

News Items from UNEP and Other Sources May – August 2014

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].]

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Links:

- [1] <http://www.casinapioiv.va/content/accademia/en/events/2014/sustainable.html>
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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 distrustful 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.

Media Contact: Dr. Ved Chaudhary ved@hinduamericanseva.org (732-853-2666)

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 billion, 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>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/07/blessed-tmrw-launch-idUSn4fkVQ9+86+PRN20140507>

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

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+change/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.ekkleisia.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 reimagined.

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=062330fdb1782907c6da323be91f9e1&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 (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 Potoènik. “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.masjiduntucson.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.”

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/wcc-announces-september-interfaith-summit-on-climate-change>

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](#).

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<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 Address 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&nlid=1099394&tntemail0=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>
