Day – warns that the magnitude and frequency of many weather and climate-related hazards will increase as climate warming accelerates, especially in small islands. This will lead to disproportionate and compounded climate change impacts, which will adversely affect multiple sectors - from tourism, agriculture and fisheries to energy, freshwater, health and infrastructure, unless ocean-based green economy approaches and policy options are put into action.

However, it also demonstrates that SIDS can transition to an inclusive green economy and ensure a sustainable prosperous future by taking advantage of opportunities in areas such as renewable energy, sustainable exploration of unexploited resources, developing an ocean-based green economy and leading the world in the development of inclusive indicators that go beyond Gross Domestic Product to include natural resources.

A second report, the *Barbados Green Economy Scoping Study* – also launched by UNEP on World Environment Day – provides a practical roadmap for policymakers and businesses on the greening of tourism, agriculture, fisheries, building/housing and transportation in Barbados— lessons that can also be applied in other SIDS.

“The issue of the Green Economy is of particular importance to Barbados given our national commitment to advance an inclusive sustainable development paradigm—in the process creating a Barbados that is socially balanced, economically viable and environmentally sound,” said Freundel Stuart, Prime Minister of Barbados.

“The policy, investment and research proposals contained in the Green Economy Scoping Study will not be confined to a shelf,” he added. “This can be witnessed in the integration of the green economic policy proposals into the new Barbados Growth and Development Strategy, and the

mobilization of major investments that harmonize with the green economy in areas such as agriculture, tourism, waste, and water.”

Disproportionate Climate Change Impacts

SIDS’ vulnerability to climate change and sea-level rise is magnified due to their relatively small land masses, population concentrations, and high dependence on coastal ecosystems for food, livelihood, security and protection against extreme events.

While the global average of sea-level rise is 3.2 mm per year, the island of Kosrae, in the Federated States of Micronesia, is experiencing a sea-level that is rising at a rate of 10 mm per year. The tropical Western Pacific, where a large number of small islands are located, experienced sea-level rise at a rate of 12 mm per year between 1993 and 2009—about four times the global average.

Among the threats are increased flooding, shoreline erosion, ocean acidification, warmer sea and land temperature, and damage to infrastructure from extreme weather events.

Apart from its direct impacts, climate change will have a compounding effect on several socio-economic sectors in SIDS.

For example, fisheries play a significant role in the economy, livelihoods and food security of SIDS, estimated at up to 12 per cent of total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in some nations. In Pacific SIDS, fish accounts for up to 90 per cent of animal protein in the diet of coastal communities.

Yet climate change is expected to negatively impact fisheries, posing a clear challenge to meeting the nutritional needs of growing populations, damaging livelihoods and hampering efforts to lift people out of poverty.

Climate change will also impact tourism, which represents more than 30 per cent of SIDS total exports. For example, a 50-centimeter rise in sea-level would result in Grenada losing 60 per cent of its beaches.

Then there is the financial cost of adaptation to climate change: under business-as-usual models, the capital cost of sea-level rise in the Caribbean Community Countries alone is estimated at US\$187 billion by 2080.

The report calls on the international community to gear up actions towards reducing climate change impacts, especially in SIDS, and to adopt a legally binding agreement that includes clear ambitious targets for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

In parallel to the global process, a comprehensive package that outlines agreed mitigation, adaptive, technological and cooperative measures - to implement at the earliest possible time - should be developed, the report says.

Developing Appropriate Indicators

A cross-cutting issue identified in the report is the need to develop appropriate growth indicators that take into account climate change, poverty, natural resource depletion, human health, and quality of life. According to the report, GDP-based indicators do not consider many of the features of small and limited economies, like those of SIDS.

New growth indicators already exist—including the Inclusive Wealth Index, developed by UNEP and the UN University—but they are yet to enter into widespread use, even though they clearly show that current economic growth is coming at the expense of depleting natural resources.

Given the particular vulnerability of SIDS, it is imperative that sustainable development indicators are applied to track accurately the growth of these states. The report calls on SIDS to collaborate in encouraging these efforts, which require cooperation among academics, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

Other Challenges and Opportunities

The report highlights a raft of other issues and opportunities, among them:

Harnessing Renewable Energy Opportunities

On average, more than 90 per cent of the energy used by SIDS comes from oil imports, causing a severe drain on limited financial resources and pushing electricity prices to among the highest in the world—in some cases 500 per cent of prices in the United States. At the same time, a large percentage of residents in SIDS do not have access to electricity: for example, 70 per cent of the population in Pacific Islands.

SIDS have bountiful supplies of renewable energy sources such as biomass, wind, sun, ocean, wave, hydro and geothermal. Accelerated deployment of renewable energy, prompted through appropriate policy interventions and public-private partnerships, offers an opportunity to widen access to sustainable energy and reduce the crippling costs of power.

SIDS are increasingly adopting renewable energy targets and policies, although still only 3 per cent of the energy mix in the Caribbean is from renewable sources.

Unexploited Natural Resources

Many SIDS possess unexploited natural resources in terrestrial areas as well as in their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and in the deep sea. Among these are minerals, potential pharmaceutical products, hydrocarbons, renewable energy resources, and fish stocks.

The exploration of these new frontiers of natural resources presents opportunities to meet a broad range of economic and social aspirations. Some countries are already expanding into these new

areas, as seen in Papua New Guinea, which has embarked on exploratory activities for mining of seabed manganese nodules and rare earth elements.

SIDS have the opportunity to set a precedent for the sustainable exploration of these resources. Embarking on these new ventures will, however, come with diverse responsibilities; it is necessary, therefore, to conduct detailed scientific resource assessments to aid the development of robust guidelines and frameworks for sustainable management.

Developing an Ocean-based Green Economy

For most SIDS, transitioning to a green economy implies an ocean-based green economy because of the socio-economic importance of the ocean to these countries.

There are many practical and political challenges in this transition, and risks and opportunities must be scientifically assessed. Approaches and solutions exist that can be adapted by SIDS and governments and have an important role to play in providing the enabling conditions for this transition.

The Foresight Report was part of a wider process, which included the input of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). A joint session with UN DESA identified 15 linked socio-economic issues that should be addressed, including diversifying the economies of SIDS, innovation in debt relief, and the future of food security.

The Barbados Example

While the *Foresight Report* focused on all SIDS, the green economy study focused on Barbados—although the lessons presented can be applied to many other nations.

A synthesis of the study—carried out in conjunction with the government of Barbados and the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus—was first released in 2012, and the government has already begun to act on the recommendations.

The report finds that the green economy approach offers opportunities for managing natural capital, diversifying the economy, creating green jobs, increasing resource efficiency and supporting poverty reduction and sustainable development. It shows that there is massive potential in Barbados—for example in energy, where a saving of US\$280 million can be made through a 29 per cent switch to renewables by 2029.

It also finds opportunities for growth in the following areas:

Agriculture: Greening a restructured sugar cane industry and the adoption and promotion of organic agriculture.

Fisheries: An increase in the utilisation of clean technologies; the conversion of fish into fertilizer, compost and pellets for animal feed; and better collaboration on transboundary marine jurisdictions and resource-use in the region.

Building/housing: Improving resource efficiency, reducing waste and the use of toxic substances, and enhancing water efficiency and sustainable site development.

Transport: The creation of green jobs, particularly in the provision and maintenance of fuel-efficient vehicles; technology transfer and the management of an integrated public transport system.

Tourism: Marketing Barbados as a green destination, developing heritage and agro-tourism, and creating partnerships for promoting marine conservation.

Notes to Editors

To download the SIDS Foresight Report, please visit: www.unep.org

To download the Barbados Green Economy Scoping Study, please visit: www.unep.org

About the Foresight Process

The 2012 UNEP Foresight Process on Emerging Global Environmental Issues primarily identified emerging environmental issues and possible solutions on a global scale and perspective. In 2013, UNEP carried out a similar exercise to identify priority emerging environmental issues that are of concern to SIDS. The report, produced by a panel of 11 SIDS experts, presents the outcome of the Foresight exercise and is one of UNEP's contributions to the Third International SIDS Conference, to take place in Samoa in September 2014.

About World Environment Day

World Environment Day (WED) is the United Nations' principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the environment. Over the years, it has grown to be a broad, global platform for public outreach that is widely celebrated by stakeholders in over 100 countries. It also serves as the 'people's day' for doing something positive for the environment, galvanizing individual actions into a collective power that generates an exponential positive impact on the planet. World Environment Day 2014 focuses on the threat to SIDS, running under the slogan *Raise your voice, not the sea-level*. 2014 is also the International Year of SIDS. Visit the WED site at: www.unep.org/wed/

For more information, please contact:

Shereen Zorba, Head of News and Media, UNEP
[+254 788 526000](tel:+254788526000), unepnewsdesk@unep.org

Michael Logan, Information Officer, UNEP
[+254 725 939 620](tel:+254725939620) (mobile), unepnewsdesk@unep.org

<http://www.rona.unep.org/documents/news/PRESS%20RELEASE%20-%20UNEP%20Report%20on%20SIDS.pdf>

June 5, 2014

Message by UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner on the occasion of World Environment Day

Join us in celebrating World Environment Day and raise your voice to encourage action

United Nations Environment Programme

Every year, on June 5th, millions of people across the planet celebrate World Environment Day-coming together at community, national and regional level to promote positive action on the most-pressing environmental challenges of our day. This year's global host for World Environment Day is Barbados, one of many Small Island Developing States (SIDS) facing multi-dimensional issues that require integrated global action.

SIDS contribute little to the problem of climate change- the combined annual carbon dioxide output of these nations accounts for less than one per cent of global emissions. Yet they are especially vulnerable to the changing climate due to their small size, narrow resource base, susceptibility to natural hazards, low economic resilience, and limited for mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. The very existence of low-lying nations, such as Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu is threatened by climate change-induced sea level rise.

As one of the smallest independent states in the world, with a total land area of just 431 km², Barbados faces many of the challenges outlined above, but it is not passively accepting its fate. Barbados has long been a leader in the Caribbean region in the Green Economy approach. Its current National Strategic Plan (2006-2025) clearly identifies "Building a Green Economy: Strengthening the Physical Infrastructure and Preserving the Environment" as one its key aims.

Barbados's transition to a green economy offers opportunities for managing natural capital, further diversifying the economy, increasing resource efficiency and supporting the goals of poverty reduction and sustainable development. Tremendous potential exists for greening the agriculture, fisheries, building, transportation and tourism sectors, and Barbados is demonstrating the political will to move to a Green Economy both through its policies and engagement with the United Nations Environment Programme by hosting World Environment Day.

Overall, climate change adaptation is a top priority in SIDS, but lack of financial resources is an obstacle. However, considering that the capital cost of sea-level rise in the Caribbean

Community Countries alone is estimated to reach US\$187 billion by 2080 under current practices, investing now to head off such a massive economic impact makes sound business sense.

The right enabling conditions are vital to generate and stimulate both public and private sector investments that incorporate broader environmental and social criteria, and thus address this growing challenge. You can contribute to this movement by joining us, in Barbados or wherever you are in the world, in celebrating World Environment Day and raising your voice to encourage action.

<http://www.unep.org/wed/messages/ED-WED-Message.asp#.U5CqSSgXKos>

June 7, 2014

176% Rise in Metal Prices, 260% Rise in Energy Prices Marks Era of Soaring Costs as Resources Decline

New Resource Productivity Opportunities Can Save World up to US\$3.7 Trillion Annually and Protect Future Economic Growth – Study by International Resource Panel

United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi – Rapidly rising prices—metal up by 176 per cent, rubber by 350 per cent, and energy by 260 per cent since 2000—signal a potentially crippling trend of increasing costs as current consumption patterns rapidly deplete the world's non-renewable resources, according to a new report released today.

Decoupling 2: Technologies, Opportunities and Policy Options, produced by the United Nations Environment Programme-hosted International Resource Panel (IRP), says the numbers demonstrate that the negative effects of unsustainable use of natural resources are already being felt, further backing the argument with a rise in volatility of food prices: 22.4 per cent from 2000 to 2012 compared to 7.7 per cent from 1990 to 1999.

The report says that harnessing existing technologies and appropriate policies to increase resource productivity could save up to US\$3.7 trillion globally each year and insulate future economic growth from the harmful effects of resource scarcity, price volatility and environmental impacts.

Many decoupling technologies and techniques that deliver up to ten times more resource productivity are already available, allowing countries to pursue their development strategies while significantly reducing resource use and negative environmental impacts.

The potential to reduce energy demand through improved efficiency is around 50 to 80 per cent for most production and utility systems. Some 60 to 80 per cent improvements in energy and

water efficiency are commercially viable in sectors such as construction, agriculture, hospitality, industry and transport.

Advanced furnace technology could achieve up to a 40 per cent reduction in energy intensity for zinc, tin, copper, and lead smelting and processing. The report argues that existing barriers to decoupling can be removed, notably subsidies for energy and water use, outdated regulatory frameworks and technological biases. Such policy change can create stable, successful economies over the long term.

“The worldwide use of natural resources has accelerated—annual material extraction grew by a factor of eight through the twentieth century—causing severe environmental damage and depletion of natural resources,” said UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. “Yet this dangerous explosion in demand is set to accelerate as a result of population growth and rising incomes.”

“Dramatic improvements in resource productivity are a vital element of a transition to a Green Economy that will lift one billion people out of poverty and manage the natural resources required for the wellbeing of nine billion people by 2050,” he added. “This requires an urgent rethink of current practices, backed by a massive investment in technological, financial and social innovation.”

The report builds on an earlier study, which warned that developed nation consumption patterns and increases in population and prosperity will put humanity on track to consume 140 billion tonnes of minerals, ores, fossil fuels and biomass per year by 2050 unless economic growth is decoupled from resource consumption. This is three times the levels of consumption in 2000, and most likely exceeds all existing available resources and the limits of the planet to absorb the impacts of extraction and use.

For example, a shortage of some of the world's key metals may be felt within the next 50 years, affecting many industries; approximately 60 per cent of the ecosystem services that support life on Earth have already been seriously degraded; and global demand for water is expected to rise by 40 per cent so that in 20 years available supplies will likely only satisfy 60 per cent of world demand.

By adopting decoupling technologies, developing countries could cut their annual energy demand growth from 3.4 to 1.4 per cent over the next 12 years, while meeting their development goals. This would leave energy consumption some 22 per cent lower than it would otherwise have been—a reduction equivalent to the entire energy consumption of China today.

The report shows that much of the policy design and technological knowledge needed to achieve decoupling already exists. Many countries have tried them out with tangible results, encouraging others to replicate and scale up such practices and successes. For example:

- The Rathkerewwa Desiccated Coconut Industry (RDCI) in **Sri Lanka** cut 12 per cent off energy use, 8 per cent off material use and 68 per cent off water use, while increasing

production 8 per cent by changing its practices. For a total investment of less than US\$5,000, an annual financial return of about US\$300,000 was reported.

- Industrial electric motors in **China** account for around 60 per cent of total electricity consumption. A pilot study at China's second-largest oil field found potential to save more than 400 million kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity per year, with recovery of the initial investment achieved within 1.6 years. High-efficiency motors could save 28 to 50 per cent of motor energy use, with a typical payback period of one to three years.
- Cape Town in **South Africa** is conducting a 10-year traffic signal upgrade programme, retrofitting 120 intersections per year with LED lamps. The LED lamps consume almost 90 per cent less electricity than the old lamps, yet produce the same lighting service. The programme is expected to save US\$2.9 million and 39,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions.
- ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steel company, estimates that using higher-strength steel achieves a 32 per cent reduction in the weight of steel columns and 19 per cent in beams. China and developing countries tend to use lower-strength steel, meaning that even a partial global switch to a higher-strength steel could save 105 million tonnes of steel a year and 20 per cent of the costs of steel use.
- The pressing out of metal components from sheet metal leaves significant waste, but intelligent organization of the shapes to be pressed out can realize significant savings. Deutsche Mechatronics GmbH operates in **Germany** using computer-driven shuffling and a production planning system that could reduce metal use by 12 per cent.
- In the **United States**, approximately 480 landfill sites, representing around 27 per cent of the nation's landfills, capture methane gas released from decomposing organic waste. It is estimated that between 60 and 90 per cent of the methane in the landfill gas can be captured and burnt, which would cut the estimated 1.8 per cent methane contributes to US total greenhouse gas emissions.
- Agriculture is responsible for 70 per cent of freshwater withdrawals. In many countries, 90 per cent of irrigated land receives water through wasteful open channels or intentional flooding. Farmers in **India, Israel, Jordan, Spain and the US** have shown that sub-surface drip irrigation systems can reduce water use by 30 to 70 per cent and raise crop yields by 20 to 90 per cent. These technologies can be made affordable for use in the developing world with payback periods of less than a year.

The report provides more examples of savings that are being made in fossil fuels, paper, cement, waste streams and chemicals, pointing to the potential to roll-out such technologies across the globe and add up to the potential US\$3.7 trillion saving.

Currently, however, many economies suffer from obstacles that lock-in existing patterns of resource use.

Among these obstacles are subsidies of up to US \$1.1 trillion each year for resource consumption, which encourage the wasteful use of resources; labour taxes rather than resource taxes; regulatory frameworks that discourage long-term management of resources; bias towards existing technologies; and institutional biases, such as financial organizations avoiding investing in new technologies due to a perception of heightened risk.

Facilitating decoupling will involve removing these obstacles and creating the conditions that enable widespread investments in resource productivity. The report mentions two options, amongst others, which illustrate the type of combined policy which is needed.

One proposal uses taxation or subsidy reduction to raise resource prices in line with increases in energy or resource productivity. For example, if the average efficiency of the car fleet rises by one per cent in one year, a one per cent price increase of petrol at the pump would seem fair and tolerable. This scheme would induce car manufacturers and consumers to speed up efforts to reduce petrol consumption or to avoid unnecessary trips.

Another policy looks to shift revenue-raising onto resource prices through resource taxation at source or in relation to product imports, with recycling of revenues back to the economy.

Many countries have put in place such policy mixes promoting decoupling. For example, at European Union level, the 7th Environmental Action Programme and the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe and the Energy Efficiency Directive of 2012 are long-term strategies moving energy, climate change, research and innovation, industry, transport, agriculture, fisheries and environment policy all towards decoupling.

The roadmap makes the case for a shift from labour taxes to resource taxes, and discusses the phasing out of environmentally harmful subsidies.

The IRP report calls for such strong leadership to be instituted across the board, allowing economic output to be achieved with fewer resource inputs, reducing waste and saving costs that can further expand the global economy for years to come.

Additional Quotes

“Decoupling can prove the most attractive strategy of combining the wish for economic growth with the need for making do with limited resources,” said the report’s lead author, Ernst von Weizsaecker, who also serves as Co-Chair of the International Resource Panel. He favours smooth and steady long-term strategies for revolutionary improvements in resource productivity, and argues that countries and private companies pioneering such strategies will achieve success.

“The report clearly demonstrates that business as usual is not an option. Rising commodity prices mark the end of an era of cheap and abundant resources,” said EU Commissioner for the Environment Janez Potočnik. “On the contrary, the report gives many examples that show improving resource efficiency is a way out of the crisis. Resource efficiency provides innovation and market opportunities to business, allowing them to maintain competitiveness, enjoy sustainable profits and minimize the risks of resource scarcity and degradation.”

Notes to Editors

To download the report, please visit: www.unep.org/resourcepanel

About the International Resource Panel

The International Resource Panel was established in 2007 to provide independent, coherent and authoritative scientific assessments on the sustainable use of natural resources and the environmental impacts of resource use over the full life cycle. By providing up-to-date information and the best science available, the International Resource Panel contributes to a better understanding of how to decouple human development and economic growth from environmental degradation. The United Nations Environment Programme hosts the secretariat for the panel. <http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/>

For more information and for one-on-one interviews with report authors and experts, please contact:

Shereen Zorba, Head of News and Media, UNEP [+254 788 526000](tel:+254788526000), Shereen.Zorba@unep.org

Melissa Gorelick, UNEP Information Officer, [+254 20 762 3088](tel:+254207623088)/ [+254 71 621 4041](tel:+254716214041)
melissa.gorelick@unep.org

<http://www.rona.unep.org/documents/news/Rise%20in%20Metal%20and%20Energy%20Prices.pdf>

June 8, 2014

From the Mountains to the Sea: investing in Haiti's environmental resources - a cause for optimism

Executive Director visited Haiti at the invitation of President Martelly to celebrate World Environment Day and to profile the country's ecological potential as key elements for future growth and resilience.

United Nations Environment Programme

Port Salut, Haiti – Since 2008, UNEP has been supporting the Government of Haiti in the sustainability and effectiveness of reforestation efforts with a focus on high value trees (fruit trees), the development of renewable energy (including solar and wind), regional cooperation for the management of shared resources in the framework of the Caribbean Biological Corridor, and the integrated development of marine and coastal resources management.

The Government of Haïti, with the support of Norway and UNEP, has marked specific new achievements for sustainable development in the *Département du Sud* in this regard. In 2011, UNEP initiated a UN Coalition called the Côte Sud Initiative to promote sustainable development and reduce vulnerabilities in this coastal *Département*. The Côte Sud Initiative has supported the implementation of several thematic environmental programmes. Within this Coalition, UNEP has supported the Government to achieve key “big firsts” for the environment in Haïti such as the first nine Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in the country and the first Electric Cooperative in the country. Overall, with the support of Norway, UNEP also created for

the first time space for dialogue between Government Authorities and donors on the environmental challenges and solutions for the Southern part of Haiti.

President Martelly who invited Mr. Steiner to Haiti to celebrate the World Environment Day, reiterated his strong commitment to including the environment as a pillar of his political agenda, with a focus on sustainable socio-economic development. "The environment is high on the national agenda and I am grateful for the support that UNEP is providing Haiti. Receiving the Executive Director is a positive signal to all our environmental actors, and I am honoured to be hosting him in our beautiful country", the president said. At that occasion, the President and Minister of Environment, Jean François Thomas, presented the Haiti White Book on Environment to the UNEP Executive Director. UNEP Executive Director, Mr. Steiner toured the mountainous and the southern coastal parts of the country with the President Martelly and the Minister of Environment, Jean François Thomas.

Mr Steiner announced that on the frame of this transformative UNEP programme, the Haiti's last remaining primary forests, the Macaya National Park is a growing priority for UNEP in Haiti. Macaya National Park, the biodiversity hotspot in Haiti's Grand Sud region, is one of the few remaining bastions of primary forest and biodiversity in the largely deforested Caribbean nation. "A new phase of collaboration is beginning between UNEP and the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture, with the aim of reducing threats to the ecosystems of the Grand Sud of Haiti – including from unsustainable agriculture, forest fires, the production of wood charcoal and firewood and the wood plank industry", said Mr. Steiner.

In particular, Mr Steiner outlined that the programme will work to strengthen the management capacities for Macaya Park; establish a network of marine and coastal protected areas connected to the Park by biological corridors; and develop sustainable economic opportunities in agroforestry that will enable a green economy in the *Département du Sud*.

"With the visit of Mr. Steiner, it is a ridge to reef approach that we put in practice. We also jointly launched the aerial reforestation campaign on the top of the mountain and then celebrated a symbolic planting of mangroves along the coast" the Minister of Environment explained.

The work of UNEP in Haiti has been mainly supported financially and technically by the Government of Norway for which Mr. Steiner reiterated his sincere thanks.

During a meeting with Representatives of the UN Country team, Mr Steiner expressed his appreciation for the close partnerships UNEP has developed with other UN agencies, funds and programmes active in Haiti. "Our collaboration in the Côte Sud Initiative on coastal protection, reforestation, access to renewable energy with UNDP, FAO, UNOPS and various Ministries has shown promising results both the Southern Region and in due course at national level".

"Despite the many challenges Haiti faces there is a palpable sense of progress and optimism about the future development of Haiti. Protecting and restoring the environmental resources of Haiti can clearly play a vital role in ensuring that economic development opportunities across a range of sectors such as fisheries, tourism, energy and forests represent investments of great promise", said Mr Steiner at the conclusion of his visit.

For more information, please contact: Maximilien Pardo UNEP South Haiti Programme Manager. maximilien.pardo@unep.org

<http://www.unep.org/wed/news/Haitis-World-Environment-Day.asp#.U5dxBSgXKos>

June 8, 2014

Review of *Religion and Ecological Sustainability in China*

James Miller, Dan Smyer Yu and Peter van der Veer, eds. 2014. [Religion and Ecological Sustainability in China](#). New York: Routledge.

Review by Gene Anderson on [Amazon.com](#)

This edited volume deserves serious attention from those interested in China and in the environment, and I hope its absurdly high price will not discourage people from looking into it. Like most (if not all) collections of papers, it is uneven in quality, but the best papers are seriously important and worthwhile. I have too little space here to hit all the high points, but a few that are particularly useful and innovative include Deborah Sommer's on early Chinese concepts of the earth (much more interesting than you might have thought); James Miller's paper on an early Daoist sect; Chris Coggins on fengshui groves and their exceedingly important role in saving forests and large trees until the Communists destroyed most of them; Rebecca Nedostup's on how borrowed western "rationalist" concepts of religion from 19th-century cultural evolutionism led to pernicious devaluing and attacking Chinese traditional religions; and Emily Yeh's really stunning and wide-ranging paper on Tibetan attitudes toward the environment, the changes of these in modern times, and the various western-world idealizations of them. I am in awe of these papers; I've been working on this material for 50 years and I never got close to making all these points. There are many other valuable papers here.

Much of this book (not the paper by Coggins or Yeh, however) represents book-driven, text-based approaches. My approach comes from human biology and has been field-driven and broadly materialist. So I had a lot to learn here. But, also, a thoughtful point emerges. Book-driven research inevitably leads to privileging elite positions and meditative, thoughtful takes on the world. This can lead to seeing the Chinese as sages living in a world of visions. No paper herein does that, but I can imagine casual readers being lulled into that view. In contrast, the field approach in human ecology can lead to a crassly materialist approach in which too much attention is paid to uses of plants and animals relative to the subtleties of the thought behind such environmental management. I have fallen into this trap on occasion, and Ole Bruun catches me up on it in his paper in this volume. Fair point, but essentializing traditional belief and religion is also shaky as a strategy, depriving us of the lessons we could be learning. That is my one real criticism of this book: there is very little on what the world can learn from China's successes and failures in managing the environment, or from traditional Chinese (Han and minority) views and ideas about environments. This is a pity, since there is in fact a great deal that the world environmental and conservation community could learn—some good ideas and some (or many)

cautionary notes. The editors would no doubt respond that this book is about documentation and analysis, not about recommendation, but in a world where long-predicted catastrophes and nightmare scenarios are rapidly becoming reality, can we afford to do that? Would a medical text on drug-resistant tuberculosis ignore the treatment side?

That said, this is a collection that no one interested in Chinese environmental history can afford to miss.

<http://www.jamesmiller.ca/religion-and-ecological-sustainability-in-china/>

June 9, 2014

United Nations Environment Assembly

Newsletter

<http://unep.org/unea/newsletter/newsletter-issue-02.html>

June 11, 2014

Fate of Iconic Species in the Balance as Key Wildlife Conservation Conference Countdown Commences

United Nations Environment Programme

Bonn, Germany - Some of the world's most endangered species, many of them migratory, are facing unprecedented threats from climate change, habitat destruction to overexploitation and pollution which has led to a number of new listing proposals for consideration at CMS COP 11 - a key international wildlife conference scheduled to take place 4-9 November 2014 in Quito, Ecuador.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) administered Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (also known as CMS or the "Bonn Convention") is the only global convention protecting species that move across international boundaries. Every three years it holds an international meeting of all its members - the Conference of the Parties (COP) - to agree on internationally coordinated conservation measures for the world's migratory species and to decide which species should be protected under its two Appendices. The deadline for listing proposals for CMS COP11 was 6 June and a total of 32 species have been proposed for listing into Appendix I which requires strict protection and Appendix II which requires coordinated management by the countries in which the species migrate.

Among the listing proposals received from countries for CMS COP11 are a large number of shark and ray species including two types of Hammerhead shark, the Silky shark, three species of thresher sharks, the Reef Manta Ray along with nine Mobula Ray species. In addition, five species of sawfishes, some of which are critically endangered, have been proposed for listing.

“One of the clear messages indicated by the listing proposals is that CMS Parties deem the plight of sharks to be so serious that they proposed over twenty species of sharks and rays for listing. It might also be seen as a vote of confidence in CMS as a forum in which to advance the global conservation of sharks, but also for an increasing number of other threatened migratory species of wild animals”, said Bradnee Chambers, Executive Secretary of CMS.

Other species put forward by individual CMS Parties for consideration by CMS COP11 include the Polar Bear which is under major threat from climate change and the African Lion which has seen a 30 per cent decrease in population over the last two decades as a result of habitat loss and other man-made threats as well as the European Eel which is threatened by overfishing and dams.

Other issues that will be discussed at CMS COP11 in Quito later this year include the illegal hunting of elephants, which are being driven to the brink of extinction as on average a hundred animals are being poached every day. This is also a topic that will be high on the agenda of the first ever United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA) later this month and which has also been the subject of a number of major Heads of State summits recently. Other issues affecting migratory species that will be discussed at CMS COP11 in November include climate change, marine debris, the effects of renewable energy installations on migratory species and illegal bird trapping.

The Chair of the CMS Standing Committee, Professor Alfred Oteng-Yeboah of Ghana commented “The CMS COP comes in the middle of a busy period in the international environmental calendar. The Convention on Biological Diversity is holding its COP the month before in Korea and the IUCN World Parks Congress takes place in Sydney shortly afterwards. It will be the first time in the 35-year existence of CMS that the COP has taken place in the Americas. We are expecting the Conference to attract leading decision-makers from a wide range of governments, international organizations and civil society”.

Species covered by CMS are extremely diverse, ranging from the Blue Whale and the African Elephant through gazelles, sea turtles, sharks, a variety of birds from albatrosses, birds of prey, waterbirds and songbirds, to the Monarch Butterfly.

By signing the Convention, the 120 Parties to CMS recognize that these wild animals in their innumerable forms are an irreplaceable part of the Earth's natural system which must be conserved for the good of mankind.

The details of the agenda of the forthcoming CMS Conference of the Parties (COP) are beginning to emerge. The countdown to the Conference, being held under the slogan “Time for Action”, has begun with the passing of the deadline for the species listing proposals on 6 June.

The full list of species proposed for inclusion into the CMS Appendices to be decided by governments at CMS COP11 includes 3 terrestrial mammals, 2 marine mammals, 5 birds and 22 fish. All proposals submitted by individual CMS Parties can be found on the CMS website at: www.cms.int

Notes for Editors

Key CMS COP11 Listing Proposals:

- The African Lion whose numbers have declined by 30 per cent in the last two decades has been proposed for inclusion on Appendix II. Only about 40,000 animals remain from an estimated 100,000 in 1900 in no more than 25 per cent of their historical range. Only one isolated population of the Asiatic Lion, which has been proposed for inclusion on Appendix I, still exists in India (Gujarat State) with about 175 adult animals.
- The Polar Bear, an apex predator that spends much of each year on the sea ice hunting, covers distances of up to 1,000 kilometres. Now proposed for listing on Appendix II, a global perspective, including the better understanding of the impacts of climate change on Polar Bears could be added to the conservation policies that countries in the region have worked on for decades.
- Two species of Hammerhead shark – the Great and the Scalloped - have been proposed for inclusion on Appendix II. Noted for their distinctively shaped heads from which they derive their name, Hammerhead Sharks have undergone dramatic declines in recent years – as much as 99 per cent for some populations. Other shark species proposed for inclusion in Appendix II are the Silky shark, and three species of thresher shark.
- The Reef Manta Ray along with nine Mobula or Eagle ray species is proposed for listing in both Appendices. In several regions, populations of the Reef Manta Ray have declined up to as much as 80 per cent over the last three generations, or about 75 years. The main threats are targeted and incidental fishing. Manta ray products have a high value in international trade markets.
- Five species of sawfishes, some of which are critically endangered, have been proposed for listing on Appendix I and II. The listing proposals coincided with the launch of a global strategy for the conservation of sawfishes by the Shark Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) at the Sharks International Conference in Durban, South Africa last week. This proposal brings the total number of shark and ray species submitted to 21.
- The European Eel, which has unique migration patterns spanning a geographic range from European rivers to the Sargasso Sea in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean, is threatened by overfishing and dams being obstacles to migration is already subject to protection measures under European Union Law.
- The Great Bustard, one of the largest flying birds of the world, has been proposed for Appendix I. It is already listed in both Appendices. The proposal to list the global population on Appendix I removes the existing geographical restriction to the Middle European population.

CMS - the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) is an environmental treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats. CMS brings together the States through which migratory animals pass to agree on internationally coordinated conservation measures for a wide range of endangered migratory animals worldwide. CMS is a growing convention with special importance due to its expertise in the field of migratory species. At present, there are 120 Parties to the Convention. Further information: www.cms.int

COP – the Conference of the Parties is the main decision-making body of the Convention, which meets every three years to adopt the budget, Strategic Plan and policy decisions including amendments to the Convention's two Appendices. COP11 is taking place in Quito at the invitation of the Government of Ecuador in November, the first time the Parties will have met in the Americas. More details on the COP11 agenda will be posted on the CMS website as they become available.

Professor Alfred Oteng-Yeboah of the Department of Botany at the University of Ghana is the current Chair of the CMS Standing Committee; his term comes to an end at the end of COP11. He also serves as the COP-appointed Scientific Councillor for African Fauna and is also a member of the Bureau of the recently established Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

IUCN Global Sawfish Strategy - The Shark Specialist Group (SSG) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has released a global strategy to prevent extinction and promote recovery of sawfishes, which have been devastated worldwide by overfishing and habitat loss.

For further information: <http://www.dulvy.com/global-sawfish-conservation-strategy.html>

For more information please contact:

Florian Keil, Information Officer and Coordinator of the Common Information Management, Communication and Outreach Team of the UNEP/CMS and UNEP/AEWA Secretariats, tel: [+49 228 815 2451](tel:+492288152451), mail: florian.keil@unep.org

Veronika Lenarz, UNEP/CMS Secretariat, Public Information & Media, tel: [+49 228 815 2409](tel:+492288152409), mail: rlenarz@cms.int

http://www.unep.org/roa/Portals/137/UNEP_CMS%20press%20release%20species%20proposals_F.pdf

June 23, 2014

University of Dayton Divests

Press Release

The University of Dayton, a Catholic, Marianist university, announced today it will begin divesting coal and fossil fuels from its \$670 million investment pool. It is believed to be the first Catholic university in the nation to take this step.

The board of trustees unanimously approved the new investment policy, which reflects the University's commitment to environmental sustainability, human rights and its religious mission.

"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 and commitments under the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment," University of Dayton President Daniel J. Curran said. "We cannot ignore the negative consequences of climate change, which disproportionately impact the world's most vulnerable people. Our Marianist values of leadership and service to humanity call upon us to act on these principles and serve as a catalyst for civil discussion and positive change that benefits our planet."

The University's divestment is planned to occur in phases. The University will initially eliminate fossil fuel holdings from its domestic equity accounts. The University then will develop plans to eliminate fossil fuel from international holdings, invest in green and sustainable technologies or holdings, and restrict future investments in private equity or hedge funds whose investments support fossil fuel or significant carbon-producing holdings.

Michael Galligan-Stierle, president of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, affirmed the University's commitment to being a responsible steward of the earth's natural resources.

"We applaud the University of Dayton for taking this step as perhaps the first U.S. Catholic university to divest from fossil fuels. This is a complex issue, but Catholic higher education was founded to examine culture and find ways to advance the common good. Here is one way to lead as a good steward of God's creation," he said.

The Rev. Martin Solma, S.M., provincial for the Marianist Province of the U.S. and a member of the board's investment committee, believes the trustees can be both environmentally and financially conscious.

"We believe it is possible and necessary to be both responsible stewards of our planet and fiduciaries," Solma said. "The tremendous moral imperative to act in accordance with our mission far outweighed any other considerations for divestment."

Thomas Van Dyck, a senior vice president and financial adviser for the RBC SRI Wealth Management Group with whom the University consulted, agrees. He said, "The trustees of the University of Dayton are acting as true leaders both from their faith and their financial responsibility in guiding the University. Fossil fuel companies have a valuation that assumes every single drop of oil, everything they have in the ground, will be taken out. More and more

people are understanding the financial risk underlying fossil fuels in the stock market and taking the appropriate action. It's not only values, but valuation risk associated with owning fossil fuel companies."

Trustees and consultants working with the University are confident this investment strategy will not have a significant negative financial impact on the University.

"We take our role as fiduciaries for the University very seriously," said Steven Cobb, chair of the University of Dayton's board of trustees. "This decision was made following careful research and in consultation with our investment advisers."

The firm of DiMeo Schneider & Associates LLC guided the University of Dayton board of trustees investment committee through the investment risks associated with divesting the University's long-term investment pool from fossil fuel-based stocks.

After its review, Matt Porter, director of research analytics with DiMeo Schneider & Associates, said, "We considered many factors, and our unbiased review concluded we could structure a prudent U.S. equity portfolio divested from Carbon Tracker 200 stocks. We believe the restructured portfolio meets the University's objectives and is consistent with its long-term risk and return mandates."

Founded in 1850 by the Society of Mary and now the largest private university in Ohio, the University of Dayton has taken a comprehensive approach to environmental sustainability and human rights scholarship and action. Through academics, research, service, community responsibility, leadership programs, and responsible campus and facilities operations, the University's commitment to both sustainability and human rights touches the campus, the Dayton region and the world.

"Faculty in the renewable and clean energy program and in departments across the University have long supported actions that strengthen the University's commitment to sustainability," said Kelly Kissock, chair of the renewable and clean energy master's program and chair of the mechanical and aerospace engineering department. "We support this investment strategy with a global view on protecting the environment."

Chris Wagner, president of the University of Dayton Sustainability Club, added: "I'm very glad to see the University is taking serious action on sustainability. The sustainability movement is growing on campus. I expect a positive response to this."

A member of the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, committing the University to being carbon neutral by 2050, the University of Dayton is listed in The Princeton Review's Guide to 322 Green Colleges. The University also has earned a STARS silver rating in the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System for its sustainability achievements.

With a strong commitment to interdisciplinary education, the University of Dayton has been a leader in developing academic programs in sustainability and clean energy. In 2010, the

University unveiled a minor in sustainability, energy and environment (SEE). In 2008, the University of Dayton created the state's first master's program in clean and renewable energy.

The University of Dayton is a pioneer in human rights education, starting the country's first undergraduate human rights program in 1998 and offering one of the nation's first bachelor's degrees in human rights studies in 2008. It has committed to establishing a human rights center. Last year, the University hosted current and former representatives from the United Nations, Amnesty International USA, Human Rights Watch, WITNESS and World Peace Foundation, among others, for a conference that took a critical look at the future of human rights.

As a top-tier national research university, the University of Dayton performs millions of dollars of research in alternative fuels at its von Ohain Fuels and Combustion Center — an Ohio Center of Excellence that performs research in such areas as fuels, combustion and emissions for aerospace propulsion. The von Ohain center holds a six-year, \$49.5 million grant with the U.S. Air Force to help develop clean alternative fuels from various feed stocks such as coal, biomass and algae; enhance engine fuel efficiency; reduce combustion-generated emissions; and investigate the environmental impact of fossil fuels use. University researchers also developed an outdoor algae production system capable of capturing carbon emissions and producing oil for alternative fuels through a five-year, \$3.4 million award from the Air Force.

For more information, contact Shawn Robinson, associate director of media relations, at 937-229-3391 or srobinson@udayton.edu.

http://www.udayton.edu/news/articles/2014/06/dayton_divests_fossil_fuels.php

June 23, 2014

Plastic Waste Causes Financial Damage of US\$13 Billion to Marine Ecosystems Each Year as Concern Grows over Microplastics

United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi - Concern is growing over the threat that widespread plastic waste poses to marine life, with conservative estimates of the overall financial damage of plastics to marine ecosystems standing at US\$13 billion each year, according to two reports released on the opening day of the first United Nations Environment Assembly.

The eleventh edition of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Year Book looks at ten issues flagged as emerging by previous reports over the past decade, including plastic waste in the ocean. The *UNEP Year Book 2014* gives an update on each issue and provides options for action. Other areas covered include the environmental impacts of excess nitrogen and marine aquaculture, air pollution's deadly toll, and the potential of citizen science.

Valuing Plastic, a UNEP-supported report produced by the Plastic Disclosure Project (PDP) and Trucost, makes the business case for managing and disclosing plastic use in the consumer goods industry. It finds that the overall natural capital cost of plastic use in the consumer goods sector each year is US\$75 billion - financial impacts resulting from issues such as pollution of the marine environment or air pollution caused by incinerating plastic.

The report says that over 30 per cent of the natural capital costs of plastic are due to greenhouse gas emissions from raw material extraction and processing. However, it notes that marine pollution is the largest downstream cost, and that the figure of US\$13 billion is likely a significant underestimate.

"Plastics have come to play a crucial role in modern life, but the environmental impacts of the way we use them cannot be ignored," said Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director. "These reports show that reducing, recycling and redesigning products that use plastics can bring multiple green economy benefits - from reducing economic damage to marine ecosystems and the tourism and fisheries industries, vital for many developing countries, to bringing savings and opportunities for innovation to companies while reducing reputational risks."

"Our economies are still largely fossil-fuel based, with the environmental, economic and health costs hidden," he added. "For example, in the polar regions, scientists have recently found tiny pieces of plastic trapped in sea ice. Transported by ocean currents across great distances, these contaminated particles eventually become a source of chemicals in our food. The key course of action is to prevent plastic debris from entering the environment in the first place, which translates into a single powerful objective: reduce, reuse, recycle."

A large and unquantifiable amount of plastic waste enters the ocean from littering, poorly managed landfills, tourist activities and fisheries. Some of this material sinks to the ocean floor, while some floats and can travel over great distances on ocean currents - polluting shorelines and accumulating in massive mid-ocean gyres.

There have been many reliable reports of environmental damage due to plastic waste: mortality or illness when ingested by sea creatures such as turtles, entanglement of animals such as dolphins and whales, and damage to critical habitats such as coral reefs. There are also concerns about chemical contamination, invasive species spread by plastic fragments, and economic damage to the fishing and tourism industries in many countries - by, for example, fouling fishing equipment and polluting beaches.

Since 2011, when the UNEP Year Book process last looked at plastic waste in the ocean, concern has grown over microplastics (particles up to 5 mm in diameter, either manufactured or created when plastic breaks down). Their ingestion has been widely reported in marine organisms, including seabirds, fish, mussels, worms and zooplankton.

One emerging issue is the increasing use of microplastics directly in consumer products, such as microbeads in toothpaste, gels and facial cleansers, the *Year Book* says. These microplastics tend

not to be filtered out during sewage treatment, but are released directly into rivers, lakes and the ocean.

Communities of microbes have been discovered thriving on microplastics at multiple locations in the North Atlantic. This "plastisphere" can facilitate the transport of harmful microbes, pathogens and algal species. Microplastics have also been identified as a threat to larger organisms, such as the endangered northern right whale, which is potentially exposed to ingestion through filter-feeding.

Production trends, use patterns and changing demographics are expected to cause increasing plastic use, and both reports call for companies, institutions and consumers to reduce their waste.

Valuing Plastic finds that consumer goods companies currently save US\$4 billion each year through good management of plastic, such as recycling, and that there is potential for greater savings. However, plastic use disclosure is poor: of 100 companies assessed, less than half reported any data relevant to plastic.

"The research unveils the need for companies to consider their plastic footprint, just as they do for carbon, water and forestry," said Andrew Russell, Director of the PDP. "By measuring, managing and reporting plastic use and disposal through the PDP, companies can mitigate the risks, maximize the opportunities, and become more successful and sustainable."

Initiatives such as the PDP and the UNEP-led Global Partnership on Marine Litter have helped raise awareness of, and begun to address, the issue. However, much more needs to be done. Recommendations for further action from the reports include:

- Companies should monitor their plastic use and publish the results in annual reports.
- Companies should commit to reducing the environmental impact of plastic through clear targets and deadlines, and innovate to increase resource efficiency and recycling.
- There should be an increased focus on awareness campaigns to discourage littering and prevent plastic waste from reaching the ocean. An application that allows consumers to check whether a product contains microbeads is already available and is expanding its coverage internationally. It can be downloaded from <http://get.beatthemicrobead.org/>
- Since plastic particles can be ingested by marine organisms and potentially accumulate and deliver toxins through the food web, efforts should be stepped up to fill the knowledge gaps and better understand the capacity of various plastics to absorb and transfer persistent, toxic and bioaccumulating chemicals.

"Natural capital valuation has the power to help organizations understand their environmental impacts, including pollution of the ocean," said Richard Mattison, Trucost Chief Executive. "By putting a financial value on impacts such as plastic waste, companies can further integrate

effective environmental management into mainstream businesses. By highlighting the savings from reuse and recycling, it builds a business case for proactive sustainability improvements."

Other issues

"Ten years ago UNEP alerted the world to the development of dead zones in coastal waters resulting from excess nitrogen seeping into the water," said Mr. Steiner. "That was in the first edition of the Year Book series. In the intervening period many more emerging issues have been identified, with some rising to crisis level and others showing encouraging improvement."

"The 2014 Year Book shows how scientific endeavours and policy actions have led to innovative solutions and vital advancements," he added. "It reconfirms the critical role that the environment plays in maintaining and improving the health of people and ecosystems; from well-managed soils and nutrients that underpin food production to the critical role of biodiversity in protecting human health against the spread of infectious diseases. Clean air in our cities prevents the premature death and illness of millions and can save society trillions of dollars."

The *UNEP Year Book 2014* lays out the state of play in critical areas, including:

Nitrogen

First looked at in 2003 by the Year Book team, nitrogen continues to be used inefficiently as a plant nutrient in many of the world's agricultural systems. The amount of usable nitrogen produced by humans is now about 190 million tonnes per year, greater than the 112 million tonnes created through natural processes.

As nitrogen moves through the environment, the same nitrogen atom can contribute to multiple negative effects in the air, on land, in freshwater and marine systems, and on human health. This sequence continues over a long period and is referred to as the "nitrogen cascade".

Excess nitrogen in the environment contributes to many problems, including:

- Coastal dead zones and fish kills due to severe eutrophication (a high concentration of nutrients, which leads to excessive plant growth and oxygen deprivation). There are currently over 500 known coastal dead zones in well-studied areas of the world, whereas in 2003 only around 150 such oxygen-depleted areas were reported. Once other regions start reporting, it is estimated that 1000 coastal and marine areas will be identified as experiencing the effects of eutrophication.
- Nitrogen emissions to the air, notably those of nitrous oxide (N₂O), contribute to climate change. Sometimes referred to as the "forgotten greenhouse gas", N₂O is over 300 times more effective at trapping heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide over a 100-year period. Human activities such as agriculture, deforestation and fossil fuel combustion are increasing the amount in the atmosphere.

Better management practices are essential for improving nitrogen use efficiency, the Year Book finds. This is the most cost-effective option for reducing nitrogen losses to the environment from agricultural sources.

According to the recent UNEP-commissioned report, *Our Nutrient World*, a 20 per cent improvement in global nutrient use efficiency by 2020 would reduce annual use of nitrogen by an estimated 20 million tonnes. This could produce savings of between US\$50 and US\$400 billion per year in terms of improvements in human health, climate and biodiversity.

Marine Aquaculture

Aquaculture production has increased since the 1950s from 650 thousand tonnes to almost 67 million tonnes, and today provides half of all fish for human consumption. Marine aquaculture production by volume grew by 35 per cent during the last decade, while production in fresh and brackish water grew by 70 and 83 per cent, respectively.

While progress has been made towards making marine aquaculture more sustainable, environmental concerns remain. Fish farms can release nutrients, undigested feed and veterinary drugs to the environment. They can also increase risks of diseases and parasites and of harmful algal blooms. In some countries, certain forms of shrimp farming have destroyed large areas of coastal habitats, such as mangrove forests.

Healthy marine ecosystems are fundamental to reaching development goals, with respect to securing food and providing jobs. Marine aquaculture's impacts and predicted growth call for strengthened efforts towards environmentally sound development of the sector to avoid the loss of important ecosystem services.

Technical innovations, the experience and growing skills of aquaculture producers, and improved knowledge of environmental impacts and operational and governance opportunities provide hope for a sustainable marine aquaculture sector supporting a growing world population with food and livelihoods.

Air Quality

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that in 2012, air pollution led to around 7 million premature deaths (one out of eight total global deaths), more than double previous estimates. It is the leading cause of environmentally related deaths.

Air quality is deteriorating in most cities where there are sufficient data to make comparisons with previous years. The WHO guideline for average annual fine particulate matter is 25 microgrammes per cubic metre. Cities in low- and middle-income countries far exceed this level. For example, in Kathmandu, Nepal, particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) levels of over 500 microgrammes per cubic metre have been measured.

The cost of air pollution to the world's most advanced economies, plus India and China, is estimated at US\$3.5 trillion per year in lives lost and ill health. In Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the monetary impact of death and illness due to outdoor air pollution is estimated to have been US\$1.7 trillion in 2010. Research suggests that motorized on-road transport accounts for about 50 per cent of that amount.

In light of the high costs related to the health and environmental effects of air pollution, all countries should invest in clean air policies, the report says.

Daily global air quality indices are available on UNEP Live:

<http://uneplive.unep.org/theme/index/2#>

Citizen Science

Citizen science, research conducted in whole or part by the public, can go beyond simple data collection to help shape fundamental questions about our world and provide intriguing answers, the report finds. It has grown in the past decade, due in part to the Internet, social media, and other technologies. Opportunities to volunteer to take part in scientific research have exploded, from analyzing cancer data to theoretical physics.

Indigenous groups can make important contributions through citizen science, including the use of traditional knowledge, to help protect resources and influence environmental policies. Data and other information generated through citizen science projects have been shown to be reliable and accurate. However, there are barriers to realizing the full potential of citizen science, which can be overcome by:

- Better coordination among scientists and project developers to make use of and collaborate with established and proven projects, in order to reduce the redundancy of projects.
- Stronger recognition of data from citizen science by scientific communities.
- Global coordination to aggregate and analyze data generated by citizen science, which would help reveal valuable information that might be useful for policymakers.

Additional information

The UNEP Year Book 2014 is published in the form of an App and can be downloaded here: www.unep.org/yearbook/2014 and uneplive.unep.org/global

Valuing plastic: the business case for measuring, managing and disclosing plastic use in the consumer goods industry can be downloaded here: <http://www.unep.org/pdf/ValuingPlastic/> The report will be discussed by Richard Mattison, CEO of Trucost, at the Plasticity Forum conference in New York on 24 June 2014. Information is available here: www.plasticityforum.com

About the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)

UNEA is the highest-level UN body ever convened on the environment. It enjoys universal membership of all 193 UN member states as well as other stakeholder groups. With this wide reach into the legislative, financial and development arenas, the new body presents a ground-breaking platform for leadership on global environmental policy. UNEA boasts over 1200 participants, 170 national delegations, 80 ministers and 40 events during the five-day event from 23 to 27 June 2014 at UNEP's Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Shereen Zorba, Head, UNEP News Desk

+254 788 526 000, shereen.zorba@unep.org

Melissa Gorelick, UNEP Information Officer

+254 20 762 3088, melissa.gorelick@unep.org

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2791&ArticleID=10903>

June 25, 2014

Faith Based Organisations Statement on Disaster Risk Reduction

On 6th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

To read this statement, visit:

http://fore.research.yale.edu/files/2014629_FBO_Statement.pdf

June 25, 2014

When Faith Meets Disaster Management

By Kalinga Seneviratne

Inter Press Service

BANGKOK (IPS) - A consortium of faith-based organisations (FBOs) made a declaration at a side event Wednesday at the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference On Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR), to let the United Nations know that they stand ready to commit themselves to building resilient communities across Asia in the aftermath of natural disasters.

Hosted this year by the Thai government, the conference is an annual collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), with the aim of bringing regional

stakeholders together to discuss the specific challenges facing Asia in an era of rapid climate change.

“I have seen the aftermath of disasters, where religious leaders and volunteers from Hindu temples, Islamic organisations and Sikh temples work together like born brothers.” -- Dr. Anil Kumar Gupta, head of the division of policy planning at the National Institute of Disaster Management in India

A report prepared for the Bangkok conference by UNISDR points out that in the past three years Asia has encountered a wide range of disasters, from cyclones in the Philippines and major flooding in China, India and Thailand, to severe earthquakes in Pakistan and Japan.

In 2011 alone, global economic losses from extreme weather events touched 366 billion dollars, of which 80 percent were recorded in the Asia-Pacific region.

While the region accounts for 39 percent of the planet’s land area and hosts 60 percent of the world’s population, it only holds 29 percent of global wealth, posing major challenges for governments in terms of disaster preparedness and emergency response.

FBOs believe they can fill this gap by giving people hope during times of suffering.

“It’s not about the goods we bring or the big houses we build,” argued Jessica Dator Bercilla, a Filipina from Christian Aid, adding that the most important contribution religious organisations can make is to convince people they are not alone on the long road towards rebuilding their lives after a disaster.

The FBO consortium that drafted the statement – including Caritas Asia, Soka Gakkai International (SGI) and the ACT Alliance – held a pre-conference consultative meeting here on Jun. 22nd during which some 50 participants from various faiths discussed the many hurdles FBOs must clear in order to deliver disaster relief and assist affected populations.

The final FBO Statement on Disaster Risk Reduction drew attention to faith organisations’ unique ability to work closely with local communities to facilitate resilience and peace building.

Overcoming Hidden Agendas

One challenge to including FBOs in national DRR frameworks is the prevailing fear that religious organisations will use their position as providers of aid and development services to push their own religious agendas.

In the aftermath of the 2004 Asian tsunami, for instance, Buddhist communities in Sri Lanka and Thailand, as well as Muslim communities in Indonesia, complained that FBOs tried to impose their beliefs on the survivors.

When IPS raised this question during the pre-conference consultation, it triggered much debate among the participants.

Many feel the fear is unfounded, as FBOs are driven by the desire to give value to human life, rather than a desire to convert non-believers or followers of different faiths.

“If beliefs hinder development we must challenge those values,” asserted a participant from Myanmar who gave his name only as Munir.

Vincentia Widyasan Karina from Caritas Indonesia agreed, adding that in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, Caritas worked among Muslim communities to rebuild the northern Indonesian region of Aceh, and “supported the Islamic community’s need to have prayer centres.”

Organisations like SGI go one step further by following methods like the Lotus Sutra for the realisation of happiness in all beings simultaneously.

“This principle expounds that Buddha’s nature is inherent in every individual, and this helps lead many other people towards happiness and enlightenment,” argued Asai, adding that in countries where Buddhists are a minority they work with other stakeholders. “If we form a network it is easier to work,” he added.

Given that an estimated one in eight people in the world identify with some form of organised religion, and that faith-based organisations comprise the largest service delivery network in the world, FBOs stand out as natural partners in the field of disaster risk reduction (DRR).

A declaration enshrined in the statement also urged the United Nations to recognise FBOs as a unique stakeholder in the [Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (HFA2) to be presented to the 3rd U.N. World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) in 2015.

It also wants national and local governments to include FBOs when they organise regular consultations on DRR with relevant stakeholders, as FBOs are the ones who often sustain development programmes in the absence of international NGOs.

For example, since 2012 Caritas Indonesia has been working with a coastal community that has lost 200 metres of its coastal land in the past 22 years, in the Fata Hamlet of Indonesia’s East Nusa Tenggara Province, to build community resilience to rising seawaters.

The agency helped community members form the Fata Environment Lover Group, which now uses natural building methods to allow seawater to pass through bamboo structures before reaching the coast, so that wave heights are reduced and mangroves are protected.

Collectively, the three partners to the declaration cover a lot of ground in the region.

Caritas Asia is one of seven regional offices that comprise Caritas International, a Catholic relief agency that operates in 200 countries. SGI is a Japanese lay Buddhist movement with a network of organisations in 192 countries, while ACT is a coalition of Christian churches and affiliated organisations working in over 140 countries.

All three are renowned for their contributions to the field of development and disaster relief. Caritas International, for instance, annually [allocates](#) over a million euros (1.3 million dollars) to humanitarian coordination, capacity building and HIV/AIDS programmes around the world.

“We would like to be one of the main players in the introduction of the DRR policy,” Takeshi Komino, head of emergencies for the ACT Alliance in the Asia-Pacific region, told IPS. “We are saying we are ready to engage.”

“What our joint statement points out is that our commitment is based on faith and that is strong. We can be engaged in relief and recovery activity for a long time,” added Nobuyuki Asai, programme coordinator of peace affairs for SGI.

Experts say Asia is an excellent testing ground for the efficacy of faith-based organisations in contributing to disaster risk reduction.

According to a [survey](#) by the independent Pew Research Centre, the Asia-Pacific region is home to 99 percent of the world’s Buddhists, 99 percent of the world’s Hindus and 62 percent of the world’s Muslims.

The region has also seen a steady increase in the number of Catholics, from 14 million a century ago to 131 million in 2013.

Forming links between these communities is easier said than done, with religious and communal conflicts [plaguing the region](#), including a wave of Buddhist extremism in countries like Sri Lanka and Myanmar, a strong anti-Christian movement across Pakistan and attacks on religious minorities in China and India.

Some experts, however, say that the threat of natural catastrophe draws communities together.

According to Dr. Anil Kumar Gupta, head of the division of policy planning at the National Institute of Disaster Management in India, “When there is a disaster people forget their differences.

“I have seen the aftermath of disasters, where religious leaders and volunteers from Hindu temples, Islamic organisations and Sikh temples work together like born brothers,” he told IPS, citing such cooperation during major floods recently in the northern Indian states of Uttarakhand and Kashmir.

Loy Rego, a Myanmar-based disaster relief consultant, told IPS that the statement released today represents a very important landmark in disaster risk reduction.

“FBOs need to be more visible as an organised constituency in the roll-out of future frameworks,” he stated.

Rego believes that the biggest contribution FBOs could make to disaster risk management is to promote peaceful living among different communities.

“Respecting other religions need not be done in a secular way,” he said. “It only happens when they work with other FBOs in an inter-faith setting.”

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/06/when-faith-meets-disaster-management/>

June 26, 2014

Lutherans Call for Repeal of “Fracking Loopholes”

By Chad Hershberger
Upper Susquehanna Synod Blog

On the recommendation of a bipartisan task group, the Upper Susquehanna Synod Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) voted on June 20, 2014, to call for all environmental and public health exemptions on shale gas and oil drilling and its related processes, known as the “Halliburton loopholes,” to be repealed and all processes related to shale gas and oil extraction and processing to be subject to the Safe Drinking Water Act (1974), the Clean Air Act (1990) and Clean Water Act (1972).

The task force was created as a result of action taken at the Synod’s 2012 assembly directing the group to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the justice issues surrounding the natural gas industry. The resolution came as a result of two years’ worth of research, field work, and discussion by a diverse group of individuals, appointed by The Rev. Bishop Robert L. Driesen, representing opposing viewpoints on the issue of hydro-fracking.

“Our task force was made up of scientists, professors, pastors, teachers, and lay leaders in the church, as well as individuals who actually work in the shale gas industry or are supportive of it. Some of us would like to see a total ban on fracking. Others think it can be done safely with proper regulation. The fact that we were able to come to the table and engage in civil, bipartisan moral deliberation about this issue and offer a recommendation for the larger church is very important,” said The Rev. Dr. Leah Schade, member of the task force. “At the very least we could agree that the loopholes created for the industry exempting it from the established laws protecting our water, air and public health are unjust and need to be repealed,” Schade said.

Schade noted that this task force provides a model to other religious bodies as well as civil society for bringing people together across ideological lines to engage in robust ethical debate about controversial issues and arrive at some consensus for the common good.

The task force also provided a report that offered guidelines for approaching shale gas and oil drilling based on biblical and Lutheran theological values, as well as materials and resources to help people understand and interpret the abundance of information about the shale gas and oil industry, pro and con, that continues to grow and change almost daily. Those resources can be found at <http://www.uss-elca.org/for-congregations/fracking-resources>.

A copy of the task force's final report and resolutions will be sent to the Secretary of the US Department of Energy and the Director of the US Environmental Protection Agency, the PA Department of Environmental Protection, local elected officials, Governor Corbett, and other ELCA Synods within the Marcellus and Utica Shale region.

<http://usselca.wordpress.com/2014/06/26/lutherans-call-for-repeal-of-fracking-loopholes/>

July 2014

Mother Pelican: A Journal of Solidarity and Sustainability

Vol. 10, No. 7

Luis T. Gutiérrez, Editor

<http://www.pelicanweb.org/solisustv10n07page1.html>

July 2014

SAFCEI - South African Faith Communities Institute Newsletter

<http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=b6d20d1616&e=a758405790>

July 2014

Sacred Sites Research Newsletter (SSIREN)

http://fore.research.yale.edu/files/SSIREN_July_2014.pdf

July 2014

Journeying Towards The Light

By Laleh

Submitters Perspective

<http://www.masjiduntson.org/publications/books/sp/2014/jul/page1.html>

July-August 2014

Competing Narratives on Climate

Carbon Rangers/Eozoic Times

Vol. 7, No. 6

<http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/?u=5dd06f3cbb86536df56de4a9d&id=7e37f135ae&e=3747af2f7e>

Summer 2014

Greening Sacred Spaces Summer Newsletter

Faith & the Common Good

Vol 12 # 1

<http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=7ffae2bc3363490fc57409a85&id=f0bf7b98a7&e=9e19e2f2b8>

Summer 2014

Creation Justice Ministries Newsletter

<http://www.creationjustice.org/capsules.html>

July 4, 2014

WCC announces September Interfaith Summit on Climate Change

World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC) announced it will hold an Interfaith Summit on Climate Change on September 21-22 in New York City. At the summit, organized together with Religions for Peace, more than 30 religious leaders will take a united stand to encourage

international and political leaders to address concretely the causes and consequences of climate change.

The interfaith summit is being held immediately before the United Nations (UN) Climate Summit, called by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, to galvanize and catalyze climate action, bringing bold announcements and actions that will reduce emissions, strengthen climate resilience, and mobilize political will for a meaningful legal agreement in 2015.

WCC members said they hoped their united voice would be also heard at the upcoming Conferences of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Lima in December 2014 and in Paris in 2015. “We will join our voices in the call for human rights and climate change to be addressed systematically,” said Daniel Murphy, campaigns assistant at the UK-based Environmental Justice Foundation. Murphy spoke to the WCC Central Committee, the governing body of the WCC which is meeting this week in Geneva.

“This is a big power game”

The WCC has been addressing climate change issues for more than two decades, and now the effects of climate change on human rights has reached an urgent level, said Kirsten Auken, an advocacy advisor at DanChurchAid, a Danish nonprofit with the mission of supporting the world's poorest people. Auken said the main message of the interfaith summit will be that “political leaders need to act to close the gap between what is needed and the lack of action on a political level. We, as church-related and faith-based groups, have an important role to play in pushing our leaders to be brave.”

In this case, “pushing” means capturing the attention of political leaders who are in a position to make a difference within the UN. “This is a big power game and we have to admit that,” said Auken. “We have to be the moral voice in this.” At the same time that WCC members challenge political leaders, they also need to take the initiative in their own lives to care for the earth around them, said Metropolitan Serafim Kykkotis, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa. “We must unite through our common action to save the planet and give our children a better future,” he said.

The 30 participants at the summit will represent groups made up of Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Indigenous Peoples, and others, said Dr Guillermo Kerber, coordinator of the WCC programme on Care for Creation and Climate Justice. “The relevance is unprecedented because of the crucial moment we are living today. We have called for years to have a fair, ambitious and binding treaty on climate change.”

Kerber and the other summit organizers agreed that the USA is first among the nations that must lead the effort to take climate action, based on science, that can help protect the basic human rights of individuals in this generation and in future ones. US-based pastors and churches are adding their voices to the calls for action, said the Rev. Everdith Landrau, who serves with the Presbyterian Church (USA). “There are conscious programmes that have been trickling down to our local churches,” she said. “Those seeds are being planted.”

July 8, 2014

The ‘Greening’ of Christianity Is Not Actually Happening

By Tom Jacobs
Pacific Standard

Despite two decades of preaching, self-identified Christians are hardly acting as stewards of the Earth.

Over the past two decades, [much has been written](#) about the “greening” of [Christianity](#). The leaders of many denominations, including [Pope Francis](#) and [his predecessor](#), have forcefully articulated the view that as the “custodians of creation,” protecting the Earth is a duty of Christians.

Unfortunately, [new research](#) suggests this message has not filtered down to the rank and file.

A research team led by Michigan State University sociologist [John Clements](#) reports attitudes about the environment among American Christians have remained fundamentally unchanged between 1993, the year the “green Christianity” movement began, and 2010.

“The patterns of our results are quite similar to those from earlier decades, which documented that self-identified Christians identified with lower levels of environmental concern than did non-Christians and nonreligious individuals,” the researchers write in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.

Expanding on a [study](#) they released last year, the researchers compared data from the 1993 and 2010 editions of the [General Social Survey](#), an ongoing, large-scale measure of societal trends. They found that, at both points in time, self-identified Christians were less likely to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors than other Americans.

“There has been no statistically significant change in this divide about two decades after the first wave of mobilization to greet U.S. Christianity,” they report.

A few differences did emerge over the decades, with evangelical Protestants becoming more environmentally aware compared to those in mainline Protestant religions. But that wasn’t enough to create a significant overall shift in attitudes or behavior.

While these findings are disappointing, [another study](#) in that same journal offers some potentially good news. It finds a link between a belief in “the inherent unity of all phenomena” with pro-environmental attitudes.

“Spiritual oneness also predicted donating to a pro-environment group,” reports a research team led by University of Wisconsin psychologist Andrew Garfield.

Given the increase in the number of Americans who [consider themselves spiritual but not religious](#), this could be an omen of more enlightened environmental attitudes to come.

<http://www.psmag.com/navigation/nature-and-technology/greening-christianity-happening-85385/>

July 11, 2014

Pope Francis's Radical Environmentalism

Exploiting the earth "is our sin," the pontiff says.

By Tara Isabella Burton
The Atlantic

This past weekend, Pope Francis did something that was quietly revolutionary. In a talk at the Italian university of Molise, Francis [characterized](#) concerns about the environment as “one of the greatest challenges of our time”—a challenge that is theological, as well as political, in nature. “When I look at ... so many forests, all cut, that have become land ... that can [no] longer give life,” he reflected, citing South American forests in particular. “This is our sin, exploiting the Earth. ... This is one of the greatest challenges of our time: to convert ourselves to a type of development that knows how to respect creation.” And the pontiff isn’t stopping there; he’s reportedly planning to issue an encyclical, or papal letter, about man’s relationship with the environment.

It’s easy to be glib about Francis’s remarks—few people see the chopping-down of the Amazonian rainforests as an encouraging development. And a pope championing environmental protection isn’t entirely new; after all, *The Guardian* dubbed Benedict XVI the “[first green pontiff](#)” for his work in this area. But by characterizing the destruction of the environment not merely as *a* sin, but rather as *our* sin—the major sin, he suggests, of modern times—the pope is doing more than condemning public inaction on environmental issues. By staking out a fiercely pro-environmentalist position, while limiting his discourse about hot-button issues like homosexuality, Francis is using his pulpit to actively shape public discourse about the nature of creation (indeed, environmental issues were part of his first papal mass). In so doing, he is implicitly endorsing a strikingly positive vision of the individual’s relationship with the created world, and with it a profoundly optimistic vision of what it means to be human—and incarnate—overall, opening the door for a radical shift in emphasis, though not doctrine, when it comes to the Catholic Church’s view of mankind.

The Christian view of the individual’s relationship to nature—“creation,” we might call it in a theological context—has traditionally revolved around interpretations of the exhortation in

Genesis 1:28: “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Many have cited the idea of *dominion* to justify an anthropocentric view of the world, in which nature exists solely to provide man with its bounty—a position that is often more prevalent in evangelical Protestant circles, especially within the United States. Legislation such as the Louisiana Science Education Act, which seeks to enact a “balanced” (read: climate-change-denying) curriculum on environmental change in schools, has [received support](#) from organizations like the creationist think tank the Discovery Institute and the Christian advocacy group Alliance Defending Freedom. The Cornwall Alliance, whose declaration has been signed by luminaries of the religious right, released a 12-part video series in 2010 entitled “[Resisting the Green Dragon](#),” about the dangers of environmentalism. This perspective, however, is hardly limited to Protestants. Consider the Catholic politician Rick Santorum, who at a 2012 energy summit in Colorado [rejected](#) the threat of climate change. “We were put on this Earth as creatures of God to have dominion over the Earth, to use it wisely and steward it wisely, but for our benefit not for the Earth’s benefit,” he said.

Such hostile stances on environmentalism are themselves rooted in a far more profound question: To what extent should the self be understood as existing against, or in concordance with, nature? In many Christian traditions, and particularly among the Christian right, the individual and the created world are considered at odds—a product of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, and God’s declaration in Genesis 3:16 that “Cursed is the ground because of you [Adam]; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.” The act of original sin, in other words, sets up an inherently combative relationship between man and nature; any conflict is part of “God’s plan.” As G. Elijah Dann, a professor of religion and philosophy at Simon Fraser University in Canada, [put it](#) in a *Huffington Post* article on the evangelical mindset: “To somehow think we can correct climatic instabilities is [seen as] a denial of God’s judgment against human disobedience.” Furthermore, any attempt to ‘fix’ the natural world is an unwelcome effort to shift emphasis from the soul to the body. As Dann writes, “When scientists back in the ’70s were starting to worry about the environment, they were seen as engaging in a secular form of salvation—to save the planet—and, as such, were an affront to God. Emphasis should rather be on the salvation of souls.” The secular and the sacred are, in this worldview, totally separate: to focus on saving the physical world is to harm the immortal soul.

Still, this view—though it is often expressed vocally in American political and theological discourse—is far from the only one. Another strand of Christian thought interprets the same reference to “dominion” in Genesis as an exhortation to “stewardship.” The command represents a responsibility as much as a privilege. This perspective has produced quiet movements of “green Christianity” in recent decades, from the proliferation of the idea of “[creation care](#)” among evangelicals, to the [Environment Justice Program](#) formed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1993, to Pope Francis’s [comments](#) in his inaugural mass to “let us be ‘protectors’ of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.”

The stewardship mindset promoted by Francis arises from a broader theology that sees the created world as inherently sacred because it is made by God. The “fallenness” of the world may

have damaged the man-nature relationship, but the ideal toward which we should be working is one of reconciliation. Such interpretations also embrace the Christian idea of salvific incarnation—that Christ represents not merely God in human form, but indeed God *becoming man*. If God can enter into the physical world, the logic goes, then the physical world is made all the more sacred (or even redeemed from original sin) by such a presence. The Franciscan Catholic tradition—from which Pope Francis draws not only inspiration but also his chosen papal name—is rooted in this perspective. As Patrick Carolan, president of the Franciscan Action Network, [writes](#) in *U.S. Catholic*: “As part of the Franciscan tradition we emphasize ‘thisness,’ the unique specialness of each particular living and nonliving thing, which is loved individually and particularly by God. Every tree every pond, every member of every species is unique and special to God.” Pope Francis [defends](#) his call for environmental action by arguing that “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.”

The eco-feminist Christian movement, which grew out of larger feminist and womanist perspectives on theology, has also flowered in both Protestant and Catholic thought. Some eco-feminists, like the Quaker Grace Jantzen, believe the demand for positive stewardship emanates from the very structure of the world. In her *God’s World, God’s Body*, Jantzen argued that God’s relationship to the world is analogous to the relationship between the body and the soul. Drawing on the widespread Christian doctrine of *imago dei*—that man is created in the “image and the likeness” of God (as per Genesis 1:16)—Jantzen maintained that our embodied state establishes creation as the “body” of God. Unlike the “dominion” schools of thought, the stewardship schools take for granted that the created world is *inherently* good—that there is an inherent concord, rather than conflict, between the physical and the spiritual.

In his recent remarks, Pope Francis did not go quite as far as Jantzen did. But his focus on the need for stewardship of the environment places him within this pro-environmentalist tradition, and within a wider theology that is willing to celebrate, rather than reject, the material as a gift of God.

What is radical is Francis’s willingness to present environmentalism not merely as *a* challenge, but as one of the “greatest” challenges of our time. By underlining the importance of environmentalism to his overall theology, Francis is doing more than simply espousing a set of principles. He is also publicly—with the dizzying reach granted to a man in his position—emphasizing an understanding of nature that, in contrast to the combative dichotomy so prevalent in mainstream politico-religious discourse, is intrinsically positive in its treatment of the physical world. It’s a vision that is, radically and profoundly, pro-life.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/07/pope-franciss-radical-rethinking-of-environmentalism/374300/>

July 11, 2014

Journeying into the Universe with Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim

Global Generation

This month Global Generation had the honour of hosting Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim in the Kings Cross Skip Garden. As well as being professors at [Yale's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies](#) they are co-producers, with Brian Swimme, of the film "Journey of the Universe" which has had a big influence on Global Generation's work. writes [Jane Riddiford](#).

The film was inspired by Thomas Berry's call in 1978 for a new story that would bring science and humanities together in an integrated cosmology that could guide humans into the next period of human-Earth relations.

The result of a collaboration of scientists, scholars and film makers, who worked together for over a decade is the film and a book of the same name "Journey of the Universe" - [click here to watch the trailer](#).

Thanks to the Guardian we showed the film to 90 people in their Kings Cross Offices followed by a question and answer session with Mary Evelyn and John.

After watching the film, Physicist from Imperial College Professor of Physics, John Halliwell said: "Science provides the very long sequence of logical connections which string together the events into what we call the history of the universe. But science has become so good at this that it has vastly outstripped our ability to truly grasp what all this means in human terms."

At Global Generation we are also interested in what this 14-billion-year story has to offer us in terms of a narrative for social and environmental change.

We had a chance to explore this question with Mary Evelyn and John at a Saturday morning workshop in the Kings Cross Skip Garden attended by Global Generation staff, friends and volunteers including ten of our young Generators. This is what they had to say about their experience:

I felt Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim brought their incomparable ability to create a natural space within which we could all simultaneously be - as we rightly should - in awe of the immense 14-billion-year history of the universe and in touch with our immense place in it. John spoke of a four-fold embodiment - a personal, social, ecological and cosmological - that enables us to become socially and environmentally responsible beings. Mary Evelyn talked about the power of a shared vision for an Earth community - with a story and global ethics. Together, they both made an almost inexplicable impact on me, but not in a way that was 'doing unto me', but enabling me to remind myself of what is out there. Love. Hope. Humanity.

~ Rachel Solomon, GG Youth Manager

Saturday morning was really exciting because we could discuss questions brought up by the film. It was inspiring that so many different people were engaged in it all.

~ Liz, GG Big Bang Ambassador

After the film. I left feeling so alive and perhaps worryingly carefree as it the film reminded me to look at the bigger picture, I really feel that we are so lucky to be here in such an amazing connected world, that we should make the most of it.

~ Jaal, GG Big Bang Ambassador

It reminded me that we need to be the ultimate sustainer of life, protecting and benefitting our world. To step back into the cycle of life, learn how to become a part of that system, gain back our inner consciousness, discover our instinct.

~ Nene, GG Big Bang Ambassador

<http://www.globalgeneration.org.uk/news-growing-ideas/679-journeying-into-the-universe-with-mary-evelyn-tucker-and-john-grim>

July 11, 2014

Group Representing Half A Billion Christians Says It Will No Longer Support Fossil Fuels

By Emily Atkin
Climate Progress

A large umbrella group of churches representing more than half a billion Christians worldwide announced Thursday that it would pull all of its investments in fossil fuels, saying it had determined the investments were no longer ethical.

The World Council of Churches, a global coalition of 345 churches, [made the decision](#) to no longer fund oil, gas, or coal at its central committee meeting in Geneva, and recommended that its members do the same. “The committee discussed the ethical investment criteria, and considered that the list of sectors in which the WCC does not invest should be extended to include fossil fuels,” read the finance policy committee report.

The WCC’s member churches — which include the 25 million-member Church of England and the 48 million-member Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, among others — will not be forced to divest themselves, but advocates say the announcement represents broad support among Christians for action to fight climate change.

“The World Council of Churches reminds us that morality demands thinking as much about the future as about ourselves — and that there’s no threat to the future greater than the unchecked burning of fossil fuels,” Bill McKibben, the founder of 350.org, said in a [statement](#). “This is a

remarkable moment for the 590 million Christians in its member denominations: a huge percentage of humanity says today ‘this far and no further.’”

Though the WCC’s announcement doesn’t require its member churches to divest, its recommendation may give some the push they need. The Church of England, for example, [already announced](#) that it was considering redirecting its investments in an effort to battle climate change. The Church of England holds an endowment of more than \$9 billion.

The WCC is far from the first religious group to pledge divestment from fossil fuels. In June, New York’s Union Theological Seminary became the [first seminary in the world](#) to cut oil, gas and coal investments from its \$108.4 million endowment. In 2013, The United Church of Christ became the first national denomination to do the same. And on June 29, The Unitarian Universalist Association’s national General Assembly [voted](#) to divest from any holdings in 200 fossil fuel companies included on climate activists’ Carbon Tracker list.

Preserving the climate and the environment is a growing concern among religious groups, many of which see the issue as not only ethical, but spiritual — a way to respect God’s creation. Though the Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC, Pope Francis has spoken widely about his concern for the environment, most recently telling a group of fellow Catholics that rainforest destruction is a “sin.”

“This is one of the greatest challenges of our time: to convert ourselves to a type of development that knows how to respect creation,” the pope [said](#). “When I look at America, also my own homeland (South America), so many forests, all cut, that have become land ... that can longer give life (sic). This is our sin, exploiting the Earth and not allowing her to her (sic) give us what she has within her.”

<http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2014/07/11/3459111/wcc-christians-divests/>

July 12, 2014

Extinction Grieving Prayer

By Terri MacKenzie
Ecospirituality Resources

Those who are “joined ... so closely to the world around us that we can feel the ... extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement” (Pope Francis) often feel, and sometimes read about, the need for a prayer or ritual to help us grieve. I felt that need especially after researching and writing my last two blogs.

My Lent 2015 *Creation Covenant* resource concludes its five weeks with a grieving prayer, but that does not fill an immediate need. I have found no prayer or ritual on the internet for this

purpose and can find no national or international day of mourning for extinct species or ruined ecosystems. (Please let me know if you find one or both.)

I wrote what follows for myself and anyone else who wants to use it on whatever day or whatever occasion seems fitting. By all means alter it in any way that will help you grieve, alone or with a group. Share freely.

For a two page (4 sides) copy of the prayer: [Extinction Grieving Prayer](#).

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

EXTINCTION GRIEVING PRAYER

Use two candles; prepare suggested (or other) music and video. Directions are starred. Adapt in any way that facilitates use.

CALL TO PRAYER

*. . .today, the dusky seaside sparrow
became extinct. It may never be as famous
as the pterodactyl or the dodo,
but the last one died today . . .*
An excerpt from "Science" by Alison Hawthorne Deming

What you call resources, we call our relatives. Source unknown.

** Light the first candle. It honors all the species that have gone extinct in our lifetimes.*

Great Giver of Life, we pause to remember our place at the beginning of the Sixth Great Extinction on Planet Earth. For 13.8 billion years creation has been groaning: bringing to birth, becoming more complex, more organized, more conscious. The other great extinctions during the past 450 million years happened by forces beyond anyone's control. Now, for the first time, our species is ruining whole ecosystems, aborting entire interdependent species. We acknowledge that we play a part in this dying by our carelessness, ignorance, and indifference. Forgive us our part in the death of healthy ecosystems and the resulting extinction of creatures in whom we believe divinity lives and acts.

LITANY OF AFFIRMATION

We affirm the Sacred Mystery that caused and continues Creation.

We affirm the 13.8 billion years of our Universe.

We affirm the billions of galaxies, each with its billions of solar systems and stars.

We affirm the multiple transformations during the 4.5 billion years of Mother Earth's life so far, and the relentless evolution towards ever-greater consciousness in the future.

We affirm the millions of species that have inhabited our planet in beautifully-webbed communities: microorganisms, plants, fish, birds, mammals

We affirm that we came from Earth and exist, like all species, in a communion of subjects.

LITANY OF GRIEF

We grieve humans' lack of awareness of, and concern about, the destruction of interdependent communities that have taken billions of years to develop.

We grieve the climate disasters that extinguish habitats and the multiple species within them.

We grieve the more than one-in-four flowering plants, the one-in-five mammals, the nearly one-in-three amphibians, and the one-in-eight birds that are vulnerable to being wiped out completely. (International Union for the Conservation of Nature)

We grieve the Golden Toad, native to Costa Rica. It has not been seen since 1989, when a single male was found, the last of its species.

We grieve the Pyrenean Ibex. The last of this species naturally born was a female, Celia, who died in 2000.

We grieve the St. Helena Olive, a small spreading tree, the last of which perished in 2003 primarily due to deforestation and invasive plants.

We grieve all our extinct brother and sister species, the amphibians, fish, birds, mammals, plants and trees, and their diminished habitats.

We grieve the humans whose sustenance and livelihoods are threatened by this disruption in the food web.

We grieve the deaths of ecological martyrs: Sister Dorothy Stang, Dian Fossey, Chico Mendes, and the over 900 other activists slain since 2004. (Global Witness)

* LISTEN TO or SING:

"Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" Perhaps for v. 2 and 3: species, workers. (If needed, Joan Baez' version: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LZ2R2zW2Yc>.)

** Extinguish first candle. Light second candle. It honors the threatened species that remain and our desire to protect them.*

* QUIET REFLECTION:

For believers, our faith is tested by our concern and care for creation. U. S. Catholic Bishops:
“Renewing the Earth” 1991

* WATCH:

How wolves renewed Yellowstone Park

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bh_fdfIPvDg.

LITANY of GRATITUDE and HOPE

We are grateful that 90% of species under the protection of the Endangered Species Act (U.S.) are recovering at the rate specified by their federal recovery plan.

We are grateful that British oil company Soco International agreed (June 2014) to suspend exploration in a national park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), home to half the world’s critically endangered mountain gorillas and thousands of other species. We thank the over 750,000 people who signed a petition to stop the oil drilling.

We are grateful that the Zoological Society of London released its list of birds most at risk of extinction based on evolutionary distinctness and global endangerment (EDGE) in April 2014. This information will help conservationists decide where efforts should focus first.

We are grateful that the population of the California Least Tern, listed as endangered in 1970, grew from 225 recorded then to 6,568 recorded in 2010.

We are grateful for all of the habitats that have been saved so that the interdependent species within them can escape extinction.

We are grateful for the many people throughout the world who dedicate their time and efforts to keeping habitats and species alive so they can give praise to their creator by their distinct lineages, attributes, and contributions to the web of life.

ACTION SUGGESTIONS

Let us not leave in our wake a swath of destruction and death which will affect our own lives and those of future generations. Pope Francis

To save species, we must save ecosystems. To save ecosystems, we must reduce climate change, pollution, poaching, invasive species, and over-consumption. Mentally check the things on p. 4 that you already do. There might be something else there that you would want to do.

* READ QUIETLY:

Consciously deepen appreciation of the glory of creation, its long story, the place of Divine Mystery in it, and humans' dependence upon it. Pray for the healing of creation.

Reduce all energy use. Transition to renewable energy sources (for electricity).

Encourage institution to invest in renewable energy and to divest from fossil fuels.

Drive less and/or reduce gas use by not exceeding 60 mph on the highways (and other ways).

Avoid produce, meat, and poultry from factory farms. Buy recycled products.

Reduced use of plastic. Carry water in a thermos (not bottled water). Buy local.

Avoid genetically modified foods (GMOs). Lobby for laws to protect habitats and species.

Include Earth-care concerns when choosing legislators.

Join (or cooperate with) a group working to conserve, restore and protect habitats and species.

* DISCUSS:

Einstein said: *Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge points to all that is. Imagination points to all that could be.* What kind of Earth “could be”? How can we contribute to co-creating it?

SENDING FORTH

Great Giver of Life, we come from, and we dwell in, the magnificent world in which you live and act. Our species is causing extinctions; our species can prevent them. Let us not be thwarted by the immensity of the challenge, for the Power working within us can do more than we could imagine. May the flame of this candle continue burning in our hearts, reminding us to help our threatened relatives.

* *Extinguish second candle.*

Enlighten us to find you in all Creation; empower us to treat it accordingly. Through Jesus Christ, whose respect for Earth inspires us to live as he did. Amen.

* SING:

“The Heavens Are Telling the Glory of God” or “Touch the Earth” (Kathy Sherman, CSJ) or another appropriate song

* SHARE

a sign of hope with one another (or a sign of peace).

<http://ecospiritualityresources.com/2014/07/12/extinction-grieving-prayer/>

July 15, 2014

Can There Be Development Without Spiritual Capital?

By Olav Kjørven
Huffington Post

The headline of this article might sound like an oddity, but hear me out on this. Negotiators at the United Nations are currently debating a new global development agenda under the headings of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. They are discussing whether things ranging from child nutrition to road safety to violence against women should be part of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will pick up from where the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) leave us by the end of 2015. It's an expert's dream circus. But let me offer three quick snapshots to try and convince you that agreeing on shared global development goals, and then actually achieving them, depends on more than expert -- or even market -- solutions. They require a good dose of faith and spirited energy and action.

WORK AND WORSHIP IN NORWAY

Snapshot 1: As a young boy growing up in Norway, I was lucky enough to spend a lot of time with my grandfather. He was a farmer who lived, breathed and talked sustainable development without knowing it, decades before the concept was invented. He knew deeply that the productivity of his farm depended on *ecosystem services* and on *social capital* in his family and the wider community (he didn't know those terms either) alongside smart investments in machinery, seeds and fertilizers. He was also a deeply spiritual man. To him, there was no separation between the toil and accomplishments of his work and worship. The two were inseparable and both infused his life with meaning. My grandfather left a lasting impression on many, including me. I know for a fact that I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing today if it was not for his influence. And I suspect many, if not most of us, have had similar influences early on in our lives, shaping who we are, what we do, and why we do it.

SPIRITUAL CAPITAL

Snapshot 2: As we speak, in hundreds of thousands of communities all over the world, people and institutions inspired by faith or other sources of purpose are busy at work, day in and day out, addressing the challenges laid out in the first set of shared global priorities -- the Millennium Development Goals. If it wasn't for these people and communities, we wouldn't be anywhere near where we are today in reducing maternal mortality, getting girls and boys to school, halting

the spread of HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, providing safe drinking water, etc. These communities are a central part of the immense depository of social and spiritual capital around the world that makes change for the better a reality in so many ways -- and that can make even greater things possible in the future.

SHINTO AND SUSTAINABILITY

Snapshot 3: A few weeks ago, I was again struck by luck. I got to attend a remarkable gathering in Ise, Japan, home to the holiest of shrines in the ancient Shinto tradition. For the first time in a history that apparently stretches back to the Bronze Age, representatives of major world religions, as well as the United Nations (me!), were invited into this most sacred place of worship -- the Ise Jingu shrine -- to partake in a ceremony that committed the Shinto to the cause of building a more sustainable and peaceful world, drawing on their unique vision of humanity's oneness with nature. (I sometimes wonder if my grandfather was at least partly -- and, again, unknowingly -- a Shinto?)

Their decision reflects, in part, growing concern about global challenges such as climate change and how it will affect Japan and the world. It is equally inspired by the work underway at the United Nations to forge a new, global development agenda founded on the UN's universal principles and dedicated to achieving sustainable development. And the Shinto are far from alone: Global spiritual and faith traditions and leaders, from Pope Francis and Chinese Confucianism to the Eco-Sikh movement and thousands of Muslim Mosques in Africa, are coming up with their distinct reflections and contributions to the emerging agenda. And whereas global leaders will agree to a 15 year agenda at most, the faiths, once they get going, keep at it for generations.

So there is a spiritual dimension to this agenda. It's inside each and every one of us, motivating us for action. And it is alive in churches, temples, mosques and in all sorts of other human groups and networks around the world, way beyond religion -- at the individual level, the community level and the institutional and global levels. Negotiators will come to an agreement on the *what* and the *how*, hopefully. The *why* comes from deep inside us, often inspired by our various ancient, as well as newer, faith and thought traditions.

FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS

There are some other reasons why the often overlooked faith-based world matters. Around the globe, people tend to listen more to their faith leaders than to most other voices of "authority." Sometimes that's a problem, sometimes it's not. But it's the way it is.

Furthermore, religious institutions are often the main providers of education and health services, of central importance to development. They are a major player in the financial markets, estimated by some to be the fourth largest category of investors. If and when they decide to invest only in the ethical, clean and green, it will have a major impact. They own huge swathes of real estate and land around the world, including forests. In short, it matters greatly what they say and do. We have every reason to expect that the faith-based world will mobilize in old and new ways to contribute towards achieving the next set of development goals. They can make a

huge difference for people and the planet, and we should encourage and welcome that.

I think the truth is rather simple. Despite all our divisions and parochialism, it is the human spirit that's at work, that reacts instinctively and positively to the notion of a shared human endeavor, dedicated to dignity and justice for all, to finding ways to make peace with nature (Creation), and to future generations being able to find a livable and beautiful home on our shared planet Earth.

I know my grandfather would have loved to take part.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/olav-kjorven/united-nations-development-spiritual-capital-b_5588436.html

July 18, 2014

The Pope and the Sin of Environmental Degradation

Living on Earth

Listen or download this interview at:

<http://www.loe.org/shows/segments.html?programID=14-P13-00029&segmentID=1>

Pope Francis has called environmental exploitation the sin of our time. He is working on an encyclical about humanity's relationship with nature. Christiana Peppard, Assistant Professor of Theology, Science and Ethics at Fordham University and author of the book *Just Water*, discusses the Pope's call to "care for God's creation" with host Steve Curwood.

Transcript

CURWOOD: From the Jennifer and Ted Stanley Studios in Boston and PRI, this is Living on Earth. I'm Steve Curwood. Pope Francis has called on the 1.2 billion Roman Catholics he leads and the rest of humanity to quote, "protect creation." Speaking to students in Southern Italy, he called environmental exploitation the sin of our time.

[SFX: POPE: "Questo è il peccato nostro: di sfruttare la terra e non lasciare che lei ci dia quello che ha dentro, con il nostro aiuto della coltivazione."]

TRANSLATION: This is our sin: exploiting the land and not allowing it to give us what it has within it, with our help through cultivation.

CURWOOD: The Pope is also working on an encyclical to lay out his doctrine about how humanity should relate to nature and our environment. To put all this in perspective, we turn to Christiana Peppard. She's Assistant Professor of Theology, Science and Ethics at Fordham University in New York and author of the book *Just Water*. Welcome to Living on Earth.

PEPPARD: Thank you, Steve. It's a pleasure to be here.

CURWOOD: First tell me what's an encyclical?

PEPPARD: An encyclical is fancy Catholic talk for an authoritative document from the highest levels of the Vatican, signed with the signature and seal of the Pope. It is one of the most authoritative documents in all of Catholic tradition. It is of course written first in Latin, but then it has to be translated into all of these other languages.

CURWOOD: I see. So what's Latin for nuclear power or fracking, for example?

PEPPARD: [LAUGHS] That is a great question. A lot of times documents will say, 'In the present day there are problems of extraction of valuable natural resources, including the new technology of , and then in quotation marks "fracking."'

CURWOOD: [LAUGHS] OK.

PEPPARD: The Romans certainly had encounters with the natural world, but their relationship to it was really different, and I think what's different now is that we are in significant ways in control.

CURWOOD: How fair is it to say an encyclical is a really big deal?

In the Vatican Museum, there is a sculpture called Sfera con Sfera, or "Sphere within a Sphere" by Arnaldo Pomodoro. It is said to symbolize the fragility and complexity of the Earth. (Photo: Nick Kocharhook; Creative Commons Flickr)

PEPPARD: An encyclical is a huge deal, at least for the Vatican hierarchy, and in theory, should also be a pretty huge deal for Catholics in the pews. Though frankly, encyclicals are not the most gripping reading that you've ever accessed. They tend to be written from a perspective that is meant to illuminate major issues, and so they don't always delve into the particularities that bring narratives and documents to life. The way that a lot of Catholics, at least in the US, have access to the Catholic Church's teachings is primarily through their pastors on Sunday, and even when an encyclical is released, the priest in question may or may not have opted to give a sermon about it.

CURWOOD: How frequently do Popes issue encyclicals?

PEPPARD: That is entirely up to the Pope. Benedict issued several; he issued Caritas in Veritate which means "Charity in Truth." Like many encyclicals, it focused on theology and quoted Nietzsche, Augustine, Scripture as well as some various UN and transnational government sources, but he also released a number of encyclicals that had to do with topics like Christian Hope. So it really depends on the issues that he thinks are important to explore with regard to people who are living in the world today and trying to make sense of how to be faithful in a Catholic sense, as well as how to be good citizens of the world.

CURWOOD: Why now? Why is Pope Francis saying that he's going to issue an encyclical about the environment?

PEPPARD: Well, one of the things that we've really seen with this papacy is that Francis is trying as hard as he can under the circumstances of his elevated post to remain pretty close to the ground. So he was known back when he was in Argentina for spending a pretty good amount of time in various impoverished communities. He's known now for, you know, driving a relatively humble Pope-mobile and not wearing fancy Prada shoes, and living in not too fancy quarters in the Vatican.

I think that his experience in South America, seeing the ways in which extractive industries and environmental degradation often have negative impacts for people living in situations of poverty, has informed a lot of his comments on the economy and on ecology more broadly. But I also think he understands his role as a kind of moral compass. There has not yet been an encyclical explicitly about the environment. There have been encyclicals that deal with the environment, sort of at this nexus of social justice, environmental degradation and economic development. And environmental degradation really is one of the signs of the times that no moral leader, or in this case theological faith leader, can afford to ignore.

CURWOOD: The sin of our time sounds like a pretty strong statement. What do you think Pope Francis means by that?

PEPPARD: It is a really strong statement. I mean for a Pope to say that deforestation and ecological destruction are the sins of our times is really throwing down a gauntlet. It prompts Christians, especially in the U.S., to think about how we understand sin and how we understand responsibility. So much of Western moral tradition, whether theological or philosophical, has really been based upon a very individualistic paradigm wherein I commit some kind of action, usually intentionally, and it's seen as wrong or sinful. In some sense we can ascribe a clear cause, a clear effect—there's someone who can repent for it, someone who is affected; there might be some mode of remediation. What's really interesting about applying the language of sin to environmental destruction is that there is not necessarily one person who is the sole cause of things. Causality is much more complex. It has to do with patterns of global economy, of governance, of incentive, of poverty, of the need for arable land and subsistence. And how we think about sin and in that context is complicated, and I appreciate that he's trying to complicate the picture.

CURWOOD: You appreciate that he's trying to complicate the picture?

PEPPARD: Yes, well, on the one hand he is complicating the picture because he's saying, "Hey, it's not as simple as sin being reduced to what we might call pelvic issues, issues related to reproduction or to sexual behavior or morality." Part of what I really see Pope Francis doing in his recent comments as well as in previous statements is to try to illuminate how economy, environmental degradation and social injustice all relate to one another in complex structural ways, and how we think about responsibility and sin in those contexts is a complicated thing.

Pope Francis says, “In South America, my homeland, I see many forests, which have been stripped ... that becomes land that cannot be cultivated, that cannot give life.” Much of the deforestation in Argentina is to make way for mining. (photo: Alicia Nijdam; Creative Commons Flickr)

CURWOOD: Pope Francis focused on resource depletion in his most recent public comments on the environment. Why do you think he’s so interested in this?

PEPPARD: So on the one hand I think Pope Francis is familiar with how environmental degradation and the difficulties faced by people living in poverty intersect, and I think that probably comes from his experience witnessing communities where resource extraction is very heavy, where mining is incentivized, and yet there are negative effects, the cost of which, both economic and otherwise, are often foisted onto local communities who may or may not have access to channels of power to advocate for themselves.

I think another source has to do with what we might call a theological orientation, that the created world is good in and of itself, it is not here merely for human use or for economic gain. Are these extractive—we’ll just called them extractive excesses—are they depleting a world that the Catholic Church understands God to have created as good? So is that then not just a sin, using Pope Francis’ language, is that not just a sin against fellow humans, but also perhaps a sin against God, and the integrity of the created order—the natural order? And so the question then becomes, how do we conduct our economic and our social and political activities in a way that respects the needs of equity of people around the world, but also respects the fact that creation, that is the environment, has a value beyond what we humans try to get out of it?

CURWOOD: By the way, in the past what has the Vatican done in terms of using its weight regarding environmental issues to get policy results?

PEPPARD: While the Church may not be an expert in matters of policy, it is an expert in matters of humanity. The Vatican is not a policy-advocating arm, but at the same time, I think the Vatican has really started to throw its weight behind initiatives that can be seen to have global human relevance, and this tends to happen at the United Nations. I think the biggest example is actually with regard to the human right to freshwater.

In 2010, the UN General Assembly passed a convention on the right to freshwater. The Catholic Church was strongly in support of this and has indicated its support in a range of documents. In a number of those documents it makes absolutely clear that there needs to be a fundamental human right to freshwater, that it should be enacted through the United Nations, and that, in fact, access to freshwater is not just some sort of convenience issue, but is actually fundamental right-to-life issue. And that’s really strong language for an organization that, at least in the United States, tends to be associated with, again, shall we say reproductive or pelvic issues. If we think of freshwater or environmental goods like clean air, clean environments, as right-to-life issues, wow, that radically reframes our sense of morality and global ethics in the 21st century.

CURWOOD: To what extent do you think the upcoming intense round of climate negotiations worldwide influenced him to say, “It’s time for me to do an encyclical about this.”

PEPPARD: What I do know is that the release of this encyclical is currently scheduled to be timed relatively concurrent with some of those big meetings and negotiations, and hopefully an eventual final report and agreement. Partly I think Francis is following up on a trajectory that has been established before him. I think it's noteworthy that the Vatican has an advisory council called the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and on that council sit many, many esteemed scientists many of whom are not Catholic, including an atmospheric chemist who won the Nobel prize for his work in atmospheric chemistry and the greenhouse effect, and it was he, this man is named Paul Crutzen, who coined the term "Anthropocene," that is the geological era in which humans are shaping Earth systems in ways never before seen and that have long-lasting impacts.

CURWOOD: By the way the Pope is of course, head of the Catholic Church, but he's also head of state at the Vatican...

PEPPARD: He is indeed.

CURWOOD: ...and the Vatican is only an observer in climate negotiations. What sense do you have that the Pope might decide to actually join the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change?

PEPPARD: I think it would be it is fantastically interesting if the Pope were to join the Framework Convention. I think that that would be a moral statement with actions as well as words. This can be a really interesting moment for the Pope and the Vatican to figure out how they want to engage on what many folks have called the most pressing moral issue of our time, and the one that will impact future generations irrevocably. This is a very acutely important moment in terms of thinking about the global common good, not just about nationalities, but about what it means to be human on a changing planet, and what role we bear that.

CURWOOD: Christiana Peppard is an Assistant Professor of Theology, Science and Ethics at Fordham University. Thanks so much for taking the time with me today.

PEPPARD: Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure.

Links

http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/07/05/pope_to_world_of_work_in_molise_break_the_mold/1102553 - Read more of the Pope's speech from Radio Vaticana

http://www.christianapeppard.com/?page_id=185 - Visit Christiana Peppard's page to read more about her work and Just Water

<http://www.loe.org/shows/segments.html?programID=08-P13-00029&segmentID=5> - Listen to "End of an Epoch" to learn more about the Anthropocene

Listen or download this interview at:

<http://www.loe.org/shows/segments.html?programID=14-P13-00029&segmentID=1>

July 24, 2014

Next big idea in forest conservation: Reconnecting faith and forests

By Liz Kimbrough
Mongabay

Innovation in Tropical Forest Conservation: Q&A with Dr. Shonil Bhagwat

INNOVATION IN TROPICAL FOREST CONSERVATION SERIES

Despite decades of attention and advocacy, tropical forests are still falling at rapid rates worldwide. Now, mongabay.com's new special series, Innovation in Tropical Forest Conservation aims to highlight solutions to the crisis through short interviews with some of the world's leading conservation scientists, practitioners, and thinkers about new and emerging approaches to conservation. For more of these interviews, please check our [Innovation in Tropical Forest Conservation](#) feed.

"In Africa, you can come across Kaya forests of coastal Kenya, customary forests in Uganda, sacred forest groves in Benin, dragon forests in The Gambia or church forests in Ethiopia...You can also come across similar forest patches in South and Southeast Asia including numerous sacred groves in India well-known for their role in conservation of biological diversity," Dr. Shonil Bhagwat told mongabay.com. "Culturally-protected forests are common everywhere in the tropics...but I think they have remained the 'unsung heroes' of tropical forest conservation thus far. We are fascinated by the vastness of the so-called 'pristine' tropical forest whilst overlooking forest fragments right in our backyards."

Dr. Bhagwat is an environmental geographer interested in people's cultural and spiritual values. He views ecosystems as 'social-ecological systems' and investigates them at various spatial and temporal scales: from landscapes to continents, from seasonal to millennial. He is interested in conditions that make these social-ecological systems adaptable and resilient in a rapidly changing world. And these self-proclaimed "undisciplined" interests have led him to work on "culturally-protected forests, indigenous and community-conserved areas and sacred natural sites."

"The connection between faith and forest is complex," Bhagwat said. "It is not just the nature worship that is primary function of these forests, but they may have been maintained by our ancestors for the benefits that they provide to people. Today we call them 'ecosystem services' but in the past faith played an important role in ensuring that certain life support systems were maintained for the benefit of humanity."

He added that it is very possible to bridge a perceived gap between conservation scientists and much of the world's faith community, simply by scientists learning how to speak to people of faith.

"After all, both faith and conservation have a moral outlook. If conservation movement is to make more friends, then faith groups can make valuable partners on the basis of a shared moral agenda," Bhagwat said, noting that faith groups could become hugely-important allies in efforts to preserve forests and other environment. Faith groups, unlike both the political and economic arenas, focus on the long-term and have a rich history of survival.

"The conservation movement can benefit from [faith's] intimate approach to connecting with people," he explained. "Our political institutions or for that matter financial institutions are short-term, even volatile. Cultural and faith traditions on the other hand have proven themselves to be more durable and this durability can prove beneficial to the conservation of tropical forests into the distant future."

Before joining The Open University as Lecturer in Geography in February 2013, Bhagwat directed an international and interdisciplinary masters' program in Biodiversity, Conservation and Management at the School of Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford, UK. He has held post-doctoral research appointments at the University of Oxford and at the Natural History Museum, London and completed his doctorate in Tropical Forest Diversity and Conservation at the University of Oxford in 2002. His work has taken him to the Western Ghats in South India as well as the tropical forests of Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and northeastern Australia.

"By reconnecting faith and forests, we can make connections between something that is 'in-here' (faith is important in people's everyday lives) and something that is 'out-there' (people hear or read about tropical forests in the news). Once these connections are made in people's minds, it can start to change their attitudes and gradually their behavior."

An Interview with Dr. Shonil Bhagwat

Mongabay: *What is your background? How long have you worked in tropical forest conservation and in what geographies? What is your area of focus?*

Shonil Bhagwat: My background is in tropical forest ecology. Ever since I stepped foot in tropical forests of the Western Ghats in South India as a teenager back in the early 1990s I have been interested in tropical forest conservation. I did fieldwork for my doctorate research in this part of the world in early 2000s and have continued to maintain a research interest in the region since. Apart from the Western Ghats in South India, my work has taken me to tropical forests of Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and I have also visited the tropical forest of northeastern Australia. I

have been very fortunate to have had students working in many other parts of the world and through their eyes it feels like I have seen the impressive array of natural and cultural diversity across the tropics.

I am very interested in people's cultural and spiritual values and this interest has led me to work on culturally-protected forests, indigenous and community-conserved areas and sacred natural sites. There are many such sites across the tropics, but I think they have remained the 'unsung heroes' of tropical forest conservation thus far. We are fascinated by the vastness of the so-called 'pristine' tropical forest whilst overlooking forest fragments right in our backyards. Many culturally-protected forests are just that—forest fragments surrounded by highly 'humanised' landscapes—fields, settlements, villages, towns and sometimes even cities. And this is the primary reason why they are important for nature conservation: they are found in places where you would least expect to find them. This means they provide habitat to certain species that would have long gone if the land were cleared for agriculture or grazing. Culturally-protected forests provide 'refugia' for the variety of life that would have otherwise disappeared from our backyards long ago.

Culturally-protected forests are common everywhere in the tropics. In Africa, you can come across Kaya forests of coastal Kenya, customary forests in Uganda, sacred forest groves in Benin, dragon forests in The Gambia or church forests in Ethiopia. All of these are embedded within agricultural landscapes that are 'lived-in' by people for thousands of years. You can also come across similar forest patches in South and Southeast Asia including numerous sacred groves in India, which are well-known for their role in conservation of biological diversity. I am fascinated by these cultural traditions and think that we need to understand them better and to apply them to modern-day nature conservation.

My research has focused on studying these culturally-protected forests and this has naturally brought me in contact with a wide variety of disciplines: anthropology, conservation biology, ecology, forestry, geography, and international development. So over the years, my research has become increasingly 'undisciplinary' because the kinds of questions I am interested in answering span across the artificial disciplinary divisions we routinely make.

Mongabay: *What role can sacred forests and religion in general play in conservation? What innovations are occurring at the interface of religion and conservation? How are you involved with this work?*

Shonil Bhagwat: Faith plays a very important role in many places to make forests socially relevant. The faith groups that look after culturally-protected forests include a wide variety of religions, spiritualities and belief systems. Some of these forests are protected by some of the world's mainstream religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism. But there are also animistic and indigenous faiths that have perhaps played a disproportionately large role in the conservation of these forests. Nature worship is central to many of these traditions and they have historically safeguarded forests as key sites for such worship. But the connection between faith and forest is complex. It is not just the nature worship that is primary function of these forests, but they may have been maintained by our ancestors for the benefits that they provide to people.

Today we call them 'ecosystem services' but in the past faith played an important role in ensuring that certain life support systems were maintained for the benefit of humanity. These societies recognized the importance of nature and the rewards brought by its conservation.

Even today, many sacred forests are located on hill slopes or near fresh water sources because they continue to be important for the storage of groundwater. People often collect medicinal herbs or non-wood forest products from these forests. These forests maintain habitat for pollinators or pest control agents in agricultural landscapes, important for farming communities who depend on agriculture for their livelihood. I think faith continues to be a force in motivating many people to keep these forests even today so that they can continue to maintain our life support systems. So the tangible and intangible benefits from culturally-protected forests are perhaps tightly interwoven.

Conservationists are concerned about the loss of culturally-protected forests because the processes of modernization and globalization are changing the fabric of many traditional societies and with those changes the cultural traditions are following a downward trajectory. Many conservationists go so far as to suggest that faith, religion, and spirituality are no longer reliable instruments for conservation because of their society-wide decline. Instead, they call for a rational, scientific approach to conservation. I think part of the anxiety for joining faith with conservation originates in the uncomfortable relationship between conservationists and the people of faith. In general, there is widespread sentiment within the conservation community that faith and reason don't go together and therefore such partnership is never going to work.

The picture at the grassroots is dramatically different, however. For lay people, faith plays an important role in their everyday lives—it is said that faith acts as a 'moral compass' to navigate the choppy waters in the ocean of life. The science of conservation on the other hand, with its sometimes impenetrable jargon, means very little to lay people. It is often said that nature conservation is a 'crisis discipline' and this means we are used to hearing the doom and gloom stories of failed conservation initiatives, but lay people often find those stories somewhat depressing. On the other hand, a message of conservation translated in *their* language means a lot more to them, and faith leaders do an excellent job of translating that message to their congregations. After all, both faith and conservation have a moral outlook. If conservation movement is to make more friends, then faith groups can make valuable partners on the basis of a shared moral agenda.

If fact, faith groups are already doing a lot of good work in helping nature conservation: Buddhist monks in Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and Sri Lanka are conducting ['tree ordination' ceremonies](#) wrapping saffron cloths around trees. These ordination ceremonies are publicly reinforcing the sacredness of trees and safeguarding them from illegal logging. Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), the key BirdLife International Partner in the

country, has revived the Islamic tradition of nature conservation by declaring a number of areas as [Hima's, conservation zone in the Islamic tradition. Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is playing a significant role in promoting the maintenance and upkeep of church forests](#) around thousands of churches in the Ethiopian countryside. These are perhaps small, local examples but they add up to make a solid contribution to nature conservation in countries that are grappling to balance flourishing modernity and deeply-rooted tradition. On the backdrop of doom and gloom stories of failed conservation initiatives, examples like these bring a message of hope.

I like this message of hope. I like good news stories and one of my favorite ones comes from Northwestern India. In late-1990s, soon after I finished college, I had a fantastic opportunity to travel throughout India discovering cultural traditions in the country that support nature conservation. During these travels, I came across an organization called [Seva Mandir](#) in the state of Rajasthan in northwest India. This organization works for the development of local communities and acknowledges that nature conservation goes hand-in-hand with development and is essential for it. Working with these communities and the local forestry department, this organization has helped revive the tradition of saffron-water sprinkling for conservation. Saffron-water has deep cultural meaning in Hindu tradition. It is often used in temples during religious rituals for the sanctification of objects. Seva Mandir helped translate this tradition to the conservation of over-grazed and degraded commons. The act of saffron-water sprinkling had a dramatic effect and in the years that followed the degraded commons flourished with trees. I see this as an excellent example of nature conservation that works with local traditions rather than against them.

My recent work has looked at long-term history of sacred forest grove conservation in South India. Kodagu district of Karnataka state in South India has a large number and a high density of sacred forest groves. The recorded history of this region goes back to about 200 years and early British colonial reports make a mention of sacred forest groves. If you ask local people, they say that these groves have been around for several of their ancestral generations. If you ask conservation biologists, they think of these groves as fragments of tropical forest, pointing to the historical loss and destruction of forest. My recent research shows that rather than being fragments of forest, these [sacred forest groves](#) are in fact regenerated patches of forest. This means these forests almost 'emerged' at some point during the history of landscape development in Kodagu.

Long-term and paleoecological data that some of my colleagues and I collected in these sacred groves show that around 500 years ago something changed and these forest sprung up. This emergence of sacred forest groves happened because of a complex combination of social and cultural change as well as environmental change. This is also a historical example of faith-led conservation with faith providing an overarching reason for the emergence of sacred forest groves. This research also suggests that given long enough time, tropical forests can spring back

to life. It makes me feel hopeful about tropical forests and about cultural traditions, but this also means that we need to plan long-term. Political short-termism unfortunately does not bode well with long-term planning—we need institutions that are more durable to be in charge. Faith-based institutions are proven to have that capacity because they have been around for much longer than one or two terms in political office. If we can reconnect faith and forests, that will go a long way in tropical forest conservation into the distant future.

Mongabay: *What do you see as the biggest development or developments over the past decade in tropical forest conservation?*

Shonil Bhagwat: Over the last decade, I think tropical forests have been 'hijacked' by the discussion on climate change. Fixing atmospheric carbon in trees has become the primary societal motivation for keeping tropical forests intact. Our need for tropical forests is expressed in terms of money, the so-called natural capital, and markets are seen as the savior of this natural capital. It is true that this is the sort of language that multinational corporate giants understand and if we are to get them to do anything good for tropical forests, then we need to speak their language. But reducing tropical forests to carbon, money and markets doesn't solve the problem of deforestation.

I am not an economist, but it is common knowledge that if something is in short supply, it becomes more valuable. If we leave tropical forests to markets alone, the scarcer they become, the more valuable they will be to markets. I think we need to tread carefully and find a more deep-rooted reason to save tropical forests—one that is sensitive to the cultural traditions of local inhabitants—and not leave them to the mercy of markets. We have seen the volatility of the global financial system in recent years and markets are closely tied to this system, so our dependence on markets might mean that the future of tropical forests is also equally volatile. This is the reason why we need to re-examine our increasing reliance on markets and also simultaneously look at more enduring solutions. Cultural and faith traditions provide both, a more deep-rooted reason for conservation of tropical forests and a more long-term thinking about their future.

Mongabay: *What isn't working in conservation but is still receiving unwarranted levels of support?*

Shonil Bhagwat: Conservationists are infatuated with corporations as is evident by the celebrated alliances between international conservation organizations and multinational corporations. There are obvious reasons for these partnerships. Corporations have the money required to support conservation, but at the same time they can also influence conservation in ways that may not always be in the interest of tropical forests. Many of these multinational corporations are deeply entrenched in global financial system and therefore one wonders how

much difference they can really make to conserve tropical forests. If a scarcer resource is more valuable, then arguably the loss of tropical forests will increase their value and that is good for the 'business model' of these corporations, in the short term at least. Can we trust corporation to make a difference to the conservation of tropical forests? If conservationists are able to dictate the terms in corporate boardrooms, then they might be able to make a difference, but that is a far cry from who has the real power in boardrooms.

I think we need to look for more durable means for conservation of tropical forests. Perhaps we should be looking at faith groups more seriously instead. Some of these groups are equally wealthy if money is what conservation movement needs. But to my mind they can offer far more by way of mass support to the conservation movement. At present, we are overlooking, sometimes disregarding, and often completely ignoring faith traditions that have played important role in nature conservation historically and continue to do so even today. Reaching out to those traditions, harnessing and supporting them is probably something we can do if tropical forest conservation is to gain people's support.

So how do we reconnect faith and forests? Faith groups have the credentials to influence their congregations. Over 4 billion people, nearly two thirds of the world's population, proclaim some form of affiliation to faith. There are even more if you include indigenous faiths and other spiritualities and belief systems. Arguably, this presents a very diverse 'stakeholder group' for conservationists to engage with and one size may not fit all, but there are obvious benefits of such partnerships to the conservation movement. This is not to say that conservation organizations should turn to faith—there are advantages in remaining secular so as to remain neutral—but there is no reason why conservation organizations cannot work alongside multiple faith partners and reach out to a large cross-section of society. This is also not to say that conflicts of ideologies will not arise—religions in fact have a long history of intra- and inter-faith conflicts—but they have historically also risen above those conflicts time and again and have continued to maintain an important function in society. Conservationists also need to be agile in identifying changing trends in society. Faith itself does not keep still and faith groups are very 'savvy' in adapting to the changing trends—a reason why they have been very successful in keeping their finger on the pulse of society. The conservation movement can benefit from this intimate approach to connecting with people. Our political institutions or for that matter financial institutions are short-term, even volatile. Cultural and faith traditions on the other hand have proven themselves to be more durable and this durability can prove beneficial to the conservation of tropical forests into the distant future.

By reconnecting faith and forests, we can make connections between something that is 'in-here' (faith is important in people's everyday lives) and something that is 'out-there' (people hear or read about tropical forests in the news). Once these connections are made in people's minds, it can start to change their attitudes and gradually their behavior. Such a behavioral change can lay

the foundation for specific conservation interventions such as [technology assisted surveillance](#) of tropical forests to prevent illegal hunting, logging and poaching; or [playing games](#) to understand people's attitudes and behavior in order to prevent deforestation; or [making nature conservation work for the alleviation of poverty](#). Conservation of tropical forests needs to turn into a mass movement and if it becomes a 'front of the mind' issue for a majority of people, that can make a real difference to the future of tropical forests.

To see Shonil Bhagwat's full publications on [faith and forests](#).

This post was funded under Mongabay.org's Special Reporting Initiatives (SRI) program. To support content like this, please visit [mongabay.org](#) and consider making a tax-deductible donation.

<http://news.mongabay.com/2014/0724-forestinnovation-kimbrough-bhagwat.html>

July 27, 2014

Pope Francis renews attack on mafia in Italian region scarred by toxic waste

Reuters

ROME – Pope Francis called for nature to be protected from criminal abuse on Saturday during a visit in the southern Italian town of Caserta, near Naples, in a region long blighted by illegal toxic waste dumps and the pervasive grip of the Camorra mafia.

During a televised open air mass before around 200,000 people, Francis said that the love of God meant respecting life, the environment and nature.

“I know that you suffer for these things,” he said in an impromptu remarks during his homily in front of the Reggia di Caserta, the former palace of the old Bourbon kings of Naples. “It is particularly important in this beautiful region of yours which requires being protected and conserved, it requires us to have the courage to say no to any form of corruption and illegality.

“We all know what the name of these forms of corruption and illegality are,” he said to applause from the crowd.

While less explicit than his fierce attack on the mafia during a visit to Calabria last month, when he said those who followed the mafia’s “path of evil” were “excommunicated,” the setting of his words left no doubt of his target.

Now blighted by crime, corruption and chronically high unemployment, the region around Naples, known in ancient times as “Campania felix,” should be one of the most fertile areas of Italy due to the rich volcanic soil from Mount Vesuvius.

Instead, it has become notorious for the “terra dei fuochi,” or the “fire country,” polluted for decades by uncontrolled dumping and burnoffs of toxic waste that have been blamed for unusually high levels of cancers and other diseases.

Caserta itself lies just outside the so-called Triangle of Death, where the mortality rates are at their highest, but it is considered one of the strongholds of the Camorra, the Campania mafia, which is behind much of the illegal waste disposal.

“This magnificent region has been particularly hurt by so many deposits of waste from other parts of Italy and Europe which cause death and distress,” Giovanni D’Alise, the bishop of Caserta, said during the mass. “And there is no shortage of criminality and corruption in our region.”

The Argentina-born Francis has repeatedly attacked the Italian mafia, launching his strongest condemnation during last month’s visit to Calabria, home of the group known as “Ndrangheta,” one of the most feared crime syndicates in the world.

The pope’s trip to Caserta, where he celebrated mass in honor of the town’s patron Saint Anne, was originally intended as a private visit to see a Pentecostal pastor he befriended in Argentina. After pressure on the Vatican for the pope to make the visit to Caserta a public one, a separate, strictly private meeting with Pastor Giovanni Traettino is now expected on Monday.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/07/27/world/social-issues-world/pope-francis-renews-attack-on-mafia-in-italian-region-scarred-by-toxic-waste/#.U9fTc7FuoUh>

July 29, 2014

In Push To Protect Big Coal, Alabama Officials Say New EPA Regulations Violate God's Will

By Shadee Ashtar
The Huffington Post

Pushing back against new Environmental Protection Agency standards limiting carbon emissions from coal-fired power plants, Alabama officials [gathered](#) Monday to argue that the new federal policy flouted the Almighty's will by regulating a God-given resource.

“Who has the right to take what God's given a state?” Alabama Public Service Commission (PSC) member-elect Chip Beeker [asked](#) during a news conference held in the offices of the Alabama Coal Association on Monday, according to [AL.com](#).

By 2030, the Obama administration’s [new rules](#) would require Alabama to reduce carbon emissions from coal-fired power plants by 27 percent from 2012 levels.

Alabama's PSC officials, however, view the new standards as an "an assault" on the state's lifestyle, and are accusing the Obama administration of purposely seeking to diminish coal-related jobs.

"I will not back down," PSC President Twinkle Andress Cavanaugh said Monday, claiming that the new EPA regulations will cost Alabama 16,000 jobs. "We will not stand for what they're trying to do to our way of life."

Cavanaugh also warned that the regulations could cause a spike in utility costs for consumers, as Alabama's largely coal-powered energy industry serves as one of the nation's largest electricity generators.

"I hope all the citizens of Alabama will be in prayer that the right thing will be done," Cavanaugh [said](#), calling on Alabamians to pray for a divine intervention.

Stacie Propst, executive director of Group Against Smog and Pollution, rebutted the officials' claims in an interview with [WVTM-NBC 13](#) on Monday, blaming state officials' failure to uphold existing environmental regulations for ongoing job loss in Jefferson County.

"Our state officials are not enforcing the current laws," Propst said, claiming that Mercedes and other car plants were forced to build outside the county due to excess pollution. "We are polluting so much in this city and we're one of the dirtiest cities in the nation so we're not allowed to bring in additional pollution."

The EPA has [estimated](#) that, nationally, the reduced emissions will produce climate and health benefits worth an estimated \$55 billion to \$93 billion per year in 2030, preventing 2,700 to 6,600 premature deaths and up to 150,000 asthma attacks in children.

Cavanaugh and other Alabama GOP leaders were scheduled to testify on the regulations on Tuesday at an Atlanta EPA hearing.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/29/alabama-coal-epa-god_n_5630945.html?ir=Green

July 30, 2014

Religious Conservatives Embrace Pollution Fight

By Theodore Schleifer
New York Times

WASHINGTON — The Rev. Lennox Yearwood punched his fist in the air as he rhythmically boomed into the microphone: "This is a moment for great leadership. This is a moment for our country to stand up. This is our moment."

But Mr. Yearwood's audience was not a church. It was the Environmental Protection Agency.

The E.P.A. on Wednesday ended [two days of public hearings](#) on its proposed regulation to cut carbon pollution from power plants, and mixed in with the coal lobbyists and business executives were conservative religious leaders reasserting their support for President Obama's environmental policies — at a time when Republican Party orthodoxy continues to question the science of climate change.

More than two dozen faith leaders, including evangelicals and conservative Christians, spoke at the E.P.A. headquarters in Washington by the time the hearings ended.

"The science is clear," said [Lisa Sharon Harper](#), the senior director of mobilizing for [Sojourners](#), an evangelical organization with a social justice focus. "The calls of city governments — who are trying to create sustainable environments for 25, 50 years — that's clear."

Ms. Harper was one of about 20 interfaith activists who quietly sang "Hallelujah" and Jewish spirituals in a prayer circle outside the environmental agency's 12th Street entrance here on Tuesday. Mr. Yearwood and three other faith leaders spoke at the hearings on Tuesday, and about 20 others did on Wednesday.

Although many of the faith leaders came from traditionally progressive congregations, like black churches, synagogues and mainstream Protestant denominations, others were more conservative Christians who reflect a growing embrace of environmentalism by parts of the religious right. This week's hearings on the new E.P.A. rule gave them an opportunity to make their argument that climate change hurts the world's poor through natural disasters, droughts and rising sea levels, and that it is part of their faith to protect the planet.

"I have been called by God to speak out on these issues and believe it is my conviction as an evangelical Christian that we must be stewards of God's creation," the Rev. Richard Cizik, a former top lobbyist for the National Association of Evangelicals and now president of the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good, said in prepared remarks on Wednesday.

The agency is also holding hearings this week in Atlanta, Denver and Pittsburgh.

Five years ago, only 34 percent of white evangelical Protestants agreed that solid evidence existed that the earth was warming because of human activity, according to a [poll](#) by the Pew Research Center. An additional 31 percent said that no evidence existed proving global warming whatsoever. Recent polling shows that many evangelicals are still skeptics.

"For the most part, people in the climate advocacy movement are ignoring a number of various biblical texts that are more specifically relevant to the issue," said E. Calvin Beisner, spokesman for the [Cornwall Alliance](#), an evangelical organization opposed to the E.P.A. rule. "They're quoting broad general texts that everyone would agree with."

But in recent years a number of conservative religious groups have embraced global warming as a serious concern. The National Association of Evangelicals began pushing for an assertive

climate change policy during the George W. Bush administration. The Christian Coalition, founded by Pat Robertson, unsuccessfully lobbied in 2009 and 2010 for a climate change bill.

“Rather than letting our faith dictate our politics, we’ve gotten to the point for many of us where we’re letting our politics — typically what the Republican Party says — dictate our faith,” Katharine Hayhoe, an evangelical Christian and a climate scientist at Texas Tech, said in a phone interview. “Caring about God’s creation and caring about God’s people is entirely consistent with caring for your neighbor.”

In addition, groups like the [Evangelical Environmental Network](#) have grown over the past five years, said the network’s president, Mitch Hescoc, by making a different argument than typical environmentalists make.

“This is not about polar bears; it’s not about future life; it’s about current reality and children’s health,” Mr. Hescoc, a Republican who was scheduled to speak at the E.P.A. hearing in Pittsburgh on Thursday, said in a telephone interview. “We’re not going to get anywhere if it remains a liberal issue.”

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/31/us/religious-conservatives-embrace-proposed-epa-rules.html?_r=1

July 31, 2014

Hindus Support Sweden’s Sami Battling Iron Mine

Eurasia Review

Hindus have expressed support for Sami reindeer herders in northern Sweden who are battling an iron ore mine.

Hindu statesman Rajan Zed has urged Swedish authorities not to approve British company Beowulf Mining’s application for a 25-year mining concession, known as Kallak project. Sweden should not base its decision on mercantile greed only and put people first instead of profit first, Zed added in a statement in Nevada (USA) today.

Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, argued that proposed mine and its infrastructure on this ancient land could endanger the livelihood of Sami community; affecting reindeer grazing, migration and herding; and thus destroying Sami culture and their unique way of life.

Rajan Zed stressed that Swedish authorities should show more responsibility to its Sami community by protecting their traditional rights and not bowing to powerful mining lobby, properly follow Swedish law and international conventions, and consult the area Sami

communities before making any final decision. He urged intervention of Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt.

Zed further said that mining in this area; dominated by nature reserves, national parks, spruce woods, sparkling lakes and stunning mountain environment; reportedly would have negative implications on wilderness, could lead to the contamination of a river next to the proposed mine site and could adversely affect the environment. Moreover, mine sat on a popular spring grazing ground for the reindeer.

Rajan Zed suggested Beowulf to abandon its Kallak project; thus ensuring the survival of unique culture of Sami, Europe's only indigenous people, who faced uncertain future.

Zed pointed out that world needed to save the culture of the Sami (who had lived in the area for over 5,000 years, predating the founding of Sweden), which generations of Sami community had tried to preserve, nourishing a harmony with nature philosophy.

Rajan Zed also appealed to the United Nations to intervene to protect Sami rights and help preserving their spiritual and cultural identity. Mine could also be threat to nearby Lapponia World Heritage Site of UNESCO, known for its outstanding natural beauty and cultural importance for the Sami. Exploitation and encroachment of areas, where Sami communities functioned and lived; and damage to Sami grazing lands needed to stop, Zed added.

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/31072014-hindus-support-swedens-sami-battling-iron-mine/>

August 2014

SAFCEI - South African Faith Communities Institute Newsletter

<http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=10502dcd54&e=a758405790>

August 2014

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=51&key=6d29d5f24239371e05d329b47c30422d&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

August 9, 2014

Swimming Against the Rising Tide

Secular Climate-Change Activists Can Learn From Evangelical Christians

By Kristin Dombek
New York Times

IT never feels like summer starts until the first time I go to the beach. To stand nearly naked and heavy from winter on the water's edge, wade awkwardly into the shallows, dive under the first cold wave, taste first salt, surface and dive again to reach the calmer waters beyond, floating there until water and skin become the same temperature — this is the best way I know to belong again, body and soul, to some larger part of the planet, not just the city, not just the job. But it's already August, and I still haven't gone swimming.

I teach, so I spent May reading student papers. When the school year ended and I caught up on the news, California was burning, Alaska melting and the Northeast soaking. The 2014 National Climate Assessment [report](#) explained that what we've been thinking of as the future is happening now. Then scientists [announced](#) that the West Antarctic ice sheet had begun to split apart, so the rising of ocean waters was pretty much irreversible.

The National Climate Assessment also argued that cutting emissions would still mitigate costs substantially, but Gallup [reported](#) that 25 percent of Americans were sure all this had nothing to do with greenhouse gases. Among evangelical Christians, it was [58 percent](#).

Outside, the bus stops of New York City were wrapped in signs that depicted rising floods and said "Know Your Zone." I learned that my zone is Five. Beyond this, I was unsure what to do.

At some point in June, a friend and I stood aimlessly on a Brooklyn street corner. "Dude," I said, "New York is a beach town. We live in a beach town." He looked around at the heavy brick buildings, the plane trees and lindens, and chuckled. I did not say, "The ocean is coming." I knew better than to get apocalyptic.

Opinion pieces about global-warming deniers did not, though: Faith was trumping reason in America, they said. Belief in God would bring on the deluge. This didn't help me know how to feel, living next to the rising ocean.

"Belong, body and soul." When I want to describe what swimming in the ocean feels like, this phrase comes to me. It is from the Heidelberg Catechism. As a child, when I felt scared, I'd repeat the first question — What is your only comfort in life and in death? — and answer to myself, "That I am not my own, but belong — body and soul, in life and in death — to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ."

My belief in this was the bridge between my otherwise insignificant life and the universe: I was not my own, but belonged to something bigger. But it also meant I was scared a lot. Atheists, evolutionary biologists, abortionists and climate scientists wanted to tear down that bridge — or so I'd heard — by denying that the history of the planet was God's story, not ours.

It was hard to understand who would want to do this — only arrogant people, people who presumed they could comprehend the world with merely human minds, who wanted to put their concerns at the center of the world, no matter the cost.

It sounds a lot like what everyone around me thinks now about global-warming deniers, fossil-fuel executives and the politicians who protect them. Others' skepticism can feel like the end of the world: They must be evil, they have all the power and what can we possibly do about it?

I know to be suspicious of apocalyptic thinking, my own and everyone else's. Numb denial of global warming will not do, but neither will helpless fear. I worry that among believers and deniers alike, blame is a way of avoiding a deeper problem, the problem of scale: How do we bridge the distance between our own seemingly insignificant lives and actions and the scale of climate change, so global and so slow?

IN Indiana, where I'm from, ocean beaches are a faraway thing, so as a child I learned to swim in a Y.M.C.A. pool. Later in life, it is easy to forget just how hard it is to figure out that you can trust the water. You must be calm and attentive exactly when you are most scared. This is why, when adults teach you to swim, they trick you. They say, "Swim to me, I'm right here" and then back up, so you learn with your body what is possible, despite what your mind is telling you. You have to trust things outside of yourself more than you trust your instincts: your parents, the floor, chairs, bicycles, water. God, and science.

That ought to help us empathize with global warming deniers, and not just among the faithful. Most evangelicals — 76 percent — don't even believe in natural selection, but then neither do 42 percent of all Americans. It is a long journey from finding science arrogant to being humbled by it, and it's only harder to make when you're being blamed for the end of the world.

The summer after I lost my faith, when I first began dreaming of New York, I got into the habit of driving to Lake Michigan alone, to swim. I couldn't yet fathom evolution and natural selection, which seemed to require more faith than the religion I'd left behind, so even though I could no longer believe in God, I had no good theory about how the world came to be.

In serious limbo, I went repeatedly to the edge of land and walked into the water. Floating until my skin was pruned, I felt my insignificance in the world next to the scale of the great lake and its long beaches, but at the same time, my actual physical connection to every molecule of it. Without knowing it, I was feeling out a new bridge between my life and the universe.

I had begun to suspect that the story I'd left behind, the religious one, was the more human-centered one, and in its own way, arrogant, assuming as it did that the ways of the universe are like human ways: houses have to have builders, paintings have to have painters, the world must have a maker.

It took many more years to start believing in evolution. I had to make a study of it, look at the finches myself, learn with my mind what I had felt in the water. Even when I knew the facts, it took a leap of faith to glimpse — only ever in moments — the interconnectedness of all life on an unfathomable scale.

It is hard to understand that the ways of the universe are not human ways. But it is hard, too, to face this ocean, so changed by us, without hiding in either fear or denial. To stay awake, active, useful, is a matter of feeling as much as knowing. You have to trust that your individual life is linked to something bigger: that you belong, body and soul, to a larger story for which you are responsible. In this, those of us who believe the science might take a lesson from the faithful. And the rhetoric that would pit faith against reason ignores the millions — all of us, perhaps — who live on both.

It is summer, whether or not I go to the beach. But soon I'll take a train to stand on the edge of the Atlantic, walk into the ocean I fear, and trust it to hold me up. I hope it will be a small kind of prayer for the future, less mystical than pragmatic, to feel in my body what is so hard to fathom: This vast and humbling contingency that's made the waters rise is also what makes my life matter, because other creatures — human and otherwise — will live in my wake. What threatens us is also our only comfort: It matters what we do. To swim in the ocean now is to swim into the future and know that we have made it.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/10/opinion/sunday/secular-climate-change-activists-can-learn-from-evangelical-christians.html?emc=edit_tnt_20140809&nid=1099394&tnemail0=y&r=1

August 13, 2014

F&ES Launches First Online Courses in Religion and Ecology

By Kevin Dennehy

Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES)

Across the world, the ecological and policy implications of climate change become more obvious with each passing year. But Professors **Mary Evelyn Tucker** and **John Grim** of the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES) suggest that for the global community to adequately respond to the crisis it has to recognize another key element: Climate change is also a moral and social justice issue.

As communities worldwide face the consequences of rising seas, drought, and food shortages, religious leaders are adding their voices to the climate discussion. Indeed, these leaders are increasingly speaking on a range of environmental issues, from biodiversity loss to deforestation to toxic pollution.

The study of how religious traditions interact with the natural world — and how these communities can play a greater role in environmental stewardship — is a field that Tucker and

Grim have helped develop for more than two decades in the classroom and through the [Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale](#).

This fall, they will introduce this emerging field to the world of online education for the first time, offering a “blended learning” version of two of their courses — [Introductions to Religion and Ecology](#) and [Western Religions and Ecology](#). [[View the syllabi](#) | [Watch videos](#)]

During the spring semester, they will offer the introductory course and East Asian Religions and Ecology. Over the next three years they will also teach online courses in South Asian Religions, Indigenous Religions, and Native American Religions and Ecology. The Introductions to Religion and Ecology class is a prerequisite for all the other courses.

“What religions can contribute is long-term and sustained change,” said Tucker. “The values that people hold are very complex — and certainly debatable — but can actually lead to change in behavior and policy. We saw that during the Civil Rights movement and with the transformations in India due to Gandhi.

Grim added: “We recognize that religions can be problematic. However, religion and cultural values are among the factors that need to be part of the conversation, along with science and policy, in leading to a sustainable future.”

Tucker and Grim direct the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale and are senior lecturers and senior researchers at F&ES. They have coordinated many conferences on this topic, edited a ten-volume series, and published a new book, *Ecology and Religion*, with Island Press. They teach in the joint program between F&ES and Yale Divinity School.

The online courses will initially be open only to Yale students for two credits each. Eventually the professors intend to make them available for a wider audience.

Tucker says the six-week courses, which will be introduced over the next three years, are uniquely suited for an online format. The curriculum explores the scriptural resources and ecological understandings of religious communities worldwide, from the major religions to local indigenous traditions.

The digital format will enable the instructors to incorporate interviews, videos, and other multimedia resources that are difficult to utilize in a traditional classroom setting.

While the main lectures will be viewable each week during the course, students will also be able to meet for discussion once a week with the instructors.

“So many students are studying ecological issues, but the science can sometimes be difficult to translate into policy,” said **Matthew Riley**, the Online Education Specialist in Religion and Ecology at F&ES. “Students are seeking ways to engage with communities across the globe, and courses like these provide them with the knowledge, skills, and cultural literacy necessary to communicate environmental values.”

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

<http://environment.yale.edu/news/article/fes-launches-first-online-course-in-religion-and-ecology/>

August 15, 2014

LCWR members set sights on justice for indigenous peoples, environment

By Dan Stockman
National Catholic Reporter

The largest leadership organization for U.S. women religious on Thursday called on Pope Francis to repudiate the doctrine of discovery, a 15th-century policy justifying violence against indigenous peoples.

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious, made up of Catholic women religious who are leaders of their orders in the United States, represents about 80 percent of the 51,600 women religious in the United States. Nearly 800 of the group's 1,400 members have gathered here for their four-day annual conference.

In a closed session Thursday, members voted to adopt a resolution calling on the pope "to lead us in formally repudiating the period of Christian history that used religion to justify political and personal violence against indigenous nations and peoples and their cultural, religious and territorial identities."

According to the resolution, modern-day indigenous people continue to suffer as a direct result of the doctrine formalized in papal bulls from the 1400s, including *Dum Diversas*, *Romanus Pontifex* and *Inter Caetera*.

Dum Diversas, issued in 1452, authorized the conquering of Muslims and pagans and enslaving them, a policy reiterated by the other two papal bulls.

The resolution also asks Pope Francis to publicly clarify and repudiate any remaining legal status of the bulls and to issue a pastoral statement to the courts of former colonial nations, urging them to change elements of their laws derived from the papal bulls that continue to harm indigenous people.

Also approved was a resolution urging the transition to renewable energy sources.

"We commit ourselves to use our spiritual, social, and educational resources and our public credibility to promote the national transition from fossil fuel energy sources to renewable energy sources as quickly as possible," the resolution read.

Members then moved to an open session, where they heard from a panel on environmental issues, including mountain-top removal coal mining, hydraulic fracturing (known as "fracking") to tap oil and natural gas, climate change, and pipelines carrying hazardous liquids.

"What I see is a world hurtling toward self-destruction," said Claire McGowan, a Dominican sister. "The human community faces its largest crisis it has ever faced in our long, evolutionary history. We call this crisis 'climate change,' and the crisis exists precisely because of fossil fuel usage."

McGowan noted that dozens of religious communities have transitioned from using fossil fuels to renewable energy sources such as solar, geothermal and wind.

Loretto Sr. Maureen O'Connell talked to the group about mountain-top removal coal mining, in which entire mountains are mined away, and grassroots activist Debra Pekny talked about her and her husband's efforts to fight the proposed Bluegrass Pipeline. The project has since been suspended.

"It was the grassroots efforts of everyday people ... that was a huge factor in that decision," Pekny said. "Every person in this room has the power to make things happen."

The group then attempted to put that power to work by filling out postcards to lawmakers who have led efforts to protect the environment, thanking them for their work.

The assembly concludes Friday evening, when St. Joseph Sr. Elizabeth Johnson is to receive LCWR's Outstanding Leadership Award. Johnson is a noted theologian widely considered one of the architects of feminist theology. She has been criticized by a panel of American bishops for her 2007 book, *Quest for the Living God*, which the panel said is not in accordance with official Catholic teaching, a charge she has denied.

MORE: [All stories from the LCWR 2014 assembly](#) [1]

[Dan Stockman is national correspondent for Global Sisters Report. His email address is dstockman@ncronline.org [2]. Follow him on Twitter: [@DanStockman](#) [3].]

Links:

[1] <http://ncronline.org/feature-series/lcwr-2014>

[2] <mailto:dstockman@ncronline.org>

[3] <http://www.twitter.com/danstockman>

<http://ncronline.org/news/peace-justice/lcwr-members-set-sights-justice-indigenous-peoples-environment>

August 20, 2014

Churches at the Frontline of Climate Action

By Melanie Mattauch
Inter Press Service

LUSATIA, Germany - Johannes Kapelle has been playing the organ in the Protestant church of Proschim since he was 14. The 78-year-old is actively involved in his community, produces his own solar power and has raised three children with his wife on their farm in Proschim, a small village of 360 inhabitants in Lusatia, Germany.

Now the church, his farm, the forest he loves dearly and his entire village is threatened with demolition to leave space for expansion of Swedish energy giant Vattenfall's lignite (also known as brown coal) operations to feed its power plants. Nearly all of the fuel carbon (99 percent) in lignite is [converted to CO₂](#) – a major greenhouse gas – during the combustion process.

For Kapelle, this is inconceivable: “In Proschim, we’ve managed effortlessly to supply our community with clean energy by setting up a wind park and a biogas plant. Nowadays, it is just irresponsible to expand lignite mining.”

The desolate landscape the giant diggers leave behind stretches as far as the eye can see from just a few hundred metres outside Proschim.

“It’s only going to take about a quarter of a year to burn the entire coal underneath Proschim. But the land is going to be destroyed forever. You won’t even be able to enter vast areas of land anymore because it will be prone to erosion. You won’t be able to grow anything on that soil anymore either. No potatoes, no tomatoes, nothing,” says Kappelle.

Some 70 km northeast of Proschim, Protestant pastor Mathias Berndt also sees his community under threat. His church in Atterwasch has been around for 700 years and even survived the Thirty Years’ War in the 17th century. Now it is supposed to make way for Vattenfall’s *Jänschwalde Nord* open cast lignite mine.

The 64-year-old has been Atterwasch’s pastor since 1977 and refuses to accept that his community will be destroyed: “As Christians, we have a responsibility to cultivate and protect God’s creation. That’s what it says in the Bible. We’re pretty good at cultivating but protection is lacking. That’s why I’ve been trying to stop the destruction of nature since the days of the German Democratic Republic.”

“Vattenfall’s plans to expand its mines have given this fight a new dimension,” Berndt adds. “This is now also about preventing our forced displacement.”

Berndt is currently involved in organising a huge protest on August 23 – a [human chain](#) connecting a German and Polish village threatened by coal mining in the region. He has also been pushing his church to step up its efforts to curb climate change.

As a result, his regional synod has positioned itself against new coal mines, lignite power plants and the demolition of further villages. It is also offering churches advice on energy savings and deploying renewable energy. The parsonage in Atterwasch, for example, has been equipped with solar panels.

Despite Germany's ambitions for an energy transition, its so-called *Energiewende*, the country's CO₂ emissions have been rising again for the past two years, for the first time since the country's reunification. This is primarily due to Germany's coal-fired power plants, and brown coal power stations in particular.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has recently confirmed that it is still possible to limit global warming below 2° C. But there is only a limited CO₂ budget left to meet this goal and avert runaway climate change.

The IPCC estimates that investments in fossil fuels would need to fall by 30 billion dollars a year, while investments in low-carbon electricity supply would have to increase by 147 billion dollars a year.

As a result, more and more faith leaders are calling for divestment from fossil fuels. One of the most powerful advocates has been Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former South African Anglican Archbishop, Desmond Tutu, who recently [called](#) for an “anti-apartheid style boycott of the fossil fuel industry”.

Tutu's call to action has been echoed by U.N. climate chief Christiana Figueres, who has [urged religious leaders](#) to pull their investments out of fossil fuel companies.

Many churches have taken this step already. Last month, the World Council of Churches, a fellowship of over 300 churches representing some 590 million people in 150 countries, decided to phase out its holdings in fossil fuels and encouraged its members to do the same.

The Quakers in the United Kingdom, the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, the United Church of Christ in the United States, and many more regional and local churches have also joined the divestment movement.

The Church of Sweden was among the first to rid itself of oil and coal investments. It increased investments in energy-efficient and low-carbon projects instead, which also improved its portfolio's financial performance.

Gunnela Hahn, head of ethical investments at the Church of Sweden's central office explains: “We realised that many of our largest holdings were within the fossil industry. That catalysed the idea of more closely aligning investments with the ambitious work going on in the rest of the church on climate change. ”

Meanwhile, from the frontline, pastor Berndt calls for putting ethics first: “What we're seeing today is the result of putting economic thinking at the forefront. Our mantra is to just continue

doing things as long as they generate profit. We need to counteract this trend with ethical thinking. We need to do what's right!"

* *Melanie Mattauch is 350.org Europe Communications Coordinator*

(Edited by [Phil Harris](#))

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/08/churches-at-the-frontline-of-climate-action/>

August 25, 2014

Warrior up! A totem pole journey against big coal

By Beth Doglio
Climate Solutions

The Lummi Nation's annual [Totem Pole Journey](#) is taking a stand against coal and oil export in our region. Stand with them this week at events in Spokane, Olympia, Seattle and the San Juans!

Coal and oil extraction and export threaten the lands, waters, resources and human health of all of us, but none more so than the indigenous people who sit right in the path of destruction. The coal terminal proposed for Cherry Point, WA would sit right on the ancestral lands of the Lummi. The mining of that coal would destroy Northern Cheyenne lands in Montana, and transport by rail would harm the fishing and treaty rights of Native Americans all along the way.

In protest against dirty and dangerous coal export and oil transport, Lummi carver Jewell James has created a new totem pole, which representatives from different tribes are taking on a journey from the Lummi ancestral home at Cherry Point to where the pole will be erected in the tar sands of Alberta. Along the way, tribal elders and community leaders will bless the totem pole.

Please take part in this important journey by attending one of these stops along the way:

- **Spokane:** August 26th, 11-12:30pm at The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist 127 E 12th Ave ([Info and RSVP](#))
- **Olympia (updated time!):** Wednesday, August 27th, 5pm at Medicine Creek, Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. To *RSVP for the event or for information on carpools from south of Olympia email beth@climatesolutions.org*
- **Seattle:** Friday, August 29th, 11am-12:30 pm at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, 1245 10th Ave East ([Info and RSVP](#))
- **San Juan islands:** Friday, August 29, 7-8 pm at San Juan Island National Historical Park "English Camp" on San Juan Island. ([Info and RSVP](#))

In the testimony of Master Carver Jewell James, the totem pole itself is not sacred—it is only when it is touched and shared by many communities standing together that the totem becomes a lasting part of our memories and a symbol of our resistance.

By taking part, we can let the Lummi community know that we stand with them in the fight against fossil fuels, and that we share the responsibility to protect the land, the waters, and the peoples of the Northwest.

For more information visit www.totempolejourney.org, like the [Facebook page](#), or follow #totempolejourney on Twitter.

<http://www.climatesolutions.org/article/1408983677-warrior-totem-pole-journey-against-big-coal>

August 25, 2014

Science and Religion talk for Science Week and beyond

St. Columbans Mission Society

How do the traditional 'creation stories' of the world's great religions engage with the 21st century story of the evolution of the universe? This is a question that needs to be part of the conversation in all religious traditions. Fundamentalist responses just don't work in this scientific age.

The Journey of the Universe is a film that helps this discussion along. On Thursday evening 7th August, 140 people from different faiths gathered in the Mitchell Theatre in Sydney to watch the film and address this question. The Emmy Award winning documentary sparked much discussion.

Conversations reflected on how greater knowledge of science changes perceptions of traditional religious 'creation stories'. Described as an epic story of cosmic, earth and human transformation the film is presented by Brian Swimme, who collaborates with Mary Evelyn Tucker from Yale University's Forum on Religion and Ecology.

The word “awesome”, so commonly parleyed around, is truly to be used when contemplating the evolution of the whole of life. When we look at things on a cosmic scale we humans are put in our proper place. We ask, *Why are we here?* It is clear that as a species, we have been destructive yet we have the ability to be so creative. The film's approach enabled responses from many different perspectives and encouraged dialogue amongst the different faiths represented.

Following the show Maria Maguire, a community educator, inspired the audience to share their first reactions to the film. Teachers from five major religions spoke briefly about how the new knowledge of the origin of the universe is leading to changing understandings of their traditional scriptural teaching. The teachers were Venerable Tejadhammo Bhikku (Buddhist), Reverend Professor Dean Drayton (Christian), Dr Meenakshri Srinivasan (Hindu), Rabbi Paul Lewin (Jewish) and Mr Mehmet Ozalp (Muslim).

One young man also commented, "I think the highlight was mixing science and religion so cohesively". "It's great that the ecological message is getting out to a wider community," said another.

Gill Burrows shared her insight, "It was good to have an audience from different traditions, given the opportunity to meet and converse. We will only advance and survive together."

The film screening was hosted by the Faith Ecology Network ([FEN](#)). FEN is an Australian interfaith network of people committed to their faith traditions and to caring for the earth.

Anne Lanyon, Co-ordinator of FEN and Co-ordinator for the Columban Centre for Peace, Ecology and Justice ([PEJ](#)) said, "It was wonderful to see people from different faiths come together to learn from this fantastic film, to be filled with wonder at the mind boggling complexity of life in all its forms and to see the drastic impact the human species is having on the 'blue dot' in the universe, Earth.

We need to change our attitudes. We hope and trust that this will kick start more of these gatherings across the country and lead to positive creative actions by, in and between faith communities."

Watch highlights from the event:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImjUAdAdeSs>

For further information please contact:

Anne Lanyon

Centre for Peace, Ecology and Justice
Columban Mission Institute

Address:

167 Albert Rd Strathfield NSW 2135
PO Box 2002 Strathfield NSW 2135

Phone: (02) 9352 8021

Fax: (02) 9746 8033

Email: pej.cmi@columban.org.au

<http://www.columban.org.au/archives/features/2014/science-and-religion-talk>

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

For more information, contact:

Melissa Gorelick, Information Officer, UNEP

Tel. :+254 20 762 3088 / Email: Melissa.Gorelick@unep.org

Emily Benson, Programme Manager, GEC

Tel./ Email: Emily.benson@greeneconomycoalition.org

<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 though 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.

For more information, please contact:

At UNEP:

Shereen Zorba, Head of News and Media, +254 788 526000, Email: Shereen.Zorba@unep.org

At WMO:

Clare Nullis, Media Officer, Communications and Public Affairs, Tel: [+41 \(0\)22 730 8478](tel:+41227308478); e-mail: cnullis@wmo.int

Co-Chairs of the ozone assessment:

Prof. John Pyle, University of Cambridge and National Centre for Atmospheric Science UK; Tel: [+44 1223 336473](tel:+441223336473) or [+44 7733446983](tel:+447733446983)

Dr. Paul Newman, NASA/ Goddard Space Flight Center, USA; Tel: [+1 301 614 5985](tel:+13016145985)

Prof. A.R. (Ravi) Ravishankara, Colorado State University, USA; Tel: [+1 970 491 2876](tel:+19704912876)

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 adaption. 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:

- "Disecclar: 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. Disecclar 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:

Amélie Heuër, Programme Manager, amelie.heuer@seedinit.org

UNEP News Desk, unepnewsdesk@unep.org, +254 725 939 620

<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 is 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.

[Media Contact:](#)

Robert Monroe | 858-534-3624 | scrippsnews@ucsd.edu

<https://scripps.ucsd.edu/news/appeal-science-leaders-religious-leaders-environmental-protection?hash=2692c6fd7e627bd1543bebafe375a12>

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 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 Americans 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://insideclimatenews.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 the 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 take 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.

<http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/rockefellers-give-oil>

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 Ban 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."

For more information, please contact:

Shereen Zorba, Head of News and Media, UNEP +254 788 526000, Shereen.Zorba@unep.org

Niamh Brannigan, News and Media, UNEP +254 717733348, Niamh.Brannigan@unep.org

James Sniffen, Programme Officer, UNEP New York, +1-212-963-8094, sniffenj@un.org

Natacha Sharp, Head of Press Relations and Digital Communication, Amundi +33176378605, Natacha.Sharp@amundi.com

Ashleigh Lezard, Financial Communications Manager, +447811428030, ashleigh.lezard@cdp.net or Chris Thorpe, +44 7582 785472, Chris.Thorpe@cdp.net

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 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 Nuttal 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 YamunaJiye 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 Myslivi
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&nlid=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 Hescox 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, Hescox 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.

Hescox'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.

Hescox 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 Hescox'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 ears 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

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 affects 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)

Links of Interest

[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 "Ecozoic" 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. Ilia 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," Chrysavgis 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 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 Celcius 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.

Erin Lothes, Ph.D. is an assistant professor of Theology at the College of St. Elizabeth (USA)

<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 ARCC, 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 ARRC-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](#)

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-counter-acting-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 Academies 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