

Religion and Ecology News Articles

2018

January 3, 2018

Pope to hear from indigenous about ministry, land rights in Chile, Peru

By Barbara J. Fraser
National Catholic Reporter

TEMUCO, Chile — Sergio Catalaf's son was just 3 days old when police arrested the Mapuche Indian leader, accusing him of terrorism. He and 10 other Mapuche leaders spent 14 months in preventive detention before being acquitted in October of setting fire to a farmhouse in which an elderly couple died.

Sitting in his simple wooden house, cradling the child on his lap as a light rain fell outside, Catalaf said he and others have been targeted unjustly because they are defending their people's right to their ancestral territory.

He would like Pope Francis to speak out about that when the pontiff visits Temuco Jan. 17.

Pope Francis' weeklong trip to Chile and Peru in January will take him to two regions that are among those countries' poorest, where environmental issues and demands for indigenous land rights have led to sometimes-violent conflict.

In the Araucania region of southern Chile, Mapuche communities have been stripped of their land repeatedly — first by Spanish colonists, then by settlers who moved to the region to farm, and more recently by timber plantations.

The pope will celebrate Mass here and share lunch with a small group of "simple people, ordinary people from the region," according to Bishop Hector Vargas Bastidas of Temuco.

Vargas said he expects the pope to bring a message "of hope, that hearts may be opened to peace, justice and dialogue."

Pope Francis is slated to meet with Amazonian indigenous people in Peru's southeastern Madre de Dios region Jan. 19. His visit comes at a time when Wampis and Achuar people in Peru's northern Amazon region, as well as groups in other parts of the country, are seeking greater autonomy and territorial rights.

Those rights are at the heart of conflicts in southern Chile, where protests have been marked by violence in recent years. Besides the burning of the home in the case in which Catalaf was acquitted, protesters have burned evangelical and Catholic churches, although indigenous leaders also have received support from the church.

The construction of hydroelectric dams on the Biobio River displaced indigenous communities and remains contentious, and recent decades have seen the expansion of pine and eucalyptus plantations across vast areas of southern Chile.

The plantations have depleted local water supplies and occupied areas claimed by Mapuche communities. Although they provide some local jobs, a study in 2016 found that plantations have done little to reduce poverty in the Araucania region, which remains one of the poorest in Chile.

Plantations have displaced indigenous people, who traditionally farmed, fished or raised livestock. They also have left little of the native forest that is the center of Mapuche spirituality, said Isolde Reuque Paillalef, a Mapuche woman and coordinator of indigenous ministry for the Diocese of Temuco.

The Chilean government has been purchasing or allocating state land to be turned over to Mapuche communities that have documents proving rights predating the arrival of settlers. But some communities have received land that is too far from their communities to be of practical use, or that lacks water and electricity, she said. In other cases, the cost of moving to the new land and building houses is prohibitive.

Nevertheless, Mapuche communities maintain their identity and their traditional religion, particularly the "nguillatun," a communal ritual that strengthens and renews bonds among the community members, Reuque said.

"This is a people of faith, which, despite everything, has not lost its values, its love for the earth and its own identity," she said.

Some bishops and priests are reluctant to support the movement to strengthen indigenous identity and traditional rituals, Reuque said, but others have embraced it.

Just outside the city of Temuco, Fr. Juan Antonio Gonzalez lives in a simple, wooden house in an area the diocese has designated as a Mapuche parish. Like his neighbors, he tends a flock of chickens in a pen beside his home.

He has no plans to build a church building for people whose traditional place of worship has been the forest. Instead he visits the communities scattered throughout his parish, including more than a dozen that have Christian communities founded more than four decades ago, when Maryknoll missionaries from the United States worked here.

"That network of Christian communities is what most strengthens the Mapuche culture," Gonzalez said. "Our work is to accompany the Mapuche people, supporting the good initiatives that spring from them" and strengthening their cultural identity.

"The Mapuche people's demands are just," he said, adding that although the Chilean government and the Mapuche people must resolve them, the Catholic Church can help by encouraging dialogue.

Pope Francis will hear similar concerns about territorial rights, environmental damage and the need for indigenous ministry when he travels to Puerto Maldonado, in the southeastern Peruvian Amazon, Jan. 19.

Home to some of the world's most biodiverse parks, that area has been devastated by a gold rush that has left large expanses of barren land pockmarked with pit mines. The wildcat mining has led to forced labor, trafficking of women and girls for prostitution, and one of the highest murder rates in the country.

Indigenous people from vicariates throughout the Amazon will travel to Puerto Maldonado for a meeting with the pope. Most will be leaders of Christian communities in their parishes or villages. Some will be from areas where communities have suffered oil spills or invasion by wildcat gold miners, while others have seen their forests razed and replaced with oil palm plantations.

Amazonian indigenous communities are among the poorest in the country, and often lack basic services such as safe water, sanitation and electricity.

The lack of basic services, along with poor schools and scarce job opportunities, drives many indigenous people to cities. They often live in the most impoverished urban neighborhoods.

Many conceal their indigenous roots to avoid discrimination, Rosa Pacaya, who leads a Christian community in La Inmaculada parish in the northeastern city of Iquitos, told CNS.

Pacaya lives in Masusa, a riverside neighborhood of houses built on stilts, which floods each year during the rainy season. The houses lack running water and sewage systems, and trash collects in the streets and under the buildings when the water recedes.

Most men in Masusa work informally, loading and unloading riverboats in the nearby port, while women care for their children and do odd jobs. Pacaya cooks and cleans in other people's houses or scavenges scraps of wood behind a sawmill to sell for firewood.

The stress of daily life takes a toll on families and leaves people little energy for mobilizing to demand better living conditions, she said.

A priest visits the chapel in her neighborhood once a month to celebrate Mass. On the other Sundays, she leads the Liturgy of the Word and catechism classes. By working with children, she hopes to draw the rest of the family into the Catholic community.

Ministry among indigenous people in both rural and urban areas requires a church with an indigenous face, said Divine Word Fr. Fernando Diaz Fernandez, who works in the parish in Quepe, a town about eight miles from Temuco.

"It would be a church that is tribal, rather than monarchic," he said. "A family church that is not patriarchal. It would be a church that learns to read the word of God in creation, to care for (creation) and respect it. A church that witnesses to the truth, seeking out our neighbors and those who suffer, and serving them."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/pope-hear-indigenous-about-ministry-land-rights-chile-peru>

January 5, 2018

Pope to teachers: Help kids live with care for all of creation

By Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Vatican City — A lifestyle that is environmentally ethical cannot be "schizophrenic" — for example, by showing more care for animals and forests, than for the plight of people, Pope Francis said.

A green lifestyle must be consistent and complete, driven by a love for God the creator and all of his creation, the pope said in a speech Jan. 5 to the Italian Association of Catholic Teachers, which held its national congress in Rome in early January.

The elementary school teachers must help children from a young age understand and practice an environmentally ethical lifestyle that must not be "schizophrenic," that is, a kind of disconnected concern for, as an example, "taking care of animals in extinction, but ignoring problems facing the elderly. No. Or defending the Amazon rainforest, but neglecting the rights of workers to have a fair wage," he said.

This approach demands teaching the importance of personal responsibility, not bombarding the children with slogans or catchy commands that someone else will have to carry out, he said. Teach children to have an enthusiastic appetite for "experiencing an environmental ethics that stem from the choices and behaviors in daily life," he said.

The pope also encouraged teachers and schools to rebuild a new alliance with families that mutually supports and strengthens each other.

The educational alliance or "pact" that once existed among the state, schools and parents unfortunately "is broken" and must be repaired, he said.

Since constructive collaboration no longer comes "naturally," plan and design a way for it to happen, even with the help of experts in education, said the pope, who used to teach at a Jesuit high school in Buenos Aires.

"But even before that, foster a new 'conspiracy' — and I am fully aware of this wording — between teachers and parents," becoming jointly responsible accomplices to promote the well-being of children, he said.

Teachers and parents cannot see each other as opposing forces and or point fingers at each other, he said, but rather, they must put themselves "in the other's shoes, understanding the real difficulties both sides face today in education, and thus creating greater solidarity, a supportive collusion."

Pope Francis also urged the Catholic teachers to continue to be inspired by their Christian values, whether they teach in public or private Catholic schools, and to encourage their students to be open to others in a "culture of encounter."

The challenge is to work together to teach kids to be open to and interested in what is around them, he said.

They need to be "capable of caring and tenderness — I am thinking of bullying here — free from widespread fallacies" that claim the only way to be worth anything is "to be competitive, aggressive and tough toward others, especially toward those who are different, foreign or seen as being an obstacle in some way to one's personal success," he said.

"Unfortunately, this is the 'air' our children often breathe," he said. The remedy is to give them a "change of air" that is healthier and more humane, he said, which is why it is important teachers build a new alliance with parents.

Help kids see others as brothers and sisters to be respected and as worthwhile in getting to know "with their past, their virtues and defects, assets and limits," he said.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/francis-chronicles/pope-teachers-help-kids-live-care-all-creation>

January 8, 2018

Organizers want 'Black Nazarene' festival in Philippines to go green

By Inés San Martín

Crux

Three years ago, Pope Francis shattered the all-time record for turnout for a papal Mass by drawing an estimated six million people in Manila, the capital of the Philippines. The previous record had also been set in the heavily Catholic Asian nation, when St. Pope John Paul II is

believed to have celebrated a concluding Mass at World Youth Day for somewhere between four and five million.

Yet neither of those events are even close to being the Philippines' biggest religious gathering. That pride of place belongs to the annual Black Nazarene procession, and the Asian Catholic news agency UCAN reports that this year, the week-long celebration is expected to draw close to 20 million people to Manila.

The apex will come on Tuesday, when a feast known as the *Translacion*, celebrating the passage of a sacred image from one location to another, is marked.

Every year on Jan. 9, millions gather in Manila for a procession of the *Poong itim na Nazareno*, a life-sized statue of a suffering Jesus fallen under the weight of the Cross. It's held along a three-mile route from Rizal Park, where Francis delivered his "[Thrilla in Manila](#)" in 2015, to the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene, in the district of Quiapo, where the image is kept throughout the year.

This time around, organizers are echoing the environmental-friendly message Francis delivered in the Philippines and throughout his pontificate, urging people to keep the celebration "trash-less." The appeal has been made by several environmental groups and Father Douglas Badong, vicar of the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo district.

"Let us consider our environment in our expression of faith," the priest said.

According to UCAN, Monsignor Hernando Coronel, rector of the basilica, also called on Catholics "to translate the devotion into actions that would serve the community."

"Let us become ecological stewards like how we protect the image of the Black Nazarene during the procession," he said.

Last year, over 300 tons of garbage were collected throughout the week along the route of the procession, some 70 tons after the 20-hour pilgrimage from the park to the church. These statistics led to last week's call from several pro-environment groups, urging Black Nazarene devotees to renounce littering and maintain a "zero-waste" policy during the procession.

The suggestions - made by the EcoWaste Coalition, Buklod Tao, and the Green Brigade Committee of the Quiapo Church - include asking for pilgrims to refrain from smoking or vaping as an "act of penance," to return used beverages and food containers to givers or vendors for proper disposal, and to store their food in reusable cloth bags instead of plastic ones.

In recent years, among the most littered items were food packaging, plastic cups, food leftovers, bamboo skewers, PET bottles, plastic bags, newspapers and cigarette filters.

Speaking from experience, the group also asked for people not to relieve themselves in PET bottles, nor in the walls of Rizal Park or the streets, saying that it's "unsightly and unsanitary."

The environmental groups asked the devotees to “express their faith in a manner that is respectful of the environment.”

“The Catholic devotion to the Black Nazarene is truly breathtaking and splendid. Sadly the annual *Traslacion* is sullied by the unrestrained littering at the *Pahalik* and vigil site in Luneta and along the processional route,” said Daniel Alejandre, of the EcoWaste Coalition in a statement.

The EcoWaste Coalition, self-defined as a public interest network of community, church, school, environmental and health groups pursuing sustainable solutions to waste, climate change and chemical issues, issued its own statement, fearing a repeat “of the heaps of garbage” left by the faithful on Dec. 31- another big day for the Black Nazarene devotees, since it marks the beginning of the novena in his honor.

“As a show of reverence to the Black Nazarene, we request the faithful to manifest their solemn devotion in a way that will not overwhelm Rizal Park and the processional route with litter,” he said.

“Cleaning up the mess left behind by the devotees can be a grueling task for government workers and for volunteers from various parishes, schools and groups,” he added.

According to the EcoWaste Coalition, the protection and preservation of the city’s environment and God’s creation should also be “at the core” of the devotion to the Black Nazarene.

During off-the-cuff remarks at the University of St. Thomas in Manila three years ago, Francis urged youth to protect the environment, “not only because this country, more than many others, is likely to be seriously affected by climate change.”

The pope had a set of prepared remarks, which he decided to set aside - as he often did during this trip - opting instead to speak in Spanish through an interpreter. This decision was partially motivated by the fact that the Argentine pontiff was visibly moved by the questions posed to him, particularly that of a 12-year old girl named Glyzelle Palomar, who asked the pope, “Why do children suffer?”

However, Francis requested for his original speech to be published. In it, he focused even more on the environment, something that was expected: Preparations for the papal visit were partially set in motion after a 2013 super-typhoon in the central Philippines left 6,000 dead and 4.1 million homeless.

“You are called to care for creation not only as responsible citizens, but also as followers of Christ!” the pope wrote in the speech, available on the Vatican’s website. “Respect for the environment means more than simply using cleaner products or recycling what we use. These are important aspects, but not enough.”

He went on to say that by destroying forests, ravaging the soil and polluting the seas, humanity betrays the noble calling of being “stewards of God’s creation.”

Francis insisted on this during his homily in the Mass in Rizal Park that drew a crowd estimated at six million people.

“[God] created the world as a beautiful garden and asked us to care for it,” he said. “But through sin, man has disfigured that natural beauty; through sin, man has also destroyed the unity and beauty of our human family, creating social structures which perpetuate poverty, ignorance and corruption.”

The actual feast of the Black Nazarene is marked on Good Friday. However, this week’s procession is even more popular. It reenacts a seemingly minor historical event from 1787, known as the solemn *Translacion*, meaning transfer, of the image from its original home, where Rizal Park is now located, to its present home at the basilica in Quiapo.

Most Filipino Catholics consider the Nazarene statue to be miraculous, able to heal terminal cancers and other sicknesses, to grant petitions, and to help those in need.

<https://cruxnow.com/global-church/2018/01/08/organizers-want-black-nazarene-festival-philippines-go-green/>

January 11, 2018

How Much Does Climate Change Cost? Try \$1.5 Trillion (and Counting)

By Mark Trahan
YES! Magazine

The Trump administration, and its allies in Congress, are fighting a losing war. They continue to press forward for the development of oil, gas, and coal when the rest of the world understands the implication of that folly. Global warming is the most pressing issue for our time. Period.

The thing is governments really have two choices when it comes to managing the impact on its people from global warming: spend money on trying to reduce the problem or spend money on cleaning up the catastrophes.

The Trump administration is on the hook for the catastrophe. [A report released Monday by The National Centers for Environmental Information](#) pegged the total cost this year at \$1.5 trillion, including estimates for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. (And that doesn’t even begin to count the human toll, lost lives, lost jobs, lost opportunity.)

I witnessed firsthand the impact of Hurricane Maria on the island of Dominica last month. We keep hearing stories about the power grid being down (similar to Puerto Rico) and you think, Why? It’s been months. Why aren’t the lights on? Then you see nearly every electrical pole on the island sideways. The entire grid needs to be rebuilt (or better, rethought) and that’s decades of infrastructure. So the figure of \$1.5 trillion is far short of what will be needed. Nearly every

electrical line, every other house, the damage was so widespread it's impossible to overstate. And that's just one island. Multiple the effect across the region. The planet.

Even the United States.

The Centers for Environmental Information says there were 16 weather and climate disasters with losses exceeding \$1 billion each across the country last year. These events included one drought, two flooding events, one severe freeze, eight severe storms, three cyclones, and one extraordinary wildfire. These "events," as the center defines them, resulted in 362 deaths.

Turns out 2017 was a record-breaking year. "In total, the U.S. was impacted by 16 separate billion-dollar disaster events tying 2011 for the record number of billion-dollar disasters for an entire calendar year," the report said. "In fact, 2017 arguably has more events than 2011 given that our analysis traditionally counts all U.S. billion-dollar wildfires, as regional-scale, seasonal events, not as multiple isolated events. More notable than the high frequency of these events is the cumulative cost, which exceeds \$300 billion in 2017—a new U.S. annual record."

A similar report was published by the Government Accountability Office, including a recommendation that Executive Office of the President "identify significant climate risks and craft appropriate federal responses."

But instead of trying to reduce the impact—and the costs of weather-related catastrophe—the Trump administration continues on course for new development of oil and gas. The Interior Department announced new rules that, if enacted, will open up nearly all of the United States coastal waters to more oil and gas development beginning next year.

"By proposing to open up nearly the entire OCS for potential oil and gas exploration, the United States can advance the goal of moving from aspiring for energy independence to attaining energy dominance," [said Vincent DeVito, counselor for Energy Policy at Interior, in the news release](#). "This decision could bring unprecedented access to America's extensive offshore oil and gas resources and allow us to better compete with other oil-rich nations."

Or as Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke put it: "The important thing is we strike the right balance to protect our coasts and people while still powering America and achieving American Energy Dominance."

Dominance is such a funny word. How can any nation be dominant in the face of hurricanes that are ever more powerful and destructive? How does energy dominance work when tens of thousands of Americans will have to move because their homes are no longer there because of fire or storms? What happens if that number grows into the hundreds of thousands? Millions? How can we afford to spend trillions of dollars rebuilding what we have now?

A group of elders on the Bering Sea immediately condemned the Interior Department's offshore drilling plan. "We told them that in person last October and again in writing, that there were 76 tribes in these regions opposed to this," said the statement from the elders. "The draft plan implies that Bering Sea communities were 'generally supportive of some' oil and gas activity.

This is not accurate and there is no evidence of this from Bering Sea communities. For decades, our people have opposed oil and gas activity and we continue to oppose it today. The northern Bering Sea is a very fragile ecosystem. The marine mammals that we rely on use it as their highway and they follow specific migration routes. That is how we know when and where to find them. The noise and vibration associated with drilling will interfere with their sonar and disrupt their migrations. Then we the coastal people will lose our primary food source.”

There is a connection between developing oil and gas and paying the high costs to clean up after a storm. One side of the ledger goes to a few; the oil and gas “industry.” The folks who bought and paid for this administration.

The other side of the ledger is the rest of us. The taxpayers who will foot the bill for this continued folly.

And on the Bering Sea? The folks who live there are one storm away from a tragedy. As the elders put it: “Our people and our way of life are being exposed to danger and we do not understand why.”

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/how-much-does-climate-change-cost-try-1.5-billion-and-counting-20180111>

January 12, 2018

'This is a sin.' Public appeals to Pruitt's religion

By Niina Heikkinen

E&E News

To keep the Clean Power Plan alive, some people are appealing to Scott Pruitt's faith in God.

The EPA administrator, who is a Southern Baptist, has fought against the Obama administration's signature climate rule since his days as Oklahoma's attorney general. Now the agency he leads is in the first phases of undoing the rule, by seeking comment on the proposal from the public. A number of commenters made it clear that EPA's decision to reconsider the rule did not mesh with their own religious views. They challenged Pruitt to reconsider his opposition to the Clean Power Plan in light of his moral obligation to protect the planet.

One woman told Pruitt to review the Bible's teachings on the environment.

"[I]f you are among those Americans that have turned your back on science because it challenges your beliefs, I urge you to consult your religious texts," wrote Jessica Ferrato.

Ferrato noted that citations in the Bible about care for the environment could be found from "Genesis to Revelations" and were supported by a range of Christian denominations, as well as non-Christian teachings.

"[W]hether you are guided by science or religion, by mathematics or by the lure of cold hard cash, our morality, our life experiences, and our success as a species and as a society is fundamentally connected to the care with which we manage the bounties of our natural world," Ferrato said.

Greg Rockwell, meanwhile, expressed his disappointment with the administrator more succinctly.

"This is a sin. Please repent, and follow God," he wrote.

While appealing to the administrator's personal beliefs may seem like an unusual tack to prevent regulatory rollbacks, Pruitt is known to have strong ties to his faith. In Oklahoma, he was an active member of his church in Broken Arrow, where he served as a deacon and taught Sunday school. Since coming to Washington, he has attended Bible studies with other Cabinet members ([Climatewire](#), July 14, 2017).

Pruitt often sprinkles his public speeches with religious references, using words like "prayerfully" and occasionally alluding to Scripture. Last November, he attended the dedication of Washington, D.C.'s Museum of the Bible.

Commenters attempted to tap into that connection to Christianity to reach the administrator, who has gone forward with the repeal over the objections of environmental groups and public health experts.

Many comments filed with EPA began with the same phrase: "As a person of faith, I am very concerned about the impact of global warming on God's Creation."

Commenters pointed out that the Bible called for mankind to be "good stewards" of the Earth. That, they said, included protecting against the harmful impacts of climate change.

The Rev. Dr. Gail Cafferata, an Episcopal priest, said repealing the Clean Power Plan was undermining "vital health protections."

"God has blessed us with this planet with its precious air, water, flora and fauna, and made us stewards of this wondrous creation. From this ethical perspective, any risky exploitation of the earth for human purposes like greed or power or national supremacy is immoral because it offends the Creator of heaven and earth," she wrote.

This isn't the first time opponents of Pruitt's plans have attempted to reach him by appealing to his faith. In October, a group of religious leaders made a trip to EPA headquarters calling for the agency to take action on climate change and reconsider its deregulatory agenda. The

administrator did not attend that meeting, but the group was able to meet with agency staff ([Climatewire](#), Oct. 25, 2017).

To date, there are more than 185,000 comments posted on the *Federal Register*, and EPA had set a comment deadline of 11:59 p.m. Tuesday. Yesterday afternoon, EPA extended that to April 26 to allow comments after additional public "listening sessions" on eliminating the rule.

EPA's first listening session of the year will be on Feb. 21 in Kansas City, Mo., followed by another on Feb. 28 in San Francisco. The final listening session will be on March 27 in Gillette, Wyo., according to EPA. The agency held its first listening session in November in Charleston, W.Va.

"In response to significant interest surrounding the proposed repeal of the Clean Power Plan and the success of the West Virginia hearing, we will now hold listening sessions across the country to ensure all stakeholders have an opportunity to provide input," Pruitt said in a statement.

An EPA court filing on Wednesday also asked the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit to continue to keep the case challenging the Clean Power Plan on hold until the agency completed its rulemaking process.

So far, most of the posted comments on the CPP's repeal have voiced opposition to the proposal.

Some commenters lauded Pruitt's actions, too.

One man, David M. Albert, said he thought some provisions of the Clean Power Plan were illegal and the rule should be repealed. He targeted the endangerment finding, a scientific determination that underpins EPA's greenhouse gas rules.

"The CPP is proposed due to the Endangerment Finding which itself was enacted without required study. Since the enactment of the Endangerment Finding all of the supporting arguments for it have been shown to be invalid by peer reviewed science," he wrote.

<https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060070817/>

January 16, 2018

Christianity Is Not Getting Greener

By Niina Heikkinen, ClimateWire
Scientific American

U.S. Christians' concerns about the environment and climate change haven't shifted much in the past two decades, despite a push by some religious leaders to increase attention on the issue, a new study finds.

In fact, Christians' views may be reversing course since the 1990s, according to David Konisky, an associate professor at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs and the study's author.

"Not only has there not been an amplification of concern among Christians about the environment, there's seemingly been a decline, at least over the time period I've been studying," he said.

Konisky's work is part of a decadeslong debate both in academia and among religious leaders about the degree that Christianity is a positive or negative influence on people's attitudes on climate change. His study comes as some researchers have suggested there has been a "greening of Christianity" in recent years, as high-profile religious leaders like Pope Francis have made climate change a higher priority within the faith. Konisky wanted to find out whether this "organizational-level" emphasis on caring for the planet was having an impact on the attitudes of individual Christians.

Konisky said he wasn't necessarily surprised by the findings.

"It seemed perfectly possible that Christians may be less concerned about the environment than, say, non-religious individuals, but there may have been a growth over time in the level of concern," Konisky said.

To figure out whether there had been a change in attitudes over time, Konisky needed data that consistently tracked attitudes about the environment over a number of years, along with religious affiliation. He found just such a resource in Gallup polling data, which included specific questions on concerns about the environment, pollution and climate change. He analyzed survey responses from 1990, 1991, 1999 and 2005 to 2015.

He found American Christians' concern about the environment had remained the same or declined, and that the degree of concern did not shift based on how often the individuals said they attended church.

His [findings](#) were published recently in the journal *Environmental Politics*. The paper comes as environmental groups are seeking to rally support for environmental regulations at U.S. EPA and other federal agencies that the Trump administration is in the process of unwinding.

The role of religion on shaping beliefs about politically charged issues like climate change has gotten attention under the Trump administration, particularly as President Trump has packed his Cabinet with evangelical Christians.

Konisky noted previous research had shown that political affiliation and ideology were the most important influencers on Americans' attitudes on the environment.

"But once you sort of move past that and think about other characteristics, what you consistently see popping up in empirical research is that religion matters," he said.

Konisky cautioned that there were several limitations to the study. The surveys did not ask detailed questions about which denominations respondents were affiliated with. The research also doesn't provide an answer for why concern may be decreasing.

"What's the explanation for the decline? I can't really say with any certainty because the data don't allow that kind of analysis. There is a lot of future work to be done to figure out what explains these correlations," Konisky said.

Reprinted from Climatewire with permission from E&E News. E&E provides daily coverage of essential energy and environmental news at www.eenews.net.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/christianity-is-not-getting-greener1/>

January 17, 2018

Amid attacks on churches, Francis tells Chilean indigenous to shun violence

By Joshua J. McElwee

National Catholic Reporter

TEMUCO, Chile — Pope Francis told Chile's indigenous people Jan. 17 to shun bloodshed in their decades-long struggle with the country's government over control of their native lands, warning that violence "eventually turns even the most just cause into a lie."

Speaking in the capital of Chile's verdant southern Araucanía region — where protest against the government's sale of former indigenous territory to logging companies has included shootings, kidnappings, and bombings — the pope said: "You cannot assert yourself by destroying others."

"Violence begets violence, destruction increases fragmentation and separation," Francis said in a homily during a Mass with 150,000 Mapuche, Rapanui, Aymara, Quechua, Atacameño, and other indigenous people gathered at Maqueue airfield.

Violence, the pope said, is "like the lava of a volcano that wipes out and burns everything in its path, leaving in its wake only barrenness and desolation." He encouraged the native peoples to instead "seek the path of active nonviolence."

Francis' exhortation against political violence came on the second of his three-day visit to Chile. A tense atmosphere not before seen on the pope's 21 other voyages abroad has marked the trip.

At least six churches across Araucanía have been firebombed in the past 48 hours, apparently by militant indigenous groups who think the pope's visit lends legitimacy to the Chilean government's control of their native lands. Three helicopters owned by the logging

company Forestal Arauco were also attacked overnight Jan. 16, their cockpits left bombed-out and unusable.

Francis is also facing vocal criticism over his 2015 appointment of Bishop Juan Barros Madrid of Osorno, Chile, who is accused of covering-up for notorious abuser Fr. Fernando Karadima in the 1980s and '90s.

Several protesters stood outside the airfield in Temuco Jan. 17 to criticize the pope over Barros. Referencing the pope's defense of Barros in 2015, when he said the allegations against the bishop were being orchestrated by "lefties," the protestors held a sign that read: "Not lefties, nor fools, Osorno suffers. Bishop Barros covered up."

Francis arrived in Temuco after an hour-long, 400-mile flight south from Santiago, the Chilean capital, where he is staying each night in the country.

The Mass in Temuco began with a short ritual performed by a small group of indigenous people, who approached the wood-accented altar platform at the airfield wearing colorful headdresses and holding tree-branches. As several of the indigenous banged on drums, the rest of the group moved the branches while singing softly.

Francis started his homily by referencing how the airfield hosting the Mass had been used at the beginning of Augusto Pinochet's 1973-90 military dictatorship as a detention and torture center of political dissidents.

The pope said the site had been the location of "grave violations of human rights" and said he wanted to offer the Mass for all those who had died and those who experienced "so much suffering, so much pain."

Francis also focused his reflection on the need for different cultures within a society to seek unity together while distinguishing between unity and uniformity.

The pope said that unity should not come about as "the result of forced integration" but must be woven together like a hand-stitched garment. "Unity can never be a stifling uniformity imposed by the powerful, or a segregation that does not value the goodness of others," he said.

Logging is Chile's second-largest industry, after copper mining, and is responsible for 10 percent of the country's exports. Nearly 20 percent of land in Araucanía is now used for forest plantations, which activists say has adversely affected the local ecosystem.

There are about 600,000 Mapuche in Chile, which has a total population of some 17.9 million. The indigenous people have lived in the region since long before the Spanish arrived in the area in the 16th century.

The Chilean government and the Mapuche have been at odds for nearly three decades over what lands in the region should be controlled by the indigenous group, and the disagreement has as

times turned violent, often with the setting of destructive fires that cost logging companies tens of millions in damages.

After the Mass Jan. 17, Francis is to have a private lunch with 11 representatives of the Araucanía region, including eight Mapuche, a victim of rural violence, a Haitian immigrant, and a Swiss-German settler,* at an educational center run by the Congregation of the Holy Cross. The pope will then return to Santiago, where he is to hold a meeting with young people and visit the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile in the evening.

The pope's visit to Chile will continue Jan. 18 with a trip to Iquique, a port city about 1,000 miles north of Santiago, where he will celebrate an open-air Mass before heading on later in the day to Lima, Peru.

The pope will be in Peru through Jan. 21, returning to Rome Jan. 22.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/world/amid-attacks-churches-francis-tells-chilean-indigenous-shun-violence>

January 19, 2018

Interfaith Power & Light welcomes Susan Hendershot Guy as new president

Episcopal News Service

Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) announced that Rev. Susan Hendershot Guy will serve as its new president, ending a year-long search for the successor to founding president the Rev. Sally Bingham, who is retiring after leading the organization for 18 years.

“I am excited to continue to grow this vital organization and its critical mission to mobilize a religious response to global warming and to act as good stewards of our planet for future generations,” said Hendershot Guy, a minister ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) tradition, who has led this work in Iowa for seven years. “I deeply respect the work of Rev. Bingham and hope to build on the solid foundation she created. The need for people of faith to lead the movement to protect Creation has never been greater.”

President Emeritus Bingham will remain involved on IPL’s board of directors. “It is with delight and my strong support that I leave IPL not only with a strong board of directors, but also in the capable hands of the Rev. Hendershot Guy who will carry IPL well into the 21st Century,” said Bingham.

IPL has an unparalleled track record of educating millions of “people in the pews” about the call to care for Creation and mobilizing them to action, achieving clean energy policy wins from the local to international level. Mobilizing people of faith to be advocates for climate protection is more important than ever, as the Trump administration continues its reckless attempts to roll

back urgently needed climate policies. Maintaining the EPA's Clean Power Plan, and keeping congregations all over the U.S. moving forward with emissions reductions to show that "We are Still In" the Paris Accord are important priorities for IPL. Hendershot Guy will be speaking in support of the Clean Power Plan at the upcoming hearing in San Francisco.

"Rev. Hendershot Guy will bring a valuable new perspective to our San Francisco-based team from her experience leading one of our successful Midwest affiliates," said Doug Linney, chairman of the board of directors, which conducted the nationwide search for the new president. "I am more confident than ever in our stability, strength, and the urgency of our mission. I believe we are in a great position for growth and innovation," Linney continued.

Hendershot Guy will step into her new position this month. She will lead IPL from its national headquarters in San Francisco.

<https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2018/01/19/interfaith-power-light-welcomes-susan-hendershot-guy-as-new-president/>

January 19, 2018

From the Amazon, Francis decries policies that 'strangle' indigenous

By Joshua J. McElwee
National Catholic Reporter

Puerto Maldonado, Peru — Pope Francis stood among the indigenous peoples of the Amazon Rainforest Jan. 19 to criticize the ramp-up of the global extraction industry in the world's most biodiverse region and decry local policies that he said "strangle" its some 350 native tribes.

The pope met with about 4,000 indigenous in this small city near Peru's southeastern border with Bolivia, known as the gateway to the Amazon, and expressed support for proposals that would place large portions of the forest under native control.

"We have to break with the historical paradigm that views Amazonia as an inexhaustible source of supplies for other countries without concern for its inhabitants," Francis said in an address marked by criticisms of both exploitative global industries and national Peruvian policies.

"Great business interests want to lay hands on [the Amazon's] petroleum, gas, lumber, [and] gold," he said. "The native Amazonian peoples have probably never been so threatened on their own lands as they are at present."

The pope then lambasted local policies that he said operate "under the guise of preserving the forest, [but] hoard great expanses of woodland and negotiate with them, leading to situations of oppression for the native peoples."

"These problems strangle her peoples and provoke the migration of the young due to the lack of local alternatives," he said, speaking as Peruvian President Pedro Kuczynski sat in the audience.

Francis, who has made environmental protection a key focus of his papacy, came to the Amazon on his first full day in Peru, which he is visiting through Jan. 22 on the second leg of a weeklong journey abroad that started in neighboring Chile.

His speech to the indigenous, some of whom took part in the event bare-chested and sporting feathered headdresses, comes as the expansion of permitted construction of dams and roads has tied with illegal mining activities to turn large portions of the lush, verdant rainforest into contamination zones.

Puerto Maldonado's apostolic vicariate estimates that nearly 17 percent of the Amazon has been destroyed. In press materials, the vicariate said that a "spectacular increase" in the granting of mining permits in particular has shown an "arrogant disregard" for environmental conservation efforts and the protection of native peoples.

Francis also heard testimony from three members of different Amazon tribes. Héctor Sueyo and Yésica Patiachi of the Harakbut people spoke passionately about the pressure their peoples are under.

"We ask that you defend us!" Patiachi told Francis, to wide applause from the crowd.

Sueyo said they had a warning for the world: "The indigenous peoples of the Amazon want to tell all of humanity that we are worried because due to the consequences of climate change the land is spoiling, the animals are shrinking, the trees are disappearing, the fish are dying, [and] the fresh water is running out."

Earlier this week, leaders of three of the largest indigenous communities asked Francis to support their request for Peru to grant some 50 million acres in collective land rights to the indigenous.

The pope appeared to back that effort in his speech Jan. 19, noting "promising initiatives ... which advocate that the native peoples and communities themselves be the guardians of the woodlands" and would "benefit your families, improve your living conditions and promote health and education in your communities."

As he has at many times in his nearly five-year papacy, Francis also pointed out the effect carbon emissions have on both the local and global scale, saying that release of hydrocarbons after oil extraction and coal mining in the Amazon "gravely threaten the lives of your families and contaminate your natural environment."

"Your lives cry out against a style of life that is oblivious to its own real cost," the pope told the indigenous. "You are a living memory of the mission that God has entrusted to us all: the protection of our common home."

For his part, the pope promised that the Catholic Church "will never stop pleading for the outcast and those who suffer."

Francis focused on the environment in his 2015 encyclical "*Laudato Si'*, On Care for Our Common Home," in which he accepted the wide scientific consensus on climate change and called on global governments to act.

Several world leaders have said the encyclical played a role in the success of the 2015 Paris agreement, which has been signed by 195 countries and obligates them to reduce carbon emissions and practice more sustainable development.

Sixty percent of Peru is located in the Amazon Rainforest, which also encompasses parts of Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia. About 34 million people live in the Amazon, including some individuals and tribes in voluntary isolation.

The Puerto Maldonado vicariate said that more than 250 dam projects and 20 road construction projects have been approved in recent years, and more than 8,000 mining permits have been granted, with another 6,800 under review.

Francis was greeted at the event Jan. 19 by two dances from young indigenous peoples, whose arms and legs swayed to a slow incantation.

The pope began his address by naming 22 of the different Amazonian tribes he wanted to greet and then saying he had come to see the "deep wounds that Amazonia and its peoples bear." He asked the native tribes especially to protect those who have chosen voluntary isolation, calling them "the most vulnerable of the vulnerable."

"They went into seclusion in the most inaccessible reaches of the forest in order to live in freedom," he said. "Their presence reminds us that we cannot use goods meant for all as consumerist greed dictates. Limits have to be set that can help preserve us from all plans for a massive destruction of the habitat that makes us who we are."

Francis landed in Peru from Chile Jan. 18 to an enthusiastic welcome on the streets of the capital of Lima.

Tens of thousands of people lined miles of Lima's streets to try and catch a glimpse of the pope as he made his way from the airport to the apostolic nunciature, where he is spending his nights.

After arriving at the nunciature, Francis took to his pope-mobile a second time to try and greet more of the people on the streets, who were pushing against barricades and gathered rows deep, holding signs and offering small gifts or religious objects.

The reception in Peru made a sharp contrast to Chile, where the pope encountered protests each day in the country over his 2015 appointment of Bishop Juan Barros Madrid, who is accused of covering up sexual abuse by a fellow priest in the 1980s and '90s.

Francis will return to Lima in the afternoon of Jan. 19 for a meeting with Kuczynski and will give a speech to him and the country's other political leaders. The pope travels Jan. 20 to Trujillo, in northwest Peru, for an outdoor Mass and a meeting with priests and religious.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/amazon-francis-decries-policies-strangle-indigenous>

January 19, 2018

Pope set to visit site of deforestation, indigenous struggle in Peru

By John Cannon
Mongabay

- *Pope Francis plans to visit Puerto Maldonado in the Peruvian region of Madre de Dios Friday morning on his trip to South America.*
- *He will speak with indigenous communities in a coliseum.*
- *Madre de Dios had the second-highest rate of deforestation in the Peruvian Amazon in 2017, with 208 square kilometers (80 square miles) of forest cover loss as a result of farming, logging and mining.*

Pope Francis will visit one of the Peruvian Amazon's most threatened regions today, where the leader of the Catholic Church is expected to address escalating deforestation and uncertainty about indigenous peoples' rights.

"The Holy Father has a special concern for the Amazon and therefore put as the first point of his journey an encounter with indigenous groups to dialogue, to give a sign of hope," Salvador Piñeiro, president of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference, said in [an article published by Mongabay LatAm](#). "These topics concern the Pope and he feels them very closely."

After a visit to Chile earlier this week, the pope is scheduled to fly Friday morning from Lima to Puerto Maldonado, the capital of the Madre de Dios region. It's a place where logging, agriculture and mining — much of it illegal — have led to the loss of thousands of hectares of rainforest in recent decades. In some cases, these activities have touched off conflicts with local communities.

Buoyed by Pope Francis's commitment to tackling environmental issues as codified in [Laudato Si'](#), the encyclical he published in 2015 subtitled "On Care for Our Common Home," campaigners are eager to welcome him to their corner of southeastern Peru. After meeting with local authorities, he will speak to indigenous people in a coliseum.

"It is very symbolic that the pope is going to Madre de Dios, the capital of the country's biodiversity, home to many indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation, and yet [one that] has seen

a growing trend of environmental problems, corruption and poisoning of the ecosystem,” said Pedro Solano, who heads the Peruvian Society for Environmental Law, known as SPDA.

The region of Madre de Dios is in the midst of a “deforestation crisis,” [according to the scientists at the NGO MAAP](#), short for Mapping of the Andean Amazon. Based on their calculations using early-warning alerts from the University of Maryland and Peru’s environment ministry, they’ve tracked an “increasing trend of annual forest loss since 2001, peaking in 2017.”

The 208 square kilometers (80 square miles) of forest loss in 2017 is twice what the region saw in 2008. That means that Madre de Dios has been saddled with the second-highest rate of deforestation in Peru’s slice of the Amazon. To get a better idea of what’s causing this hemorrhage, the MAAP team drilled down into the data covering specific areas.

Gold miners are felling trees in areas around the upper stretches of the Malinowski River, which abuts [the wildlife-rich Tambopata National Reserve](#), as well as the town of La Pampa. Elsewhere, near Santa Rita, Guacamayo and Iberia, small-scale farmers appear to have cut several thousand hectares of forest to plant cacao, corn and papaya.

The satellite imagery has shown the “rapid proliferation of logging roads” around Tahuamanu, according to MAAP. And in 2017, spots of deforestation began to show up in two ecotourism concessions teeming with wildlife near Las Piedras, which locals say are the result of cacao farming and cattle ranching.

“This hotspot is located within a forestry concession, but its impact is troubling due to the extension and density of the new road network,” MAAP reported. The team found evidence of 130 kilometers (81 miles) of new logging roads into forested areas in 2017.

Issues such as logging and mining affect indigenous ways of life, leaders say. The razing of the forest they depend on and the pollution of their waters from mining are among the issues that a coalition led by the group Fenamad, the Native Federation for the Madre de Dios River and its Tributaries, hopes to bring to the forefront with the pope’s visit.

“For us, indigenous peoples, the pope’s arrival is important because it is a leader who is highlighting environmental issues and human rights,” Julio Cusurichi, president of Fenamad, said in [another article](#) by Mongabay LatAm.

Also in the group’s proposal are the legal security of their claims to the land and a desire to have a say on large projects such as oil and gas infrastructure, dams for hydropower, and roads that cut through the forests. They also want to see the continued protection of peoples living in voluntary isolation and a recognition of the conservation contributions that indigenous communities make.

Many local and national leaders also see this as an opportunity to elevate the status of indigenous rights and rampant forest destruction on the national agenda.

“Unfortunately, lawmakers have failed to see this reality and are letting an opportunity pass for the organization of the country against this phenomenon and to demonstrate to Peruvians and the pope concrete actions that address this our common house as he calls the world,” said Iris Olivera, program coordinator at the organization Law, Environment and Natural Resources. “We just hope that the pope can raise an agenda, a commitment that we can then follow up on.”

Others envision a mandate arising out of Pope Francis’s choice of where to visit in Peru.

“If the pope comes to Peru and his first trip is to Madre de Dios, he commits us as a country to be able to take effective measures for protecting the environment and combating illegal activities occurring in the region,” said Alicia Abanto, the deputy ombudsman of the Environment, Public Services and Indigenous Peoples.

CITATIONS

Finer M, Novoa S, Garcia R (2017) Pope to visit Madre de Dios (Peru), region with Deforestation Crisis. MAAP: 75.

Hansen, M.C., A. Krylov, A. Tyukavina, P.V. Potapov, S. Turubanova, B. Zutta, S. Ifo, B. Margono, F. Stolle, and R. Moore. 2016. Humid tropical forest disturbance alerts using Landsat data. *Environmental Research Letters*, 11 (3).

<https://news.mongabay.com/2018/01/pope-set-to-visit-site-of-deforestation-indigenous-struggle-in-peru/>

January 19, 2018

Pope in Amazon urges seamless defense of life, earth and cultures

By Inés San Martín
Crux

PUERTO MALDONADO, Peru - In the middle of Peru’s Amazon jungle, Pope Francis on Friday delivered what could be considered a “seamless garment” speech - stressing ecology and issuing a strong appeal for protection of the Amazon region, which he said is not an “inexhaustible source of resources,” while also insisting that human life has equal, if not greater, value.

Francis said he wanted to affirm “a whole-hearted option for the defense of life, the defense of the earth and the defense of cultures.”

The term “seamless garment,” associated with the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago, refers to an approach to the sanctity of life stressing opposition to abortion and attempts to

redefine the family in tandem with other social justice issues, such as defense of the poor and the environment.

“The defense of the earth has no other purpose than the defense of life,” Francis said during his first speech in Peru after arriving Thursday night.

“We know of the suffering caused for some of you by emissions of hydrocarbons, which gravely threaten the lives of your families and contaminate your natural environment,” he said.

Yet, the pope warned, there is also an equally worrying “distortion” of certain policies, which aim to conserve nature without considering the men and women who live in the area. There are movements, the pope told a stadium with some 4,000 people from the Amazonian region, trying to preserve the forest that also “hoard great expanses of woodland and negotiate with them, leading to situations of oppression for the native peoples.”

Saving the trees and wildlife, in other words, is not good enough, if the people who live in the region are not equally protected.

On the day of the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., Francis also delivered a strong pro-life message.

Speaking about the family and how it’s contributed to keeping cultures alive, he said that today there are “ideological forms of colonialism, disguised as progress, that slowly but surely dissipate cultural identities and establish a uniform, single... and weak way of thinking.”

“Ideological colonization” is a papal shorthand for attempts by Western governments and NGOs to compel impoverished nations to accept measures such as contraception, abortion and gay marriage as a condition of development assistance.

Referring out loud to what was originally a footnote in his prepared text, Francis also spoke of the need to “raise our voices” against pressure in favor of the sterilization of women, which, he said, at times happens without their knowledge.

That’s a highly sensitive issue in Peru, since former President Alberto Fujimori launched a family planning program in 1996 that involved the sterilization of thousands of women. Justified at the time by a desire to reduce poverty, the program stirred controversy when many women, mostly members of the country’s Amazonian indigenous groups, reported that they had been sterilized without their consent.

In general, the pope presented a comprehensive case for the defense of life, both natural and human, in the Amazon.

“Praise to you, Lord, for your marvelous handiwork in your Amazonian peoples and for all the biodiversity that these lands embrace!” Francis said Friday.

The pope was paraphrasing a prayer by St. Francis of Assisi, “Canticle to brother sun and sister moon,” which gave the title to the pope’s first-ever encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si’*.

The Argentine pontiff has long called for greater protection of the environment, insisting that climate change is at least partially man-made.

“This song of praise is cut short when we learn about, and see, the deep wounds that the Amazon and its peoples bear,” Francis said.

Prior to the pope’s remarks, he heard from indigenous persons urging a defense of the peoples and cultures of the Amazon.

María Luzmila Bermeo told Francis that forests have been attacked, fish killed, trees cut down, animals hunted, and rivers polluted by mining, gold and oil extraction.

“Now we do not have many natural resources,” she said, adding that it seems “we don’t care. We don’t respect nature. Rather, we pollute all nature.”

Pollution, she said, has heavily impacted the Amazon, which today suffers the effects of climate change.

“What can we do? The authorities can help conserve the forests, to keep our environment clean and breathe pure air, like when I was little,” she said.

Arguably, the pope said, the Amazon’s peoples have never been so threatened in their own land, which is under pressure on many fronts, including what he called a “neo-extractivism, and the pressure being exerted by great business interests that want to lay hands on its petroleum, gas, lumber, gold and forms of agro-industrial monocultivation.”

In recent years, the Peruvian Amazon has been plagued by illegal mining that damages the delicate ecosystem. Yet this practice, the pope said, also leads to another “devastating assault on life”: human trafficking, slave labor and sexual abuse.

“Violence against adolescents and against women cries out to heaven,” the pope said.

“Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Let us not look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. This issue involves everyone!” he continued, quoting his own document, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Francis also referred to the “most vulnerable of the vulnerable,” meaning what are called “Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation,” who went into seclusion in inaccessible reaches of the forest to “live in freedom.”

“Their presence reminds us that we cannot use goods meant for all as consumerist greed dictates,” he said. “Limits have to be set that can help preserve us from all plans for a massive destruction of the habitat that makes us who we are.”

Puerto Maldonado is a steamy rainforest city often used as the gateway to deeper, more remote parts of the Amazon jungle and a jumping-off point for eco-tourists who want to explore the natural riches of Tambopata national park.

There are over 50 ethnic groups living in the Peruvian Amazon, and representatives from several of them traveled to participate in the gathering with Francis. Also present were bishops from eight of the nine countries that make up the Pan-Amazonian region. Last year, the pontiff called for a 2019 synod of bishops to focus specifically in this region, and some on the ground perceived this meeting as a prelude of the one to come.

One of the organizers of the event told *Crux* on Thursday that many had to “travel by boat, then go into the mud, then on another boat” to get to Puerto Maldonado, in the Madre de Dios region.

Respecting and recognizing the native peoples, acknowledging their cultures, languages, traditions, rights and spirituality is key, and can only be done with the indigenous being the “principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting your land are proposed.”

The Amazonian people, the pope said, are not an obstacle, but a cry against a style of life that ignores its own real cost. Instead, indigenous peoples are a “living memory” of the mission God has entrusted to humanity: “the protection of our common home.”

On another topic, the pope said that education, which helps create a culture of encounter, must be a priority of the state, yet respectful of their ancestral wisdom and bilingual.

Francis closed his remarks praising the missionaries who devoted their entire lives to the people of the Amazon and the protection of the region.

“Do not yield to those attempts to uproot the Catholic faith from your peoples,” Francis said. “The Church is not alien to your problems and your lives, she does not want to be aloof from your way of life and organization. We need the native peoples to shape the culture of the local churches in Amazonia.”

Pope Francis has a busy day ahead. After meeting with the indigenous peoples, he was scheduled to encounter the local population at an education center, and then head to the Hogar Principito, home to some 35 orphan children.

He will then have lunch with representatives of the Amazonian peoples, and then head back to Lima, where he’ll address the local civil authorities and have a private meeting with President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski.

<https://cruxnow.com/pope-in-chile-and-peru/2018/01/19/pope-amazon-urges-seamless-defense-life-earth-cultures/>

January 19, 2018

Pope brings environmental crusade to Peru's Amazon, citing 'defense of the earth'

By Lucien Chauvin

Washington Post

Pope Francis landed in the Amazon on Friday, bringing his environmental crusade to a rough-and-tumble corner of Peru's jungle that is besieged by deforestation and illegal mining.

The visit to Peru, the second leg of a trip that ends Sunday and also took him to neighboring Chile, gave the Argentina-born pontiff a chance to highlight the links between the environment and indigenous people. He met with Mapuche people in Chile early this week and gathered here Friday with thousands of indigenous people decked out in traditional dress.

Arriving just after 10 a.m. in the jungle heat, the pope was greeted with chants of "Francis, Francis, you are now Amazonian."

He arrived at his first official event aboard his popemobile and circumvented a phalanx of men wearing loincloths. Addressing a crowd of indigenous people from Peru and neighboring countries, he stressed the environmental ills facing the Amazon, including agribusiness, logging, mining, and oil and gas drilling. He also cited "certain policies aimed at the 'conservation' of nature" that he said did not take into account people who inhabit the rain forest.

"We have to break with the historical paradigm that views the Amazon as an inexhaustible source of supplies for other countries, without concern for its inhabitants," he said during a 20-minute speech. "Defense of the Earth has no other purpose than the defense of life."

He said that the Amazon is not only about biological riches but is a "cultural reserve" under threat by new forms of colonialism. "Limits have to be set that can help preserve us from all plans for a massive destruction of the habitat that makes us who we are," he said.

The visit and the meeting with indigenous people are meant to build on his groundbreaking treatise on the environment — the 2015 *Laudato Si* encyclical, passages of which were read in five languages by indigenous leaders — and to plan for a synod of Amazon Basin bishops that has been called for October 2019.

The pope's message and the encyclical, basically guidance to clergy and the faithful on key environmental issues, were applauded by the crowd. But inhabitants also expressed fear that not enough is being done as environmental destruction in this massive sea of green continues to gain speed.

"The Amazon is our home, but it is also the lungs of the world. We have to work much harder to stop deforestation," said the Rev. Juan Elias, a priest in Bolivia's jungle state of Pando, across the Peruvian border.

Elias echoed the pope's concern, saying that forests are being clear-cut to make way for large-scale agribusiness, including sugar cane. He said the new fear is the expansion of soy, which already covers huge tracts in Bolivia's eastern plains. "There are plans for soy. Can you imagine what that will do? It would be devastating," he said.

The pope did not make specific references to some of the controversial issues being pushed by indigenous peoples, such as territorial demarcation, property titles and consent, specifically the right to veto extractive or infrastructure projects, including roads and dams for energy projects that they say degrade the environment.

"The church has to get our governments to see that their policies are destroying the environment and us with it," said Angelom Arara of Brazil's Arara do Pará people. "We want more support from the church, and we want our governments to follow what the church says."

Wearing an ample feather headdress and covered with red and black body paint, Arara was part of a delegation representing 32 indigenous peoples from Brazil who traveled to Peru to present their case to the pope. "We can no longer just talk. There needs to be real action, because we are being killed while we wait," he said.

Brazil's Indigenous Missionary Council reported that more than 100 indigenous people were killed in the country in 2016. Brazilian authorities continue to investigate the killing in September of 10 members of an indigenous group that lives in voluntary isolation near the border with Peru.

The pope dedicated part of his address to people living in isolation, who he said were the "most vulnerable of the vulnerable" and should not be considered a "kind of museum of a bygone way of life."

The largest concentration of people living in voluntary isolation are found along the long, inaccessible border between Peru and Brazil.

The World Wildlife Fund's director for climate and energy, Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, who previously served nearly five years as Peru's environment minister, said he hoped the testimonies from indigenous people would help ground the encyclical in everyday issues.

"There need to be priests who are capable not only of talking about the environment but anchoring it in real issues. This has not been done, which is why the message [of the encyclical] has not had the impact it should have," he said.

Pulgar-Vidal said Puerto Maldonado and the surrounding southeastern Amazon rain forest, home to some of the most biologically diverse spots in the world, offer tragic examples that could be used to drive home the pope's vision.

Peru lost nearly 407,000 acres of tropical forest in 2016, 5.2 percent more than the previous year, according to the state's protected areas service. It lost nearly 4.9 million acres between 2001 and 2016 — more than the combined area of Connecticut and Rhode Island — from deforestation

caused by farming, illegal mining and road construction. The state of Madre de Dios — Mother of God in English — of which Puerto Maldonado is the capital, lost 42,125 acres in 2016, and initial estimates put the number at roughly the same for last year.

The big problem in Madre de Dios is illegal gold mining, which not only eliminates forests but contaminates the air, soil and water with toxic chemicals, including mercury used to extract river gold. Some of the large camps where gold is extracted are just down the road from where the pope landed here.

They are sprawling and barren wastelands where few plants can return after miners move on. And mining is big business. Madre de Dios does not have any large-scale formal gold mines, but the state produced 12 million grams of gold in the first 11 months of last year, according to the Energy and Mines Ministry. That represents just shy of 9 percent of the country's gold production. Peru is the world's sixth-largest gold producer. The government last year destroyed 284 illegal mining camps, the bulk of them in Madre de Dios, and launched dozens of criminal investigations, including for human trafficking.

Although he did not go after illegal mining directly, the pope did not avoid it.

“There exists another devastating assault on life linked to this environmental contamination favored by illegal mining,” Pope Francis said. “I am speaking of human trafficking: slave labor and sexual abuse.”

David Barbosa, an Ashaninka indigenous leader from Peru, said he hoped the pope would leave his country with an understanding of what is happening in the Amazon.

“I think what we are hearing is good, but the church needs to do more. It has to take a stand,” he said.

“The issues in Madre de Dios are the issues the pope addresses in the encyclical,” said Pulgar-Vidal of the World Wildlife Fund. “The focus on the Amazon is the opportunity to get the traction that is needed.”

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/pope-brings-environmental-crusade-to-peru-amazon-though-indigenous-skeptical/2018/01/19/4de03f6a-fcb0-11e7-a46b-a3614530bd87_story.html

January 19, 2018

Latest chapter in Adorers pipeline case unfolds with appeals argument

By Jamie Manson
Global Sisters Report

The fight by the Adorers of the Blood of Christ against a natural gas pipeline went to an appeals court Friday, Jan. 19, as their attorneys argued that the case should be heard by a lower court that had dismissed it.

The sisters were appealing the U.S. District Court's [decision](#), in August 2017, to dismiss their claim that the building of a pipeline through their land violated their religious freedom. They argue that the Eastern District of Pennsylvania inappropriately dismissed their religious freedom challenge for a lack of jurisdiction.

The hearing was the latest chapter in a two-year battle against the building of a natural gas pipeline through Lancaster County. The courtroom for the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals was standing-room-only, with more than a dozen Adorers and their fellow activists filling most of the available spaces.

"The Adorers have a deep and longstanding commitment to safeguard the sanctity of the Earth," the congregation said in a press statement a few days before the hearing. "As such, the forced installation of a fossil fuel project on their own land represents a gross violation of their deeply held religious convictions."

The sisters are basing their case on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), the same [statute](#) that the Little Sisters of the Poor have cited in their case against the contraceptive mandate in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

In 2005, the sisters adopted a "Land Ethic," proclaiming that, as a matter of religious belief, they will not use their land in any manner that does harm to the Earth. The Adorers have used Pope Francis' environmental encyclical, "[Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home](#)," to further bolster their argument.

In its legal briefs, Transco, the construction company that is building the pipeline, questioned the sincerity of the sisters' defense, calling their convictions a "subjective religious experience."

At the hearing, the three-judge panel pressed the Adorers' lead counsel, Dwight Yoder, as to why the sisters did not raise a formal complaint with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) or Transco before construction began.

Yoder pointed out that the notifications that the sisters received from the federal commission did not offer an opportunity to object on the grounds of a violation of religious freedom.

Lawyers for the commission and Transco told the judges that they would have taken the Adorers' claims seriously if the sisters had raised them months ago when other Lancaster landowners were filing their objections through FERC's formal administrative process.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the judges requested a written argument from the Adorers' lawyers. If the court rules in their favor, the sisters will be allowed to present their case in the district court. A decision by the appellate judges is expected within a few months.

In an interview with reporters after the hearing, Yoder explained that a religious freedom claim requires a judicial process, as opposed to the administrative process that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission offered to landowners before Transco broke ground.

"We think the District Court has jurisdiction and would be the proper forum to hear their RFRA claim," Yoder said.

Yoder said that, according to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the sisters could not file a claim until there was a substantial burden on their religious beliefs.

"That didn't happen until Transco condemned their property and took it against their will in July 2017," Yoder said. The congregation that month [filed](#) a complaint against the federal commission.

"When you look at RFRA, it has no requirement that you go to the agency before your religious beliefs are violated," Yoder said. "It says you have a right to a cause of action after your religious beliefs have been substantially burdened."

Yoder said that Transco's construction permit did not give enough cause for the sisters to take action. "There was no ability for them to assert those claims until the pipeline actually went through."

The Atlantic Sunrise pipeline would be a \$3 billion, 183-mile extension of the Transco pipeline system that currently runs 10,200 miles from Texas to New York.

In early July, the sisters built an open-air chapel on their land as a protest against the construction. A short video presented to reporters at a press conference after the hearing showed that the periphery of the chapel was damaged by the construction.

In their press statement, the Adorers claim that Transco altered its construction schedule to install the pipeline on their land first, "in a bald attempt to insulate themselves against a future legal victory for the Sisters."

If they ultimately win their case, the Adorers may demand that Transco remove the pipeline, since the construction company proceeded at their own risk.

"If you proceed knowing that there's a legal challenge pending and you lose, you have to remove it," Yoder said.

<http://globalsistersreport.org/news/environment/latest-chapter-adorers-pipeline-case-unfolds-appeals-argument-51476>

January 22, 2018

Pope's message to Amazonia inspires hope, but will it bring action?

By Justin Catanoso
Mongabay

- *On 19 January, Pope Francis spoke to a crowd of thousands, including many indigenous people, in Puerto Maldonado, Peru, the capital of Madre de Dios state in the Amazon, a region that has seen significant deforestation (62,500 hectares between 2012 and 2016), and significant violence due to illegal mining.*
- *Latin American analysts, while excited about the pope's visit, and appreciative of his spotlighting of illegal mining in Madre de Dios and other environmental problems across Amazonia, expressed doubt that the papal visit will have much impact in the long run.*
- *The pope singled out large corporations in his address: "[G]reat business interests... want to lay hands on [the Amazon's] petroleum, gas, lumber, gold and other forms of agro-industrial monocultivation," he said. "We have to break with the historical paradigm that views Amazonia as an inexhaustible source of supplies for other countries without concern for its inhabitants."*
- *The pope invited a top-down and bottom-up response by Catholics to the Amazon crisis, calling on indigenous people "to shape the culture of local churches in Amazonia," and announcing next year's first-ever Synod for Amazonia – a gathering of global bishops who will put papal doctrine such as Laudato Si, his landmark 2015 papal encyclical, into action.*

There is nothing quite so effective as an [historic visit](#) by a charismatic pope for bringing grave moral issues into the bright light of spiritual hope.

Pope Francis did just that on 19 January when he arrived in Puerto Maldonado, Peru, the capital of [Madre de Dios state](#) in the Amazon which is rich in biodiversity, but also in gold; nearly 62,500 hectares (154,440 acres) of forest were lost there to illegal gold mining between 2012 and 2016, [an area bigger than ten Manhattan islands](#).

Nature isn't the only victim of Illegal gold mining. The deforestation, violence and land conflicts, and toxic mercury pollution it brings to local rivers, are also seriously impacting indigenous communities who for centuries have laid claim to their ancestral rainforests and waterways.

"The native Amazonian peoples have probably never been so threatened on their own lands as they are at present," Pope Francis said in a stirring address to a huge crowd that filled a sports arena and included many indigenous people dressed in their finest decorative robes and feathered-headdresses.

The pope didn't only blame illegal small-scale miners for the Peruvian deforestation crisis. "Amazonia is being disputed on all fronts," the pope said. "There is the pressure being exerted by great business interests that want to lay hands on its petroleum, gas, lumber, gold and other forms of agro-industrial monocultivation... We have to break with the historical paradigm that views Amazonia as an inexhaustible source of supplies for other countries without concern for its inhabitants."

Judging by the ear-shattering waves of applause the pope received, everyone within earshot of Francis agreed with his assessment of the crisis and with his call to action.

“We Peruvians are obliged to take care of our cultural and natural heritage,” agreed Mariela Cánepa, policy director for the World Wildlife Fund-Peru, who hailed the pope for being forthright about the issue. “Now that this is out there in the open, we need to come together and work toward that goal [of curbing amazon deforestation]. Short term, we must make sure that this stays as a priority in the public agenda, besides plain or rhetorical statements. We need to commit to a more inclusive and sustainable vision for the Amazon and the country. Long term, everyone – authorities, civil society and citizens – need to be accountable.”

Now what?

The public moment of the pope’s visit has now passed. After speaking out passionately in Peru – pumping new life into the *Laudato Si*, his landmark 2015 papal encyclical that blasted capitalism and blamed humanity for climate change, while demanding global stewardship of “our common home” – the pope has returned to Rome.

Across the Amazon, it’s back to life as before the visit: [back to chain saws](#). To [mercury poisoning](#). To [human](#) and [wildlife trafficking](#). To a relentless assault on a U.S-size region rich in natural resources, but on which the planet’s wellbeing depends for carbon sequestration, weather regulation, regional and global climate stability, and an array of plant, animal, bird and insect life found nowhere else.

The question analysts are asking is will hope take root in the wake of Francis’ visit?

Puerto Maldonado is the largest city in the state of Madre de Dios; its economy depends largely on illegal gold mining. Will the governor of Madre de Dios, Luis Otsuka, former head of the statewide miners’ association, become an environmentalist? Will the government in Lima take much needed steps to protect the indigenous tribes whom Pope Francis so exalted?

“The defense of the earth has no other purpose than the defense of life,” the pope asserted. “We know of the suffering caused for some of you by emissions of hydrocarbons, which gravely threaten the lives of your families and contaminate your natural environment.”

A consensus of those interviewed by Mongabay, as well as those quoted in other media, is pessimistic. Most offer little hope that government or [business leaders](#) will change much as a result. Many, for example, [have long dismissed Laudato Si](#) as naïve or beyond the pope’s expertise. Surprisingly, [many of the working poor](#) are opposed to the Pope’s environmental message, fearing that it will deprive them of jobs and an economically secure future.

Pedro Solano, executive director of the Lima-based Peruvian Society of Environmental Law, saw the pope Friday and spotted Governor Otsuka in the crowd.

He told Mongabay he did not expect Otsuka to suddenly press for a reduction in illegal gold mining. But he added, “It is good to remind people that he was in the audience and that his role is

to act accordingly to the [environmental and indigenous] emergency... and in the public interest of the most valuable rights that are in jeopardy: human and environmental rights.”

Calling on church leaders

If the pope’s words are to lead to practical action, it may fall to the Catholic Church of South America to make it so, many agreed. But that, too, is complicated. The church is still staggering through its sexual abuse scandals, [especially in Chile](#). While Francis, an Argentinian, remains popular, his South American cardinals and bishops are less so.

“I’m Catholic, I believe in God, but I’ve learned not to trust priests,” Edwin Vasquez, leader of an Amazon indigenous organization, told [The New York Times](#).

Enrique Ortiz, a project manager with the Andes Amazon Fund and a Peruvian conservationist, is more optimistic. The pope’s specific call for the church to be more engaged in environmental protection and indigenous rights “is the real game changer,” he says.

“The pope is making sure that at the level of small, medium and large-scale churches, *Laudato Si* is coming. It’s real. It’s a big deal,” Ortiz told Mongabay. “Two years ago, we wondered if it would have any impact. But Francis is now telling the church, ‘This is a priority.’ It’s going to take a while, [but it’s coming](#). Change always comes slowly to the Catholic Church.”

Frances Seymour, a senior fellow with World Resources Institute, agreed: “Papal attention can inspire, encourage and empower local religious leaders and faith communities to redouble their efforts to stave off forest destruction and violations of human rights.”

Manuel Pulgar-Vidal is the World Wildlife Fund’s director of climate and energy. As Peru’s [former minister of the environment](#), he helped produce the working draft of the 2015 Paris Agreement at the 20th United Nations Climate Summit in Lima in 2014. He has long waited for *Laudato Si* to bring about change.

“There need to be priests who are capable of not only talking about the environment, but anchoring it in real issues,” he told [The Washington Post](#). “This has not been done, which is why the message [of the encyclical] has not had the impact it should have.”

In Puerto Maldonado, Pope Francis made clear that he remains committed to expanding the mission of the Church to include earth stewardship. But he understands well that this change can’t only come from above. On his South America trip, he called on indigenous people “to shape the culture of local churches in Amazonia.”

Then he punched up his commitment: in Peru, the pontiff announced that he will convene the first-ever Synod for Amazonia next year – a gathering of global bishops who will aim to put papal doctrine such as *Laudato Si* into action on the ground – including in the rainforests across Amazonia.

Justin Catanoso is a regular contributor to Mongabay and a professor of journalism at Wake Forest University in North Carolina, USA. Follow him on Twitter @jcatanoso

<https://news.mongabay.com/2018/01/popes-message-to-amazonia-inspires-hope-but-will-it-bring-action/>

January 24, 2018

Do We Care Enough About Mother Earth?

By Ryan Torok
Jewish Journal

As the executive director of the Shalom Institute, a Jewish day camp and conference center in Malibu, Rabbi Bill Kaplan has been both a preacher and practitioner of environmentalism.

In 2016, his organization received \$75,000 from the Homeland Security Grant Program, funds it used to install two solar power banks. What's more, the institute's dining hall is made of recycled plastic, its urinals are water-free and the campus uses LED lighting.

"We're making choices — and those choices are green choices," Kaplan said. "We always do improvements with a mind on sustainability."

That very contemporary concern has deep Jewish roots, as reflected in the holiday of Tu B'Shevat, the birthday of the trees, which falls on Jan. 31.

While in ancient times the date served to keep track of fruit trees' age, it has evolved into an opportunity for Jewish environmentalists to reaffirm their dedication to sustainability, respecting the earth and conserving natural resources. That commitment, however, isn't as widespread in the Jewish community as many think it should be.

Devorah Brous, founding executive director of Netiya, a Los Angeles-based food justice organization, is focused on improving the choices individuals and the community make around food. Brous was hired by Netiya in 2011, aiming to help Los Angeles synagogues to transform their underused land into food-producing gardens.

Her efforts have yielded mixed results, said Brous, who discovered that many of L.A.'s Jewish leaders are less concerned about sustainable agriculture and healthy eating than she is. As a result, the organization is putting a greater emphasis on working with the city. Los Angeles City Councilman David Ryu recently helped Netiya secure a parcel of land that it plans to convert into an urban farm. Brous also expressed excitement about local legislation that would provide tax incentives for landowners to dedicate their property to food production.

She sees a major opportunity for the organized Jewish community to embrace congregational gardens. Farming is an effective way of immersing young adult Jews in Judaism, she said, citing

several communities — including Berkeley and Boulder, Colo., among a vibrant national movement of 17 Jewish farms — where farming has connected young adult Jews to Judaism and to other Jews.

Brous said the work she is doing addresses many Jewish leaders' goals of engaging young Jews and combatting intermarriage.

“These Jewish farmers around the country are showing that the answer is to get them close to the land, get them outside, teach them skills, teach them how to grow food, teach them how to make their own matzah instead of buying it,” she said. “Because the people who are doing these programs are falling in love, getting married and having Jewish babies.”

While successfully catalyzing food production with 31 faith-based congregations throughout L.A. County, she did say that at least two Los Angeles synagogues expressed interest in turning unused land into gardens but eventually decided against doing so.

“I think this is not enough of a priority for many synagogues,” she said. “My wish is that regenerative stewardship becomes a top priority. This is faith in action.”

The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles has provided Netiya financial assistance for a gardening-education program for young children. Last fall, Federation gave Brous a \$40,000 grant to run the Seedlings Sprout! and Torah of Gardening programs out of her home in the San Fernando Valley.

Jewish day schools — including the Alice and Nahum Lainer School, de Toledo High School and Milken Community Schools — and congregation IKAR are working with Netiya, and last spring, Netiya installed an irrigation system and a number of fruit trees on Shalhevet High School's roof. The school's students and faculty also tend a rooftop flower and vegetable garden, and the school's environmental club promotes recycling.

Brous, whose sister is IKAR Rabbi Sharon Brous, also helps out at IKAR with the synagogue's Green Action team, which IKAR's website describes as a group of “advocates, activists, and gardeners” with a goal to “create a more sustainable way of life.”

“We're teaching the youngest of the young at IKAR's Early Childhood Center program,” Devorah Brous said.

Despite efforts like Netiya's, much of the Jewish community is just beginning to understand the potential behind Jewish environmentalism, said Rabbi Arthur Waskow, director of the Philadelphia-based Shalom Center, which integrates political action with spiritual wisdom. Waskow has been a Jewish environmental leader for decades. Taking care of the planet is an imperative of Biblical Judaism, he said.

“It seems to me the value of Torah and environmentalism are very closely intertwined, especially if you look at ... the Biblical tradition, which really was the spiritual expression of shepherds and farmers who were very close to the land,” Waskow said.

He said many congregations are focused on social justice issues but do not consider the environment in that category. “We now talk about ‘eco-social justice,’ ” he said, “we won’t use ‘social justice’ by itself.”

Of the major denominations, the Renewal movement has made the most progress integrating environmentalism into daily practice, he said. The Orthodox movement, he said, has the furthest to go.

“The Orthodox community, most of it, is still focused on traditional Orthodox concerns — keeping Shabbat, keeping kosher — and has only begun to address the ways in which Torah might point us toward action about the earth,” he said.

Pico Shul Rabbi Yonah Bookstein, an Orthodox rabbi, acknowledged that the Orthodox community lags behind, but he also said the Reform community does not appreciate how fundamental Jewish environmentalism is.

“Way before there was ever an environmental movement, [German Orthodox] Rav [Samson Raphael] Hirsch wrote, in the 1850s, how anybody who could think the Earth was ours to use and abuse was like an idol worshiper — and in Judaism you can’t get much worse than being an idol worshiper,” Bookstein said.

Bookstein has been passionate about the environment for decades. As an undergraduate at the University of Oregon in 1988, he brought Waskow to the campus on Earth Day to speak to Jewish students about Judaism and environmentalism.

Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky of B’nai David-Judea, a progressive Orthodox congregation in Los Angeles, said his congregation is not focusing on the environment.

“Unfortunately, [we] have nothing environmentally friendly to report,” Kanefsky said in an email.

On Tu B’Shevat, synagogues across Los Angeles will be holding Tu B’Shevat seders and other events. But Brous said Tu B’Shevat should be about more than events. The holiday reminds people how appreciating nature can improve their lives. She said there is a mystical element to the holiday.

“In our culture, you’re sort of expected to be always on, always be productive. But if you were a tree, not all trees are evergreen; some lose their leaves and go dormant in the winters,” she said, pointing out that, in the Torah, people are compared to trees. “Tu B’Shevat is this unbelievable, mystical reminder that even when they are powered down, they are still very much alive.”

https://jewishjournal.com/cover_story/230019/tu-bshevat-question-care-enough-mother-earth/

January 30, 2018

Loyola's free e-textbook brings environmental ethics to classes worldwide

By Brian Roewe
National Catholic Reporter

In October 2017, students at a Jesuit secondary school in Spain's Aragon region were studying hurricanes. At the same time, their peers in Puerto Rico were living through the aftermath of one.

Separated by an ocean and widely different circumstances, the students at Colegio del Salvador in Zaragoza, Spain, wrote letters of support to the students of Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola in San Juan, Puerto Rico, who remained in the midst of recovery from the devastating destruction brought by Hurricane Maria a month earlier.

What connected the two schools wasn't simply empathy but an environmental textbook, that each class had used, with the Caribbean's hurricane fallout presenting a case study come to life.

"It's not just a textbook that's going from us to users, but we're able to get this lateral connection going, which is exciting," said Michael Schuck, an associate theology professor at Loyola University Chicago and co-editor of the book who helped put the schools in touch.

In January 2016, the Jesuit university launched *Healing Earth* as a free, online textbook available to anyone with an internet connection. Co-edited by Schuck and Nancy Tuchman, a biology professor and dean of Loyola's Institute of Environmental Sustainability, the e-textbook is geared toward upper-level secondary school students, beginning college students and adult learners.

Beyond its pricing and paperless publishing, what differentiates *Healing Earth* from other environmental science texts is its integration of ethics, theology and spirituality into the curriculum — subject matters not often associated with science classes — in an effort to deepen the learning experience from simply understanding what is happening and why with respect to the environment, to what it means and what can be done about it.

The approach parallels the integral ecology that Pope Francis highlighted in his 2015 encyclical "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home," which coincidentally published roughly seven months before *Healing Earth*.

"When the encyclical came out, we were convinced that the pope had read *Healing Earth*," Schuck said.

The team behind *Healing Earth* briefly met Francis in September at the Vatican, where they were among the inaugural recipients of the Expanded Faith Awards, presented by the University Francisco de Vitoria, in Madrid, and the Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI Vatican Foundation.

"It was just very affirming for our project," Tuchman said.

The idea of a "living textbook" blending science, ethics and spirituality originated six years ago in the mind of Jesuit Fr. Michael Garanzini, formerly Loyola president (2001-2015) and director of the Jesuit Higher Education Secretariat in Rome. The concept came, in part, from a 2011 special report on ecology from the Society of Jesus, titled *Healing A Broken World*. Among the report's recommendations: developing teaching resources and curricula in environmental studies as well as increased collaboration on environmental concerns — an increasing focus for the Jesuits, in particular the impact of ecological degradation on the poor — among its vast network of schools worldwide.

Healing Earth, which has been used in classrooms in at least 17 countries, 20 secondary schools and more than 30 universities, attempts to do just that.

The e-textbook runs six chapters — introduction, biodiversity, natural resources, energy, water, global climate change — with each written by an interdisciplinary team of scholars and teachers. While faculty from Loyola University Chicago represented roughly a third of the contributors, about an equal number of writers hailed from outside the U.S., including Brazil, India, Indonesia, Spain and Zambia.

"We tried to make it a global perspective so it's not just about the United States and what's happening here," Tuchman said.

Each chapter starts with the science to provide a basis of understanding of the issue before expanding into the ethics, spirituality, and finally, a discussion of actions under way as well as ideas for students to get involved themselves.

At Cristo Rey Atlanta Jesuit High School, environmental sciences teacher Stanmore Hinds has watched his junior students latch onto the ethical and spiritual dimensions.

"They really get into it, and sometimes I have to try to pry them away from discussions along that," he told NCR.

Hinds, who teaches three classes on AP environmental science and has used *Healing Earth* as a supplemental text the past two school years, attributes their interest in part to teenagers' attunement to what's right and wrong. But he also sees some students, many from economically disadvantaged families, relating personally to case studies about landfills or power plants built near lower-income housing areas.

"They get a chance to see those kinds of things and they start to pick up. They say, 'Wait a minute, that's like where I live,' " Hinds said.

Incorporating into classroom discussions the spiritual and ethical discussions beyond the science helps students become more critical and analytical thinkers about their world, he added, recognizing the interrelatedness not only of the subjects they study but what happens in the communities all around them.

Connections to *Laudato Si'* have also piqued Hinds' students, as they're surprised by what the pope has said about environmental stewardship, and curious why more people haven't heeded his directives. In reply, their teacher told them, "OK, that's what you're going to do."

At Loyola Academy, another co-ed Jesuit high school in Chicago, references to the pope's encyclical and Jesuit documents in *Healing Earth* has led environmental science teacher Jennifer Snyder to make regular use of its climate change chapter.

"The way the climate change one is written is so different than in the traditional textbook because they talk about *Laudato Si'*," she said. Having Catholic social teaching included in a textbook, she added, makes it easier for science teachers to find ways to weave the Ignatian pedagogy and the school's mission into their lesson plans.

While both Snyder and Hinds have found *Healing Earth* enhancing classroom discussion, they said they can't use it as their primary textbook largely because it doesn't cover all of the material associated with the college-credit AP test for environmental science administered by The College Board.

The book's editing team continues to make updates, including a forthcoming chapter on food, a synthesis chapter tying together all the issues addressed from a macro level, and more global case studies. They also plan to polish up the Spanish translation — a priority with a sizable number of the text's users located in Spanish-speaking countries — and eventually add a French version, with an eye toward reaching schools in some African countries.

Other goals include a deeper collaboration with the Cristo Rey network of schools and with the Jesuit Refugee Services, the latter to bring *Healing Earth* into its schools set up in refugee camps. The small staff is also seeking additional donors, so far predominantly funded by Loyola University Chicago.

Ultimately, Tuchman said they strive to reach 100 known users of *Healing Earth*. As it stands, the free and online components, while making the book widely accessible, doesn't allow for a true count of how many teachers are using it in classrooms.

"We might already have those 100 and we have no way of knowing," Tuchman said.

From the workshops they've given on *Healing Earth* around the globe, she and Schuck have seen the textbook take root in classrooms, and see potential for it to become a larger platform for Catholic schools to address environmental issues across the planet.

"I hope *Healing Earth* can grow, and people can become aware that it's a place to come to talk about the challenges we're facing," Schuck said.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/loyolas-free-e-textbook-brings-environmental-ethics-classes-worldwide>

February 2, 2018

Minister urges Christians to act on climate

By Daisy Simmons

Yale Climate Connections

'Love of God and neighbor means that we have to honor creation and care for it,' she says.

Sharon Delgado is a retired United Methodist minister and activist who challenges Christians to reflect on how their faith relates to climate change.

In her new book, [*Love in a Time of Climate Change*](#), Delgado uses scripture and religious teachings to explain why Christian ideals require action on global warming.

Delgado: “It’s not simply an issue of loving the earth and taking care of the earth, it’s also an issue of standing up and speaking out for justice for people who are on the front lines of climate change.”

She says that includes poor and vulnerable people who often bear the brunt of extreme weather, droughts, and pollution, as well as children and future generations.

Delgado: “Love of God and neighbor means that we have to honor creation and care for it, and we have to establish justice.”

For Delgado, that means going beyond individual actions like recycling. She encourages Christians to become politically active and to speak out in support of climate-friendly laws and policies.

Delgado: “We’re facing a living hell on earth if we don’t turn things around – and that is going to require systemic change.”

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2018/02/minister-urges-christians-to-act-on-climate/>

February 7, 2018

As Cape Town’s Water Crisis Nears ‘Day Zero,’ Faith Groups Spring into Action

By Brian Pellot, Religion News Service

Word & Way

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (RNS) — The trickling sound echoed through Zonnebloem Estate's chapel as the Anglican bishop of Table Bay, the Rt. Rev. Garth Q. Counsell, slowly poured one pitcher of water into another.

This sound of running water, once considered soothing, now triggers anxiety in drought-stricken Cape Town, where residents are hoarding bottled water and showering over buckets in anticipation of “Day Zero.”

[Currently estimated for mid-May](#), Day Zero would mark the unprecedented moment when engineers close most of the city’s faucets. Nearly 4 million residents would be left to fetch daily water rations of just 25 liters (6.6 gallons) from fewer than 200 central collection points until rains resume or alternative sources come online.

Government officials have provided scant details for Day Zero logistics. Rather than communicate a clear plan of action, some are invoking fear [with comparisons to World War II and 9/11](#).

Major political parties and faith groups in South Africa have long recognized the toll climate change is taking on citizens and the environment. As tensions rise and politicians point blame in every direction, faith groups are working across spiritual divides to offer their flocks hope and a way forward.

Counsell’s deliberate water display and opening sermon kicked off the Anglican Diocese of Cape Town’s Water (In)Justice Conference on Saturday (Feb. 3). More than 120 lay and clergy members joined the event, aimed at infusing the upcoming Lenten season with messages and prayers around water’s sacredness, scarcity, sanitation, biodiversity and sustainability.

We have stopped major crises in the history of our country, and even this one will come to pass,” Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town Thabo Makgoba told the room, later referencing the HIV/AIDS epidemic and apartheid. Makgoba takes issue with the apocalyptic connotations of the name “Day Zero” and suggested parishioners consider “Day One” — his preferred term for the same scenario — as an opportunity for action.

“From a biblical perspective, the concept of void and nihilism does not sit well, because we take the creation story seriously,” he explained. “Zero has the connotation that this is the end. It doesn’t give us hope. But we are responsible. We can do something. We can avert it.”

The Rev. Rachel Mash, environmental coordinator for the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and [Green Anglicans](#), organized the conference, which featured practical water-saving tools and ideas. Goody bags included dense [green plastic blocks](#) participants were advised to drop in their toilet tanks at home to save water.

“Our job as the church is to reduce water ourselves, inspire others to reduce water, share ideas on how to do that, get the message out into the community, and avert Day Zero,” Mash said.

The Anglican Diocese is performing environmental audits on individual parishes and fixing leaks. If or when the countdown to Day Zero drops below 30 days, Mash said the denomination plans to install crisis committee representatives at each parish to help coordinate water home delivery for vulnerable people of all faiths and none.

“If we do need to be queueing for water, it would be helpful if faith leaders are there to help marshal and to make sure the elderly, vulnerable, pregnant mums, etc., aren’t standing in the hot sun for hours,” she said.

Mash invited fellow Anglican and “water prophet” Kevin Winter of the Future Water Institute at the University of Cape Town to address the conference.

“We’ve always imagined climate change as being a slow-moving bus, but we need to recognize that there are speed bumps along the way, and we’re going through one right now,” he said.

Winter’s ultimate message: “Keep calm and save water while we have it.”

The Rev. Ronald Dias attended the conference from St. Dominic Church Parish in the township of Hanover Park, where he says water quality is already a problem.

“We have a borehole (water well) at the church, but the police stopped us from using that,” he said. “The water is running very low, and the pressure is very low. What will happen to our soup kitchen on Wednesday mornings? That requires water.”

New water restrictions came into effect Feb. 1, regulating the use of borehole water wells and limiting Cape Town residents to [just 50 liters \(13.2 gallons\) of water per day](#). By comparison, the U.S. Geological Survey estimates that Americans use [80 to 100 gallons of water each per day](#).

These numbers, and the growing panic in Cape Town’s wealthy and middle-class neighborhoods, belie a grim reality, Mash is quick to point out.

“Because Cape Town is such an unjust society, the leafy suburbs have always had enough water for swimming pools and totally ignored the fact that on the other side of the city people don’t have enough water to even throw into their toilet, and they’re sharing one toilet between 20 families,” she said.

On Sunday, the Muslim Judicial Council South Africa joined Habibia Soofie Masjid and Masjidul-Quds to lead more than 1,000 Muslims in an early morning prayer for rain.

Men at the front, women at the back, gathered on green patches of grass at the Rylands sports complex, where signs warned that the nonpotable grey water keeping the field alive is “not suitable for human consumption.”

Presiding sheikhs offered an emotional refrain that highlighted sin and redemption.

“Each and every person must ask, ‘Where did I go wrong?’ We have done so much wrong. The consequences have brought us to where we are today,” said Sheikh Moegamad Moerat of Zeenatul Islam mosque. “Once we live in halal, Allah will send us beneficial rain.”

“The root cause is the way we live, the sins we commit,” added Sheikh Riad Fataar, second deputy president of the judicial council. “You have a hand in it, and you can correct it.”

Several imams encouraged worshippers to pay zakat, obligatory alms, citing a hadith attributed to the Prophet Muhammad that Allah withholds rain for those who withhold their charity.

Pressed about the water crisis' practical implications for Muslims — supply restrictions on ablution water used for ritual washing before prayer, and questions about whether alcohol-based hand sanitizer, now replacing soap and water in many public restrooms, is halal — Masjidul-Quds President Hafiz Mahmood Khatib said sometimes necessity makes the impermissible permissible.

“The importance of washing ourselves and obtaining a state of purity is important, but more important is finding spiritual purity. Islam enjoins us that when water is scarce you can make your ablution with pure sand,” he said.

For now, many mosques throughout Cape Town have installed aerators on taps or are providing worshippers with spray bottles or single cups of water to perform ablutions.

Cape Town's predominantly Orthodox Jewish community has also held several gatherings and half-day fasts to pray for rain. Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein's office circulated a rain prayer to synagogues and now plans to launch a nationwide daily psalm.

“We are praying not only for G-d to bring the rain, but also for G-d to give wisdom and insight to all levels of government – national, provincial and city – to guide them in the right direction to find solutions for the water crisis,” Goldstein told RNS by email.

Beyond individual faith groups' efforts, several ecumenical and interfaith initiatives have emerged to address the water crisis and “soak the city in prayer.” In May, Cape Town Mayor Patricia De Lille [hosted interfaith leaders](#) at the foot of Table Mountain to pray for rain.

On Monday, interfaith leaders gathered at St. George's Cathedral to offer leadership in advancing water justice and averting Day Zero.

“When the interfaith voice opposed apartheid as a movement, it worked,” Archbishop Makgoba said. “This is a struggle and a crisis. We need to be good stewards. It's a beautiful opportunity for South Africans to come together. And therein lies our hope.”

<https://www.wordandway.org/news/world/item/4069-as-cape-town-s-water-crisis-nears-day-zero-faith-groups-spring-into-action>

February 10, 2018

Biodiversity Congress to be held in Dehradun

Deccan Chronicle

Ms Vandana Shiva said the focal theme of the Congress aimed to showcase Indian philosophy of living in harmony with all living beings.

Thiruvananthapuram: The Centre for Innovation in Science and Social Action (CISSA), Thiruvananthapuram will organise an International Biodiversity Congress at the Forest Research Institute, in Dehradun from October 4 to 6. Navdanya, Dehradun, Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE, Dehradun), Forest Research Institute (FRI), Wildlife Institute of India (WII, Dehradun), Uttarakhand Biodiversity Board and Uttarakhand Council for Science and Technology, will be the co-organisers of the Congress with the focal theme “Biodiversity for Ecological Civilisation: Vasudh-aiva Kutumbakam”.

Ms Vandana Shiva, managing trustee, Navdanya, told reporters here on Friday that the focal theme was aimed at showcasing the Indian philosophy living in harmony with every living being in the planet. “The Congress will be an appeal towards undertaking a transformation from industrial civilisation to biodiversity civilisation, a human civilisation strongly rooted in biodiversity consciousness.

Global authorities and thinkers who promote this philosophy of biodiversity civilisation will take part in the programme,” Ms Shiva said. Academicians, researchers, students, citizen scientists, farmers are among those who will participate., Farmer Representatives, Social Activists, and Community Representatives will be among the participants.

Congress will include a wide array of programmes including International Seminar, Exhibition, Women Biodiversity Congress (WBC), Youth Biodiversity Congress (YBC), Civil Society Meet, Workshops, National Photography Exhibition, and Documentary Film Festival More than 1000 participants from all over the world will participate in the event. Academicians, researchers, students, citizen scientists, Farmers, Farmer Representatives, Social Activists, and Community Representatives will be among the participants.

<https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/100218/biodiversity-congress-to-be-held-in-dehradun.html>

February 13, 2018

Lord Williams: Environmental Crisis Toxic Expression of Humanity's Failures

By Catherine Pepinster
The Tablet

Lord Williams of Oystermouth gave an address on Pope Francis' green encyclical, Laudato Si' at St Mary's University

The environmental crisis is a toxic expression of humanity's failures which Pope Francis has challenged us to tackle, according to the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord (Rowan) Williams.

And according to the former archbishop, one of the gravest problems of this crisis is the way in which society is failing children, hampering their ability to grow in learning and understand beauty.

Lord Williams of Oystermouth was speaking on Monday night at St Mary's University, Twickenham, where he gave an address on Pope Francis' green encyclical, *Laudato Si'*.

He praised the encyclical for highlighting that the Christian understanding of "who is my neighbour?" should embrace the whole of creation and that humanity's treatment of the environment is self-destructive.

"For the Christian, the doctrine of creation is a declaration that all that is comes from God", said Lord Williams. "But as Pope Francis says, it is not enough to avoid environmental disaster, to love our neighbour and ourselves...we have to ask how do we live in such a way to receive from God".

Lord Williams, now the Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, reserved his staunchest criticism for contemporary approaches to education.

"Children need to know what beauty is and we need to think how this can be nurtured and developed in education. We have increasingly lost sight of education as a humanising task," he said.

After the lecture during questions he was even more forthright about education, expressing dismay over the Government's higher education white paper. It recommends that universities should be placed on a more commercial footing, and uncouples the link between teaching and research.

"We are in danger of trivialising higher education," he said. "The higher education white paper was narrow-minded and a disgrace. Universities should be conversational communities".

Lord Williams also used to his lecture to draw out a strong link between the theology of Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, highlighting the importance both attach to reason, in the sense of the importance of conversation and of learning together – something he urged was vital for universities to nurture.

After the lecture, St Mary's chair of governors, Bishop Richard Moth, presented Lord Williams with the Benedict Medal, awarded by the university for outstanding contributions to faith and education.

<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/8554/lord-williams-environmental-crisis-toxic-expression-of-humanity-s-failures->

February 14, 2018

Indonesian youths plant trees to protect environment

By Katharina R. Lestari
UCA News

Interfaith group seek to prevent landslides, retain water at natural sources

The Suburban Interfaith Youth Community of Kupang plant 500 saplings of mahogany in Naitoto, where a spring is located, on Feb. 3. (Photo supplied by Maks Tameno)

More than 50 people calling themselves the Suburban Interfaith Youth Community of Kupang in Indonesia's predominantly Christian [East Nusa Tenggara province](#) have planted 2,000 saplings so far this year to help protect the environment.

The young people representing Buddhism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Islam and Protestantism as well as young policemen and military personnel planted 1,000 mahogany and rain tree saplings Feb. 10-11 near a newly constructed bridge in the provincial capital [Kupang](#).

Community members as well as the local forestry department provided the saplings.

"Construction of the bridge left the land around it empty. We want to prevent any possible landslides," Maks Tameno, the community's coordinator, told ucanews.com on Feb. 14.

Earlier, on Feb. 3, the community planted 500 mahogany saplings in nearby town of Naitoto, where a natural spring is located. "The spring serves as water source of local people. We want to prevent it from drying up," he said.

In late January, the community planted 500 mahogany and rain tree saplings along a river in Belo on the outskirts of Kupang. "At least 120 families live close to the riverbanks. Heavy rains can cause landslides there," Tameno said.

In the near future, he said the community will cultivate unused land in the province and drill a well in Belo.

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-youths-plant-trees-to-protect-environment/81522>

February 19, 2018

Before Tet festival, sisters train Vietnamese to avoid unsafe food

By Joachim Pham
National Catholic Reporter

During the Tet or Lunar New Year, Vietnam's biggest festival, food contamination is a serious threat.

Vietnamese people say *ăn Tết*, literally "eat the Lunar New Year." During the festivities, which were at a peak Feb. 16-18 but traditionally last a full month, food is a central focus and revelers consume large amounts of a bewildering variety of food.

Amid the frenzy of activity, substandard food products and contaminated or rotten meat can be secretly slipped into restaurants, open markets and even malls.

The [Daughters of Mary Immaculate](#) have chosen the time leading up to the holiday to educate people, especially those who are ill or with limited resources, to avoid the risks of food poisoning.

"We are deeply concerned about poor people's health during the Tet. They easily suffer food poisoning because they can only afford to buy cheap food of poor quality," said Sr. Anna Nguyen Thi Hien, a doctor who runs a clinic in Hue City.

In 2017, the General Statistics Office recorded 3,374 food poisoning cases nationally, 22 of them fatal.

On Feb. 3, police in Ho Chi Minh City reportedly seized more than 10 metric tons of rotten pig meat that was collected from places outside the city. Police also caught workers at three small factories processing hundreds of kilograms of pig ears and viscera that had already started to rot or had no documents regarding its origin.

The traders said the intention was to process the meat in chemicals and then supply it to restaurants in the city.

During a Feb. 8 press conference, authorities from the coastal province of Ba Ria-Vung Tau said they fined six factories for using pesticides in processing dried fish to preserve it from insects.

Police from Thua Thien-Hue Province, in the North Central coast region, said last month they found 20 incidents of food safety violations and product imitations.

Responding to these risks, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate sisters organized a Feb. 5 training course in food safety for 50 people with HIV/AIDS, volunteers and sisters at their [Kim Long Charity Clinic](#) in Hue City.

Hien, head of the clinic, said the course "aims to raise a growing awareness of food safety among participants and provide them with practical knowledge about nutrition and food safety so that they could maintain their good health and [that of] others."

During the course, Dr. Tran Thi Kim Pho, deputy of the Food Safety and Hygiene Department in Thua Thien-Hue Province, taught participants how to use information on food origins, producers and processors to identify whether food is unclean.

Participants learned how food could be adulterated with chemical agents, viruses, poisons, pesticides and chemicals from the soil.

They were also shown ways to preserve fresh food, and to process meat, fish, fruits and vegetables with proper hygiene. They learned how to prepare nutritious food for the sick, people with malnutrition, obese patients and pregnant women.

They were taught how consuming unclean food products can lead to cancer, other diseases and poisoning.

Pho warned that many people who sell food on the street process food without proper hygiene and store food near garbage cans. Some local factories are known to use chemical agents to process packaged food products.

She said that, in one December 2016 case, 128 people were hospitalized after eating bread from a street vendor, and 23 others were sent to hospitals for poisoning in a case in 2017. Both incidents happened in Hue City.

The doctor urged participants to seek medical treatment for intestinal parasites every six months, and to wash their hands before meals and food preparation.

A participant living with HIV said, "I learned much helpful information from the course. I hope I can buy and prepare good food products to serve my family during the Tet."

She said she and 22 others suffered poisoning after buying sticky rice cakes on a street in Hue last April. "I had severe diarrhea and other symptoms, and received treatment at the hospital for one week," she said.

Joseph Nguyen Van Hoang, a volunteer who visits and serves patients at their homes, said the course would help him show HIV/AIDS patients how to prepare nutritious food for themselves.

"If patients who are in poor health get food poisoning, it takes much time for them to recover," Hoang said.

Hien said she plans to hold another course for 100 people with HIV/AIDS from the neighboring province of Quang Tri after the Tet festival.

The nuns also held Tet celebrations for 400 people with HIV/AIDS at the clinic. The attendees watched cultural performances, played traditional games, enjoyed a great feast, and received blankets, cooking oil, milk, sugar, rice and sweets.

[Joachim Pham is a correspondent for Global Sisters Report based in Vietnam.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/news/ministry/tet-festival-sisters-train-vietnamese-avoid-unsafe-food-52021>

February 19, 2018

The Church of England's Lent challenge: give up plastic

By Tara Isabella Burton

Vox

All over the Christian world, the faithful are making sacrifices for the [penitential season of Lent](#), which began last week. Some are giving up chocolate; others are turning away from Twitter. But the Church of England has one slightly unconventional vice it wants its parishioners to give up: plastics.

The Church of England, which has about 25 million members worldwide, exhorted the faithful to participate in the [Lent Plastic Challenge](#) forgoing single-use plastic containers, such as plastic cups, and unnecessary plastic packaging, as part of a wider program of stewardship for the environment. The effort is part of the church's wider environmental program, [Shrinking the Footprint](#).

Ruth Knight, the environmental policy officer for the church, [told the BBC](#): "The Lent challenge is about raising our awareness of how much we rely on single-use plastics and challenging ourselves to see where we can reduce that use. ... It ties in closely with our calling as Christians to care for God's creation."

Lent, the approximately six-week lead-up to Easter, is a time of fasting, penance, and prayer meant to coincide with Christ's temptation in the wilderness, arrest, and crucifixion. Catholics and some Protestants today typically give up a perceived "vice" (like alcohol or sweets) for the duration of the period.

To critics, the church's actions may seem emblematic of a wider ["secularization" of Lent](#): in which an originally spiritually focused religious observance becomes more about anodyne notions of "wellness" and "doing good." It's fair, too, to critique the movement as a bid for relevancy by a fading institution: A 2016 poll found that the number of Britons attending a weekly Church of England service [fell for the first time](#) to fewer than 1 million (or less than 2 percent of the UK's population).

Those criticisms would be valid. But at the same time, the Church of England's actions reflect a wider willingness among many mainline Protestant and Catholic Christian groups to focus on combating structural or global issues — from income inequality to environmental stewardship — alongside individual misdeeds.

For instance, Pope Francis has frequently made environmental issues a linchpin of his ministry. His 2015 [encyclical, *Laudato Si*](#), argued that caring for the environment was a fundamentally

Christian obligation. To sin against the environment, in this paradigm, is to place individual convenience and instant gratification above cooperation and caring for the world God has made.

“This is our sin, exploiting the Earth,” [Francis said in 2014](#), “this is one of the greatest challenges of our time: to convert ourselves to a type of development that knows how to respect creation.”

Francis’s notion of sin as something collective and structural, not just individual, has informed much of his theology, from his environmentalism to his [fervently anti-capitalist stance](#), a dynamic also at play in the way the Church of England is talking about its own initiatives.

It’s worth noting that these initiatives, which tend to be popular with Catholics and mainline Protestants, are not necessarily shared by all Christians. American evangelicals, in particular, have [long been wary](#) of environmental causes, seeing them as a threat to what they envision as man’s God-given dominion over the earth.

But for the Church of England, environmental stewardship has become a necessary part of the Christian mission.

By focusing on the shared call to care for what they see as God’s creation, the church isn’t just asking parishioners to recycle. It’s asking them to step up to their divinely mandated role as responsible “stewards” of creation. What could be more orthodox than that?

<https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/2/21/17032564/church-of-england-lent-challenge-plastic-environmentalism-christianity>

February 21, 2018

Red Cloud’s Revolution: Oglalla Sioux Freeing Themselves From Fossil Fuel

By Saul Elbein
Common Dreams

“People don’t like being on the grid here,” Red Cloud says, “because they’ve been coexisting with the earth – the sun, the wind – for most of their history.”

- *Henry Red Cloud, like so many Oglalla Sioux young men, left the reservation to work in construction. When he returned home in 2002, he needed a job, and also wanted to make a difference. He attended a solar energy workshop and saw the future.*
- *Today, Red Cloud runs Lakota Solar and the Red Cloud Renewable Energy Center, which have become catalysts for an innovative new economic network – one that employs locals and connects tribes, while building greater energy independence among First Nations.*

- *The company is building and installing alternative energy systems, and training others to do the same, throughout remote areas of U.S. reservations, thus allowing the Sioux and others to leap past outdated fossil fuel technology altogether.*
- *Henry Red Cloud's company has another more radical purpose: it helps provide energy to remote Water Protector camps, like the one at Standing Rock protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). Solar power and other alternative energy sources are vital at such remote sites, as they power up cellphones, connecting resistors to the media and outside world.*

It's high summer in South Dakota, and a cruel sun beats down with an endless floodtide of photons that burns skin through t-shirts and tinted car windows. That's the way Henry Red Cloud likes it. To Red Cloud – descendant of a great Lakota insurgent chief, founder of Lakota Solar, and self-proclaimed “solar warrior” – that July sun is key to the independence of his fellow Lakota and native peoples across America; it also embodies a hot business opportunity.

It's July 5, the tail end of Red Cloud's Energy Independence Day weekend, first announced in the wake of the Trump Inauguration, and meant to spread off-grid skills throughout Indian country – possibly with radical purpose.

I walked out of the sun and indoors to find Red Cloud leading a solar workshop, holding forth to a group of eager indigenous participants about photovoltaic cells and the danger of [phantom loads](#) – the way in which many appliances continue drawing current even when switched off. “Vampire” loads are a constant suck on household energy, consuming electricity and thereby emitting carbon to no purpose – while also draining an off-grid setup with limited juice.

A set up, like, say, the remote, off-grid camps at the Standing Rock Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) protests in 2016.

Red Cloud offers up a hypothetical: “Let's say you have a Water Protector camp, your solar array is charging, you notice the inverter is on, but nothing is plugged in.” The stocky 60-something instructor, with long ponytail and far-seeing eyes, frowns and shakes his head, indicating trouble. “Well, that empty power strip can draw more than your actual daily use,” draining down the batteries faster than they can charge.”

A bearded man in his late 20s raises his hand. “That bad for the array?”

“Well,” Red Cloud responds, “it's not a problem if you know about it. Just plug in a couple cellphones,” and charge them up so protestors can reach out to the media from the remote site. That way, he says, at least now the array is doing some work.

Man with a plan

After the workshop, Red Cloud shows me his innovations. A solar trailer, small enough to be pulled by a compact car, is mounted with panels and an inverter. We step into a show-house built out of compressed earthen blocks – the hydraulic press that makes them runs on diesel, the only machine Red Cloud owns that depends on fossil fuel.

“And then there’s this,” he says, pointing to a plywood box with Plexiglas atop it, a 35V photovoltaic panel that sparkles in the sun. It’s a homemade solar furnace: in the brutal Dakota winter, it can generate a 190 degree Fahrenheit mass of air, along with enough energy to blow that warmth through a house, largely eliminating heating costs. He takes me to see the solar pumps that move running water through his two-story school building. Red Cloud’s training center and home is a model for something new and, not to put too harsh a word on it, revolutionary.

His compound represents an all-in-one alternative energy lab and off-grid resistance camp set in the middle of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. That’s a highly unlikely place for energy innovation: Pine Ridge is America’s second poorest county, a sprawling and desolate collection of about 40,000 spread across the South Dakota Badlands. Most locals are so impoverished, and so estranged from the cash economy, that some 60 percent of them can’t afford to hook up to the electric grid.

Which, to many Lakota leaders and especially Red Cloud, represents a huge opportunity – a chance for the tribe to leapfrog over the 20th Century energy economy of coal and natural gas burning power plants and regional transmission lines into a New Economy. The goal is to build an energy independent First Nation and modern lifestyle, beyond the reach of oil shortages, price hikes, and the environmental harm perpetuated by the U.S. fossil fuel-driven economy.

For more than a decade, Red Cloud has been running Lakota Solar, an off-grid skills school and solar machine factory – one of Pine Ridge’s few locally owned business, and the heart of a business network that extends to a dozen other reservations.

Over a thousand alumni have learned to build solar arrays, solar furnaces and solar-driven water pumps in his schools. To Red Cloud, these are practical skills that expand people’s economic and political options. But they’re also something mystical – a key to a new personal and communal future. The two of us settle under a shade tree, and Red Cloud declares: “Number 45,” (that being his way of referring to U.S. President Donald Trump) “is changing a whole lot in our country. So we need to start banding together, natives and non-natives, and if we’re going to build this country let’s build it efficient.”

He wipes his forehead. “We’re all waiting for something. What? I don’t know. But it’s time to get started,” he says.

An independent tradition

In the early 2000s, Henry Red Cloud came home to the Pine Ridge Reservation and realized he had a problem. He’d spent years on the road, working seasonal construction, building with structural steel, interlocking the bones of skyscrapers “high above 5th Avenue” in New York City, and elsewhere, seeing much of America. But that wasn’t the world he wanted to live in.

“I had all these hopes of going home, having a job, getting to spend quality time with my people,” he recalls.

The word “home” for Red Cloud, and his moniker too, resonate with historic cadences. He is named for his five-times great-grandfather, the war-chief Red Cloud of the Oglalla Sioux. Though not a member of one of the traditional Oglalla ruling families, the original Red Cloud led a highly successful insurgency from 1866-1868 to prevent U.S. expansion into the productive buffalo grounds that the Lakota were then seizing from the Crow Indians.

During that conflict – now remembered as the Powder River War or Red Cloud’s War – the Oglalla and their Cheyenne and Arapahoe allies, defeated a number of U.S. expeditionary forces, wiping out an 81-man cavalry unit in the worst American military defeat at the hands of Plains Indians up to the defeat of Custer’s 7th Cavalry at Little Big Horn, Montana in 1876.

The end of Red Cloud’s War resulted in the federal government signing the Treaty of 1868, ceding a vast territory to the Lakota that made up much of what is now the U.S. Midwest. Red Cloud then agreed to settle the Oglalla at Pine Ridge, and his fight ended there. When in 1876 the Hunkpapas under Sitting Bull rose against the U.S. in anger at the treaty’s violation, the elder Red Cloud stayed out, seeing no benefit in further battles against the Americans.

The Oglallas have been at Pine Ridge since, renowned among the other Lakota and Dakota peoples for the extent to which they have proudly maintained their culture. It is still common to meet elderly Oglalla who speak only their tribal language well, and English with difficulty.

Here comes the sun

According to Henry Red Cloud, what the Oglallas lack today, and badly need, is a thriving economy. When he came home in 2002, he found a reservation that relied on something roughly comparable to a colonial economy – indigenous settlements were largely dependent on franchise stores and chains that brought little money into the community, but which sucked out dollars to the benefit of faraway corporate headquarters. About the only jobs on the reservation were with the tribe – as police, in schools and government.

With the initial intention of just making some cash, Red Cloud signed up for a solar installation course. It was a revelation.

“I thought, as natives we’ve been embracing the sun for eons,” he says, offering the Sundance as an example, the most sacred rite of the Plains Indians, in which devotees dance ecstatically for four days, exposed to the elements, without sleep, food or water.

“We have always believed in living off the land,” he says. After graduating from that first solar course, he decided there was no reason that this native self-sufficiency shouldn’t be reestablished.

He took more solar courses, learned more about alternative energy and green technology. He started working as a solar installer, always expecting to run into other Native Americans who had enjoyed the same epiphany he had. “But there weren’t any,” he recalls.

“I encouraged my brothers to come [and learn from me], but people can’t just get up and [come to my workshops]. Everyone is doing something, like making handicrafts or gathering wild food, to help their families survive. They can’t leave their families for 19 days. So I thought, what if I bring this knowledge here, to Indian Country?”

By 2004, he had learned solar installation; by 2005 he was making his own solar machines; by 2006 he had founded Red Cloud Renewable Energy and was employing locals to make solar panels to sell to the other tribes. Meanwhile, his alternative energy training school began turning out graduates.

Finding an alternative to the devil’s choice

For Red Cloud, solar and renewable energy are to the New Economy what the sun is to an intact ecosystem – the basis of everything, offering perpetual sustenance. A place as “underdeveloped” and remote as Pine Ridge, he says, has always presented its First Nation inhabitants with a devil’s choice: either continue in poverty, or sacrifice your culture to the world coming in from outside – usually the malls-and-suburban model of 20th Century America.

“But out here we’re rural,” Red Cloud says, pointing to the far horizon. “We’re the West of the West. At night you have a sky full of stars. You can see thunderstorms coming from 100 miles away. We have no Interstate, no banks, no nothing. And that’s how I like it – being able to go to the hills and see as far as the naked eyeball can see. I wouldn’t want to see mainstream America flood this place.” So, Lakota Solar and the Red Cloud Renewable Energy Center have become catalysts for an innovative economic network – one that employs locals and connects tribes, while building greater independence.

Ten years on, Red Cloud employs a dozen people at around \$12 an hour, well above the U.S. minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. The products they make, they sell to other tribes, who add their own innovations to the mix. The nearby Rosebud Sioux have “gone to the next level,” says Red Cloud, installing residential-scale wind and rooftop solar. But they also buy their solar furnaces and photovoltaic arrays from Red Cloud. Lakota Solar is now the main supplier for three other native-owned small businesses – a solar-powered paper recycling company and two solar installation firms.

The alternative energy systems Red Cloud builds, and boosts, are what’s known as “grid-tie.” For now, they tie into the conventional electricity grid, providing a household, depending on its solar setup, with anywhere from 40 to 80 percent of their power. The systems are designed to be small scale and supplemental, offering a bit more power (or a bit more saved cash) to families that otherwise might go without, or fall short.

A mid-range residential setup from Lakota Solar goes for \$3,500 and lasts about 30 years; that’s drastically below the \$25 to \$35 thousand dollar average cost for solar arrays found in the rest of residential America. His systems don’t pay the entire electric bill, Red Cloud says, “but it’s still money saved that goes back into the community. It’s enough to help build our own economy here.”

While not the be all, or end all, these inexpensive solar installations offer more than just extra electricity to High Plains reservations. For Red Cloud and other Native American leaders, these solar solutions possess a deep philosophical appeal, extending beyond economic or environmental motives, and extending into the communal, and even to the nearly spiritual.

“People don’t like being on the grid here,” Red Cloud says, “because they’ve been coexisting with the earth – the sun, the wind – for most of their history.” Clearly, the man who came back to the reservation in 2002 has found his way home, and he’s now bringing his people home too.

See photos from this article here:

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2018/02/21/red-clouds-revolution-ogllalla-sioux-freeing-themselves-fossil-fuel>

February 21, 2018

The world will be saved by beauty

By Martha A. Kirk
Global Sisters Report

I had been thinking, "Too much poverty, too much pain, too much pollution, I don't want to look, I don't want to know. How can we go forward with all this?"

I was helping to lead a study and service trip to Peru with our [University of the Incarnate Word](#) students and faculty, as part of a [Women's Global Connection](#) team.

Peruvian Incarnate Word Sr. Katty Huanuco introduced us to the women of the Shipiba community who live in the hills of Cantagalio, Lima.

The Shipomi-Koniba communities are indigenous Amazonian people who have moved to Lima seeking work and education for their children. Not only were they poor and struggling, but a little over a year ago their small hillside homes were destroyed by fire. The Peruvian government has refused to recognize the people's rights to be there, but about 30 of these courageous women have been working together to demand their rights.

Sister Katty has been encouraging them in developing leadership skills and in creating a sewing co-op. It seems the greater their hardships, the more beauty they have been creating with the fabrics.

"The world will be saved by beauty," says the main character of [The Idiot](#) by Fyodor Dostoevsky. In his 1999 [Letter to Artists](#), Pope John Paul II took up Dostoevsky's prophetic idea, suggesting that when humanity is challenged, beauty and wonder can draw them forward.

Two years ago, when we were on a service trip in Chimbote, a Peruvian coastal city challenged by dire poverty and pollution, I began asking Peruvian artist [Richard Jon Castañeda Estrada](#) if we could serve in Chimbote by collaborating with him on art projects. People hunger for beauty as well as food. Nourishment for the spirit gives strength and creativity to pursue justice. Castañeda Estrada, one of the best artists in Chimbote, had created a mural for the city's Centro Cultural Centenario.

One of our Incarnate Word missionaries ministering in Chimbote, Selena Mitchell, made contact with Santa Rosa School in one of the most disadvantaged areas. The children's homes do not have running water and the school has no back fence, so the area where the horses and animals live is all one with the children's playground.

Elena Valenzuela, an art teacher and one of my doctoral students, focused her research on Peruvian murals and social justice. She and Castañeda Estrada led our group in the creation of a mural in the Santa Rosa kindergarten classroom. I didn't fully appreciate it until my grandniece Harper Metting delightedly explained it from her perspective as a kindergarten student: "Children can learn their letters, they can learn their numbers, they can learn their colors and their shapes — then they can fly like a bird!"

At the school, Stephanie Phillips Mitchell, a University of the Incarnate Word nutrition teacher, also tested the quality of water in the area with Juan Piña, an Incarnate Word missionary in Peru. Every week, families get water outside from what is left of the school water supply. The families often wash their clothes in the irrigation ditch across the street. The water does not meet safe standards and we hope to help the people get safe water.

They inspired me to go home and focus on water — lack of water, polluted water, and water as the source of life. As the United States has been moving away from the crucial [Paris climate agreement](#), our sisters have made a strong [statement](#) in support of it and are calling others to do so also. I wanted us to be part of the [Global Water Dances](#) movement in support of the environment, so I contacted a former student, Catherine Cisneros, and her creative [Urban-15](#) dance and music group.

We gathered at the Blue Hole for an event we called "Standing with the Paris Climate Agreement, Celebrating and Dancing with Creation," to raise issues about water. The Blue Hole is the source of the San Antonio River and is located in the [Headwaters Sanctuary](#), our congregation's Earth care ministry that preserves 53 acres of beautiful land in the middle of the urban area of San Antonio.

See the [video](#) of our danced prayer in the dry riverbed where crystal clear water used to gush forth from a spring.

In this way, we joined people around the world in [dancing](#) to raise issues about water. Finally, people were invited to sign our sisters' Statement for Sustainability and Solidarity with the Paris Climate Agreement.

In the face of the challenges that I feel overwhelming us, let us dare to create beauty. Beauty can re-create us in hope.

[Martha Ann Kirk, a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word, is professor of religious studies at the University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, and the author of [*Iraqi Women of Three Generations: Challenges, Education, and Hopes for Peace*](#), based on her exhibit of photos and interviews.]

See photos with this article here:

<http://globalsistersreport.org/column/environment/world-will-be-saved-beauty-52076>

February 21, 2018

'Administrative chaos' risks sacred site

By Wendy Caccetta
National Indigenous Times

An ancient valley in a region of Australia found to hold secrets of Aboriginal occupation dating back to the Ice Age is at risk of being destroyed by a rail line planned by billionaire Andrew Forrest's Fortescue Metals Group, according to traditional owners.

The Native Title body for the Eastern Guruma people of Western Australia's East Pilbara, the [Wintawari Aboriginal Corporation](#), has asked federal Environment and Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg to urgently act to protect the valley.

His department told *NIT* Mr Frydenberg had appointed a "reporter" or investigator to look into the matter.

The Wintawari Aboriginal Corporation claims the case has been botched by the WA Labor Government and has not ruled out asking for a legal review by the courts if proper procedures aren't followed by the government and its advisory body, the Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee.

The valley lies at the base of Spear Hill, or Ngajanha Marntaa, a traditional meeting place for Aboriginal people who travelled to the site near the Hamersley Gorge and Karijini National Park to harvest wood for ceremonies.

The valley shares the same traditional name as the hill it abuts.

Thousands of years of history

Wintawari director Tony Bevan said the valley contains at least 50 important sites, including rock shelters and ceremonial storage places that had so far been dated back 10,300 years.

Archaeological work was continuing to determine if the secrets of the valley were even older, he said.

“We’ve done some preliminary dating and the information we have is 10,300 years old in one of the rock shelters,” Mr Bevan said.

“But that date is only halfway down the pit. We’re waiting for another type of testing to come back, which will hopefully indicate it is older.”

Mr Bevan said Wintawari wanted FMG to re-route about three kilometres of a planned rail line — part of the miner’s \$1.5 billion Eliwana Mine plans — so that it did not go through the valley.

Rock shelters in other areas in the Pilbara have been found to contain rare artefacts showing continuous Aboriginal occupation dating back 40,000 years.

Two years ago archaeologists discovered grinding stones and 48 other artefacts in a rock shelter deep in the heart of mining giant Rio Tinto’s iron ore operations near Tom Price, also in the Pilbara.

The battle over Spear Hill Valley comes after the Aboriginal group says a WA government decision in November clears the way for the FMG rail line to proceed through the valley at the same time as approval was given for Wintawari to determine the importance of the site.

The WA Government, however, says the November decision relates to the Solomon mine and its infrastructure and the Eliwana Rail Project is still with the state’s Environmental Protection Agency.

‘Administrative chaos’

Wintawari chairman Glen Camille said the WA Government had “bungled”.

He said traditional owners were pragmatic about balancing economic development and Aboriginal heritage protection, but in this case they had been denied fairness.

“Eastern Guruma are beneficiaries of mining, but FMG’s current expansion to facilitate Eliwana must have consideration for our cultural heritage places,” Mr Camille said.

“The facts are clear. On the same day, that the ACMC and the Department for Planning, Lands and Heritage provided us with the required permits to allow work to determine and document the significance of the area, to help inform the minister’s decision on the FMG application, the ACMC and the department also discussed and then recommended to the minister that FMG should be granted consent to destroy these sites.

“At best, this reflects administrative chaos within the ACMC and the department.”

Mr Camille also questioned why FMG was given the go-ahead before the report on the site's significance was ready on March 1.

Mr Bevan said they had asked Mr Frydenberg to make an emergency declaration to protect the area and also appoint an investigator to look into its long-term protection.

He said the matter was becoming increasingly urgent.

"FMG are wanting to go ahead and do some geotechnical testing, so dig test pits along the railway alignment," Mr Bevan said.

"That means they will go into that Spear Hill area and dig a 2m x 1m trench."

In a statement on February 20, a spokesman for Mr Frydenberg's Department of Environment and Energy said a reporter, or investigator, had been appointed.

Further applications from Wintawari were being considered.

"The department will work with the reporter to ensure an expeditious and thorough process," it said.

"The exact timing of the process depends on the volume and complexity of information contained in the application and responses from affected parties, the nature of consultation with affected parties, the extent of requirement for scientific and archaeological investigations."

Act in need of reform, says Wyatt

WA Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ben Wyatt did not directly respond to questions from *NIT* about whether the handling of the Spear Hill Valley matter had been botched nor whether he was confident the rail line would not destroy a significant site.

Instead his office issued a statement in which he said he would like to see WA's *Aboriginal Heritage Act* reformed.

"What this issue shows is that we are currently working with an outdated *Aboriginal Heritage Act*, which all sides seem to find unsatisfying and that is why I am committed to reform," he said in the statement.

His office said the Eliwana railway was being assessed by WA's Environmental Protection Agency and Mr Wyatt would be constrained from making a decision on it "even if there was a section 18 linked to it".

The Department for Planning Land and Heritage said in a statement that FMG had made an application to the ACMC under section 18 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* to use land for its Solomon Mine and infrastructure.

“Having considered the information, including submissions made by stakeholders in response to the department’s procedural fairness process, the ACMC resolved to advise the minister to approve the purpose, subject to providing the WGAC reasonable access to the land to conduct excavation of Aboriginal sites approved by the Registrar.

“A permit under section 16 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* was issued to the WGAC by the Registrar on the advice of the Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee on 22 September 2017.

“The permit was to enable the WGAC to collect Aboriginal cultural material from the surface of 10 sites for the purpose of archaeological investigation. The permit consented to test pitting for the purposes of collecting materials and for the WGAC to manage the cultural material collected.

“The permit was valid for a period of 50 days, with a report on the outcome of the permitted works to be provided by the WGAC to the Registrar by 30 November 2017. At the request of the WGAC, the department has agreed to extend the period for reporting until 1 March 2018.”

New FMG CEO backs process

Fortescue Chief Executive Officer Elizabeth Gaines said FMG had worked closely with the Eastern Guruma people and Aboriginal heritage professionals to identify important Aboriginal cultural heritage sites.

“On the basis of information gathered during this process, an agreed boundary was placed around Spear Hill and Fortescue designed its railway to stay outside of the boundary,” Ms Gaines said.

“Fortescue secured consent from the state to use the land outside of Spear Hill and we will continue to work constructively with Eastern Guruma.

“This project is important for Fortescue and the state and will provide significant employment during construction and operation, with a capital cost of US\$1-1.5 billion.

“Fortescue has always sought to work cooperatively with Aboriginal people to ensure heritage is appropriately managed.”

Ms Gaines said FMG was open and ready to contribute to any review made by the Federal Government.

The ACMC was also contacted for comment.

<https://nit.com.au/administrative-chaos-risks-sacred-site/>

February 22, 2018

Midlands Voices: Let's build consensus for action to promote climate stability

By Daniel R. DiLeo and Richard W. Miller
Omaha World Herald

DiLeo is assistant professor and director of the Justice and Peace Studies Program at Creighton University. He is also a consultant to Catholic Climate Covenant. Miller is associate professor of systematic theology and associate professor of sustainability studies at Creighton.

This week Creighton University hosted a lecture by V. Ramanathan, Ph.D, a world-renowned climate scientist who advised Pope Francis on his ecological encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. As Catholics, we affirm the Church's consistent teaching that climate change is an urgent moral issue. As Americans we ask that people of faith and goodwill demand science-based climate change policies from our elected officials, and implore our leaders to preserve the climate upon which civilization depends.

In 1859, Irish physicist John Tyndall showed that greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere trap heat in a process called the "greenhouse effect." Since then, human activities — especially fossil fuel combustion — have radically increased the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

At the same time, our planet's surface temperature has increased nearly two degrees Fahrenheit in the past 150 years. This is no coincidence. As the National Aeronautics and Space Administration reports, "97 percent or more of actively publishing climate scientists agree: Climate-warming trends over the past century are extremely likely due to human activities."

Human-forced global warming is having profound effects across the planet. For example, the Greenland and Antarctic sheets have lost miles of ice in the past decade, and glaciers around the world are melting rapidly. As a result, global sea level rose eight inches over the past century, and a growing number of distinguished researchers warn that we could already be committed to 10 to 16 feet of sea level rise.

Climate change affects people around the world — especially the poor who contribute least to the problem. Sea level rise displaces coastal communities. Drought causes food and water stresses that lead to resource conflicts, political instability and violence. Increased severe weather events produce malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and heat stress that, according to the World Health Organization, already cause 150,000 annual deaths globally and may lead to an additional 250,000 fatalities between 2030 and 2050.

There is a growing danger that we will soon pass tipping points that lead to irreversible global warming and effects beyond human control. This is due to the long lifespan of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (thousands of years), and because of so-called "feedback loops." For example, permafrost melt releases frozen greenhouse gases that further intensify the greenhouse effect.

Faced with these realities, the Catholic Church, beginning with Saint John Paul II in 1990, has recognized climate change as a moral issue implicating core commitments of the Christian tradition to protect human life and dignity, promote the common good, exercise special concern for the poor and vulnerable, and care for God's gift of creation. In defense of these commitments, the Church has repeatedly supported action to address climate change.

Since climate change is a global problem that voluntary actions and regional policies have failed to address, the Catholic Church has repeatedly advocated for national and international climate change policies.

Domestically, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops supports the Clean Power Plan. Internationally, the USCCB calls for American contributions to the Green Climate Fund. Additionally, the Vatican under both Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Pope Francis advocates for a global climate change accord — most recently the Paris Agreement.

Many American politicians and corporate leaders — including from Nebraska — have resisted these and other policies for climate stability. Instead, they have largely chosen to ignore the overwhelming scientific consensus about human-forced climate change and support energy plans providing short-term financial benefits for some persons at the long-term expense of climate stability for all humanity — indeed, all creation.

As U.S. Catholics, we ask that people of faith and goodwill demand science-based climate change policies from our elected officials. We also implore our leaders to enact policies preserving the climate upon which human life and dignity, the common good and all creation depend.

http://www.omaha.com/opinion/plus/midlands-voices-let-s-build-consensus-for-action-to-promote/article_e64cb761-9277-51da-b037-bff039a6a7fb.html

February 23, 2018

How dangerously dirty water is threatening one of the world's ancient religions

United Nations Environment Programme

On an unseasonably warm winter afternoon in Baghdad, Sheikh Anmar Ayid hitches up his robe and crouches by the Tigris river. Rocking back and forth on his haunches, he flicks the water from side to side – all the while chanting rhythmically in Aramaic. After finishing his ablutions, a two-minute procedure, the young sheikh turns to a small mud-brick temple and begins to pray.

In past years, Ayid might then have quenched his thirst directly from the river. As a Mandaean priest, an adherent of a pre-Abrahamic faith that's native to the Fertile Crescent, he and his co-religionists believe the Tigris – and the Euphrates – are sacred and flow from heaven. Clerics are consequently only supposed to drink from and eat food washed in their waters.

That, however, is scarcely even possible these days. Dirtied and drained almost from the moment they rise, Iraq's great waterways are in bleak states by the time they reach the country's heavily urbanized centre. To drink straight from them is to invite near instant sickness. And so as the rivers plumb desperate new lows, seemingly worsening by the year, the Mandaeans are struggling to practice their several thousand-year-old rituals.

"We depend on the water for everything, for worship, for daily life, for food," Ayid said. "But because the water is going from bad to very bad, we are negatively affected."

Across the world, water pollution is leaving a devastating trail in its wake. [Eighty per cent](#) of all wastewater goes untreated, and much of finds its way back into rivers and lakes – where it contributes to ecosystem and public health crises. Up to a third of all rivers are blighted with pathogenic waste, according to UN Environment data, and a seventh suffer from organic waste problems, mostly from agricultural fertilizer run off. In largely desert countries, like Iraq, worsening sandstorms and diminishing grass cover have caked the rivers with dust and saddled water treatment facilities with a new range of woes.

Never before, though, it seems, has poor water quality imperiled an entire religion. Already threatened by jihadists and criminal gangs, who damn them as heretics and target them for their historic role in the gold trade, the Mandaeans' numbers have fallen from 100,000 to less than 10,000 in Iraq since 2003. For those who remain, pollution's assault on one of the central tenets of their faith has added final insult to injury.

In Amarah, 350 km south of Baghdad on the Tigris, the pollution is so debilitating that not even boiling water is enough to prevent local priests from falling ill. At their heavily-guarded riverside temple in the Iraqi capital, Ayid and his colleagues have taken to leaving buckets of water to sit for a day, before skimming off the layer of fetid scum that's usually accumulated on the top. From Baghdad to the Mandaeans' traditional heartlands in the country's far south, there's so much glass and trash in the shallows that few worshippers dare set foot in the rivers without wearing sandals. "Our religion believes human nature requires hygiene, and so for us many things are built around water," Ayid said. "But where is the hygiene here?"

What makes this all the more frustrating for many Mandaeans is that the culprits are hiding in plain sight. With insufficient wastewater treatment facilities and lax environmental regulations, ever-growing volumes of industrial and domestic refuse are seeping into the rivers. In Baghdad alone, dozens of places, including the Dora oil refinery and the massive Medical City hospital complex, discharge waste directly into the Tigris, according to local conservationists. All this at the same time as upstream dam construction and reduced rainfall cut the rivers' flow has brought the lifeblood of the Mandaeans faith to the brink of disaster.

"When water levels drop, the health of that lake or river is likely to be affected, both in terms of quantity and quality," says Lis Mullin Bernhardt, a Programme Officer in UN Environment's Freshwater Unit. "And the lower the flow, the less likely that water body is to be able to deal naturally with water pollution and contamination."

Globally, there is an increasing awareness that something drastic has to be done. UN Environment operates a monitoring system, [GEMS/Water](#), which keeps tabs on river and lake water quality, and also helps states establish their own water quality surveillance networks. “For me, it’s like going to the doctor,” Bernhardt says. “You need that monitoring, those stats and numbers, to understand what’s happening and know a bit more about what you can do about it.” By encouraging the planting of water grasses and the preservation of wetlands, for example, UN Environment is pushing for green solutions to water quality problems.

But for the Mandaean, the fear is that no manner of solutions might arrive fast enough to save their rituals – and perhaps their very existence. Scattered now across Europe, North America and Australia, they question whether a community as small as theirs can endure in diaspora. That a people whose faith teaches care for the environment might die in part because of it is a tragic irony not lost on Sheikh Ayid.

“Above all, we respect the water, of course. But we respect the Earth and the animals too. It is forbidden, for example, to play with a living tree, to slaughter an animal unless it is needed, or to throw things into the river,” he said. “Our daily life depends on nature, but nature is not being kind to us.”

Learn more about UN Environment's work on [freshwater ecosystems](#).

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/how-dangerously-dirty-water-threatening-one-worlds-ancient-religions>

February 26, 2018

A climate scientist talks—respectfully—to climate-change skeptics

By Amy Frykholm
The Christian Century

*Katharine Hayhoe is a professor and director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University. She has led climate impact assessments for many cities and regions. Recognizing her ability to communicate the importance of climate change to skeptical audiences, the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication called her a “national treasure.” She also appears in the video series *Global Weirding*. She and her husband, Andrew Farley, a pastor, wrote *A Climate for Change: Global Warming Facts for Faith-Based Decisions*.*

How did you begin trying to communicate to the skeptics about climate change?

It began inadvertently. I met my husband at the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship at the University of Illinois, when we were both in graduate school. We had been married six months or so before it dawned on us that we weren’t on the same page when it came to climate change.

I come from Canada, where I took for granted that everyone agrees that climate is changing, humans are responsible for it, and we need to do something about it. He came from the American South, where many believe climate change is something liberal, atheist tree huggers have invented so that the government can rob people of their personal liberty and ruin the economy. I had never met anyone as intelligent and educated as my husband who didn't think climate change was real. And he had never met anybody who believed the same things he did who thought it was.

Back then, 17 years ago, the issue was not as politicized as it is today. And we had another advantage: we not only loved each other, but we respected each other. I knew that he was a really smart person. He knew that not only did I share his faith, I was a practical person. I wasn't somebody who wanted to ruin the economy to save the whales.

One conversation didn't resolve our differences overnight. But over the course of months, through exploring the evidence and the implications together, he came to agree that climate change is real and human-caused and that the impacts are serious enough to warrant taking action.

How was that conversation like the others you've had since with people who deny climate change?

It was my first experience of starting from a place of mutual respect and shared values. And that, I realized, is the key to success: not just then but even more so today, when climate change has become one of the most politically polarized issues in the United States.

Today, the most accurate predictor of what people think about climate science—or even what the number on the thermometer means—is where they fall on the political spectrum. In a study done in 2017 in New Hampshire, during an unusually warm winter in the state, researchers asked, “Has this winter been unusually warm?” People's perception of an event they had personally experienced differed based on their political affiliation. It doesn't get more politically polarized than that!

How did you start speaking in churches?

By the time we moved to Texas about ten years ago, I realized that many people thought what I did as a climate scientist was one step removed from astrology—so I wasn't sure what to expect. Within a couple of months of moving here, though, I was asked to speak to a women's group about climate change. I did my best and fielded a lot of questions—some I could answer, some I couldn't. The experience reminded me of the conversations I had had with my husband.

Soon, another invitation came to speak at a book club from a woman who had been in the first group. I adapted my presentation so it addressed many more of the questions people had asked in the first one—and got even more questions. Then another invitation came, to a church group. I adapted the presentation again and collected even more questions. And that's what I'm still doing today, more than ten years later.

Whenever I'm invited to speak to conservative audiences—farmers, water managers, experts in the oil and gas industry, Christian colleges and churches—I try not only to anticipate but respect the questions they will have. My goal is to communicate that, yes, those are good questions that deserve good answers, so let's talk!

What have these the conversations taught you?

One of the most important things I've learned is that most people don't really have a problem with the science or even the theology of climate change.

I know that there are lots of scientific sounding objections: "it's just a natural cycle," or "scientists don't know enough yet," or "those models are always wrong." I hear these every day. And I also hear the religious objections: "if God is in control, then nothing bad can happen," or "God gave us dominion over the earth, so we can do whatever we want," or, "the earth is going to end anyway, so why does it matter?"

But if we talk about these concerns for more than a few minutes, the conversation quickly moves past the science and even the theology. People's real objections are based on the fact that they believe the solutions to climate change conflict with their ideology and even identity. They've been told that climate change solutions will ruin the economy; that the issue is being pushed by godless liberal atheists, and Christians can't go along with them; that the concern is a tool of the Democrats to expand big government and control people's lives. And who wants any of that? I don't.

Here's the thing: those worries are not accurate. There are all kinds of solutions that energize local economies, build jobs, free people to develop their own energy sources, and—most importantly—fulfill our call to exercise responsible dominion over the planet and love others as Christ loved us. So my message is: we do not have to change who we are to care about this issue. Who we are is already the perfect person to care about this. We just need to connect the dots between the things that we already care about, how they are affected by a changing climate, and what we can do about it that is consistent with who we are.

What kind of connections do you make?

I've become increasingly convinced that nearly everyone already has the values they need to care about climate change. It's just a matter of figuring out what values those are, then making the connection.

Many of those I speak with are Christians, so we can connect on our shared faith. In Genesis 1, humans are given dominion or stewardship or responsibility over every living thing on the planet. Whichever word we prefer, it's impossible to interpret this as meaning pillage and plunder, given all we read of God's joy and pleasure in creation throughout the rest of the Old Testament. It's not just about nature, though; the Bible has a lot to say about caring for others, especially those less fortunate than us, those who are already poor and suffering. Climate change exacerbates the problems of hunger and poverty and lack of access to clean water, so for me, I care about climate change because it's a humanitarian issue.

The Bible is by no means the only point of connection. We can connect over economics, how clean energy creates many more jobs than traditional fossil fuels, many of them local, and how it empowers us to develop our own energy rather than importing it. For those concerned about American exceptionalism and “making America great again,” it’s important to recognize that China is already well ahead of the United States when it comes to the new clean energy economy of the future. We all know what their air quality looks like; but what most people don’t realize is that they are changing, fast. They already have more wind and solar energy than any country in the world, and they are a global leader in manufacturing this technology. Continuing to shore up the coal industry when there are more jobs in solar energy than coal is like investing in horse farms and buggy manufacturing as the automobile is starting to be mass produced. It just isn’t competitive.

“I hear a lot of scientific sounding objections, but they aren’t the real issue.”

For those of us concerned about our health, we can connect the dots between the air pollution from fossil fuels and some 200,000 people in the United States who die every year as a direct result of this pollution. If we’re concerned about water, as many are in Texas, we know that the warmer it gets, the more water evaporates out of soils and reservoirs, exacerbating drought. Whoever we are, whatever we believe, whatever matters to us, these days there is more likely than not a connection to climate change: how it affects us and what we can do to make sure that we are reducing its impacts and prepared for those we can’t avoid.

Where do you take the conversation from there?

To solutions. All too often, we think solutions are punitive and unpleasant; that if we agree climate is changing and humans are responsible, then the only fix is to let the government control our thermostats, or control how many minutes we are allowed to shower, or even take away our trucks. But that’s not the case at all.

There are so many practical, beneficial solutions that we can all support and even implement in our day-to-day lives. New LED lightbulbs save us money—and don’t have to be changed nearly as often. Eating lower down the food chain reduces our carbon footprint—and benefits our health as well. Insulating our houses keeps energy costs down.

In addition to personal choices, we can do more. We can add our voice to organizations that reflect our personal values, from Young Evangelicals for Climate Action and Interfaith Power and Light to the free-market Energy Enterprise Institute or even the libertarian Niskanen Center. We can make our elected representatives aware of important programs like the U.S. Mayor’s Climate Protection Center and the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus in the U.S. Congress.

And perhaps most important, we can talk about solutions, like the fact that Fort Hood, the biggest army base in the United States, signed a new contract for solar and wind energy because it will save taxpayers over \$150 million; or that there are at least six cities in the United States that are already using 100 percent renewable energy (including Georgetown, Texas); or that the cheapest prices for solar energy are in developing countries where people need it the most.

What specific actions do you recommend to church communities?

Church communities have so much potential: classes, sermons, book recommendations, guest speakers, even online communities like Climate Caretakers for people who want to “care for the climate through regular prayer and action that glorifies God and loves our neighbors.” It’s important to be a good steward of our finances; so a church might consider doing an energy audit to save money, which would also reduce the church’s carbon footprint and might free up funds to support for missions or invest in green energy options the church. As part of their witness, one congregation offered its roof to the community as a “solar panel garden,” because it’s often cheaper to put a lot of solar panels on one large structure like a church than dividing them up among homes. Churches are great places to help each other and build community by starting a composting program or a lightbulb initiative to replace senior citizens’ incandescent bulbs with the more efficient LED type, or by asking a local car dealership to park electric cars in the parking lot so that everybody can see what they look like or reaching out to elected officials to share their concerns.

How do you respond to eschatological concerns, like the notion that the world is going to end soon anyway?

My favorite Bible verse comes from 2 Timothy 1:7, which says that “God has not given us a spirit of fear.” This is a litmus test for us Christians. If something is inducing fear in us, it is not from God. What God has given us is a spirit of love, power, and a sound mind.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul was writing letters to people who expected that Christ would return tomorrow or next week. He makes it very clear that although we don’t know the day and the hour, we are not to sit on our hands waiting for him to return, and we are certainly not to tremble in fear. We are to do good works, which includes loving and caring for others. And today, that includes addressing global issues like climate change that disproportionately impact the most vulnerable of us.

What are your goals for these conversations?

My goal is for people to feel empowered. So often, we feel as if climate change is this enormous global problem and nothing I can do about it will ever make a difference—so why bother? The truth is that the boulder is already rolling downhill, we just need more hands.

The Yale Program on Climate Change Communication surveyed thousands of people and categorized them into six different groups based on their relationship to action on climate change. They called the results the “Six Americas of Global Warming.” The categories are alarmed, concerned, cautious, disengaged, doubtful, and dismissive. And despite the fact that the loudest voices we usually hear from are the alarmed, on one end of the spectrum, and the dismissive, on the other, the majority of people in the United States are somewhere in the middle.

So my personal goal is to move people who are cautious, disengaged, or doubtful to concerned, recognizing that this *does* matter to me and there is something that I can do to help.

What is the most important action that you encourage people to take?

The number one thing that we can do is talk about climate change.

In addition to helping us understand where people are coming from, the Six Americas survey also asked how many times a year we hear someone else talk about climate change. It turns out that about 75 percent of people said less than one or two times a year.

Why should we expect someone to care about something that they never hear anyone talk about? Why would we expect someone to think that the problem can be fixed if we never hear anyone talk about solutions?

“Nearly everyone already has the values needed to care about climate change.”

We may be scared to talk about climate change because we worry it will pick a fight, or we will have to argue about science, or it is just doom and gloom, such a downer. But as we’ve discussed above—and as I talk about in my Global Weirding videos—there are lots of positive ways we can connect this issue with things people already care about, to talk about why it matters to us and what we can do about it.

Tell us about your PBS series on Global Weirding.

Our Global Weirding series is now in its second season. Every other week, we release a short video that tackles a frequently asked question that has something to do with climate change. The prompt for the series came from a local PBS station, which thought it would be cool for a station in West Texas to do a series on the science, politics, and religion of climate change. The videos are purposely designed to be short and sharable and to give people interesting facts and perspectives they can use in conversation with others.

Questions we’ve talked about so far include: How do we know climate change is real? What do all of these crazy hurricanes have to do with global warming? What does the Bible say about climate change? Won’t plants and animals adapt? Aren’t you climate scientists just in this for the money? Are those airplane tracks we see in the sky a secret attempt by the military to cool the planet?

I haven’t heard that one.

Yes, that’s a big conspiracy theory in the darker halls of the Internet. Never mind that the logistics of secretly producing massive amounts of chemicals, shipping them to airports, and getting them on board commercial flights without the pilot’s knowledge or anyone else finding out is stunningly prohibitive; there are still thousands of people convinced that the normal condensation trails, or contrails, we see in the sky for minutes and even hours after planes have passed are actually a chemical experiment by the military to do . . . what? The answers never make sense—but hopefully our Global Weirding videos do!

Do you have time to do any science?

I have to make time, because doing science is what I love most. I work with big climate models, looking at how well they are able to reproduce the local climate patterns that bring heat waves and drought and storms. Then I translate that into information that people can use to make plans. For example, the city of Austin is using information that we generated in developing its long-term water plan, to make sure the city is prepared for a changing climate. Washington, D.C., is using our projections to plan for the future of infrastructure and public health. When it all comes down to it, we all want the same things: enough food to eat, clean air to breathe, clean water to use, and a safe place to live. Climate change threatens that, and that's why it's so important to prepare for its impacts.

A version of this article appears in the print edition under the title "How to talk to climate skeptics."

<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/interview/climate-scientist-talks-respectfully-climate-change-skeptics>

February 27, 2018

Some Christians are cutting carbon for Lent

By Diana Madson

Yale Climate Connections

Instead of giving up luxuries, they're reducing pollution.

The weeks just before Easter are known as Lent. It's a time when many Christians fast or give up luxuries. Now, some churches and faith groups are encouraging Christians to reduce activities that contribute to global warming.

Leah Wiste is director of outreach and advocacy at an organization called [Michigan Interfaith Power and Light](#).

Wiste: "Lent is a state of preparing for rebirth ... And so we focus on transformation."

In that spirit, her group helps Christians use this time to develop more environmentally friendly habits.

Wiste: "We propose a Lenten Carbon Fast. We've created a calendar that suggests one activity each day that folks can do in order to reduce their ecological footprint."

It includes actions such as switching to energy-efficient L.E.D. light bulbs, eating food that is not trucked long distances, turning the temperature down on water heaters, and hanging clothes out to dry instead of using the dryer.

Wiste: “The hope is that this several week exercise won’t just end at Easter but that these actions actually seed a more fundamental transformation that people can then continue.”

Listen to this podcast here:

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2018/02/some-christians-are-cutting-carbon-for-lent/>

February 27, 2018

Pope's climate expert tells Nebraska audience: It's an issue in the laps of faith leaders

By Bill Kelly

NET News – Nebraska’s PBS and NPR Stations

Did you know Pope Francis has a scientist consulting him on issues related to climate change? Neither did we.

Dr. Veerabhadran "Ram" Ramanathan, an atmospheric and climate scientist, recently [spoke to students](#) at Creighton University. In an interview with Bill Kelly of NET News he talked about his post with the Vatican, why the pope made climate an ethical and spiritual issue, and why Nebraska needs to pay attention.

V. Ramanathan: I'm a distinguished professor at the [University of California, San Diego](#). I started working on this topic of climate change, at least for the last 40 years. I joined the Vatican as part of the [Pontifical Academy of Science](#). They have 80 world renowned experts invited to the academy. I was invited, invited to join the Pontifical Academy of Science in 2004 by then-Pope John Paul II.

You are elected to the Academy not because of your religious beliefs, not because of your cultural or national origin, it's purely based on scientific merit. You're just chosen for your science and I found that to be remarkable. I don't think there is any panel equal to that in any religion that I know of having a scientific body exerting its free will.

Bill Kelly, NET News: As a member of the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences, you're in the service of Pope Francis. I'm betting most people still ask what is the service that you offer the pope.

Ramanathan: The Academy meets once every two years but then individual members organize meetings on special topics, there are at least two such meetings each year. Based on that, we then brief the pope what is the most recent scientific thought on any particular topic. We had meetings on creationism, we had meetings on fundamental areas of physics, and of course, climate change. Sometimes he comes to our meetings himself.

Kelly: Did Pope Francis need convincing that there's appropriate advocacy to be done in the area of climate change?

Ramanathan: I don't know the answer to that question. I personally don't think so. But I can just tell you about one event. I planned to organize a meeting under Pope Benedict on melting glaciers. By the time we got to organize the meeting in 2014 (Pope Benedict) stepped down and [Pope Francis stepped in](#).

At the end of it, I was asked to brief the pope. Unfortunately that day he had only two minutes. So, I mentioned to him just on one thing, which is 'what's going to be the plight of the poor?' Climate change was caused by pollutants from the wealthiest billion around the world. But the poorest three billion who have not even discovered fossil fuels. They were still using primitive energy. I told him these three billion are going to suffer the worst consequences. He seems to have immediately got that (message). A year later he spoke about climate change extensively. In fact, [there was a famous statement he made](#). "If you hurt nature, nature will hurt you back."

When he released encyclical, I consider that the most influential document on us as human beings protecting nature. Scientifically it's very accurate. I challenge any climate scientist to look at [Laudato Si, his encyclical](#), and find anything there which he or she doesn't agree with. It's stuck to the rigors of the science. Perhaps that may be because of the influence of the Pontifical Academy of Science.

There's one statement says, "Cry of the earth should be heard with the cry of the poor." That's how he synthesized all of climate change into one sentence.

Kelly: So where does the science and the spirituality intersect with this issue?

Ramanathan: This being my mantra, the thing I'm pushing last five years, more so after my interaction with Pope Francis, is that in the context of climate change we have reached an important fork on the road. Which is, if you ignore the science and go one way, my own science tells me I foresee destruction. Suffering on mass scales. Now we are talking about three quarters of the planet getting impacted if you let these pollutant emissions go unchecked for the next 30 years.

So where does spirituality fit in? Because of our inaction to stop this climate change, it has become a huge moral, ethical issue. Three billion (people) who have nothing to do with this (the cause of climate change) are going to suffer the worse consequences. The change, which is already happening, is going to get worse. They're irreversible on our time scales. Once you have the sea level rise 10, 15 feet, it's not going to go back for another several thousand years. So generations of our children, grandchildren, and their children, they're going to suffer the worse impacts of our actions. It's the huge equity issue, which puts it right in the laps of faith leaders.

Kelly: You're in the center of the United States and you have a faith community here often with roots in Christianity. They also can be traditionally politically conservative. This is where some of those ardent skeptics of climate change can be found these days, too. What would your message be to one of those congregations in Nebraska?

Ramanathan: First I want to challenge on one topic you mention that the Christian community is conservative. I found in my interaction last five years the Christian community is

tremendously unified in protecting creation. They call it creation, I call it nature. That's where I find that we can come together science, policy and religion.

The fundamental challenge I face in talking with churches and with evangelical groups which I have done, is to separate the politics from the science of climate change

Kelly: If part of the tenant is science comes in opposition to biblical teaching, that's a huge hurdle for you to overcome. That their faith is in conflict with your science.

Ramanathan: I've learned from the Catholics that being good stewards of the planet is part of the teachings. I've interacted with the president of the American Evangelical Association who oversees 30,000 churches. He reassures me, being good stewards of the planet is [part of the evangelical theology](#) too. So, I have so far not seen that resistance.

Kelly: There is a certain band of Christian belief that says this is just [God's will](#) and this is the course that God's intending. Your response.

Ramanathan: That's very difficult for me to understand because when the testaments were written, the whole issue of we damaging the planet beyond recognition was not there.

If God created us and God created our ecosystem, how can one part of that system destroy the other part? If you think of both as creation, then the issue of this as God's will, it's very difficult to justify.

Kelly: Nebraska is a state built on generations of farm families and a strong agricultural economy. Weather and climate, long range climate are part of people's lives and a big chunk of this state. What is the responsibility of American agriculture in addressing this issue?

Ramanathan: The issue that concerns me is how are (rural farmers) going to be impacted by this climate change? What we are predicting, the extreme weather, is going to get a lot worse because we are creating new climate. As the American Meteorological Society said, we are expecting huge heat waves exceeding 130 degrees Fahrenheit. Then we're predicting huge droughts. Not the drought that comes one or two or three years and go away. Lasting for ten years.

We need to work with the farmers in Midwest and the Great Plains region, to advise them what to expect. How do they adjust their agriculture practices?

How can they contribute? I think the main thing is conserve water use. It's not going to plentiful. Prevent greenhouse gases escaping from your farm, for example. The manure is a major source of greenhouse gas escaping. What can they do about? Very simple. Put them in bio-digesters, so the manure becomes biogas, which they can use for power. There are a lot of low hanging fruits, win-win solutions the farmers can adapt.

Kelly: When you look at this data, are there times you are already convinced that it's too late?

Ramanathan: Not at all. If it was too late, I would never be giving this message to the public. Then I'm doing a great disservice, right? Fortunately there's still time. Climate change is going to get worse, but at least 50% worse than when we were experiencing but it's not going to be catastrophic if they start cutting down the emissions. Starting today. Not 20 years from now. Not 15 years from now. But today. We have about 15 years from now to bending, what I call bending the curve. If we all start and unite, just like America unified before second World War, we just need that repeated.

Kelly: If the United States does do a better job of its preparation but there are still global effects on food supply in these other nations, even if America sustains itself, what are the impacts from food supply shortages back on this country?

Ramanathan: Let's assume America can deal with this. That's exactly what I thought until I saw what's happening to California last five years. I thought of California as the super technology, super rich amongst the U.S. This whole drought and fire of last five years has brought us to our knees. I'm not at all clear that if the changes happen on the scale many of us would do well, but a lot of the population are going to get hurt.

Let's assume that America can cope with this. Yet the burden on this is going to be huge. Just focusing on the three billion poorest population, they earn \$1 a day, they depend on the next day's paycheck. Throw a five-year drought on them and I see how the world is unable to deal with one million Syrian refugees. There's no governing system. I'm talking about hundreds of millions. Fatalities, displacement, migration. It really worries me, concerns me.

Kelly: Last question. You're a little boy growing up in India. Other little boys thought they were going to be an astronaut or an actor or a cricket player. When you were growing up did you say, "I'm going to grow up to be an advisor to the pope?"

Ramanathan: It's funny you ask. I grew up in small towns in India, spent most of my time in villages of my grandfathers. I had only one dream, when I came to America, not to pursue science. Definitely not climate change science. Not to pursue higher studies. I wanted to own a Chevy Impala. And live the American good life.

Kelly: Have you gotten it yet?

Ramanathan: It's my fate I worked on climate change. I could never buy that Impala. If Chevy makes an electric Impala with batteries, I have solar in my rooftop, first thing I would do is buy that Impala.

Listen to this story here:

<http://netnebraska.org/article/news/1117893/popes-climate-expert-tells-nebraska-audience-its-issue-laps-faith-leaders>

February 27, 2018

New project to challenge Catholics to reduce carbon footprint, care more for environment

By Mark Bowling
Catholic Leader

A project aimed at healing, protecting and caring for our common home is to be introduced in parishes and Catholic agencies across Brisbane archdiocese.

Called Living Laudato Si', the project will draw on Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical – Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home – and will challenge Catholics to make practical changes to the environment around them.

“We want people to really understand the breadth and depth of what Pope Francis was saying (in Laudato Si') and to embrace the notion of ‘ecological conversion’, as Pope St John Paul II called it,” Brisbane archdiocese’s Catholic Justice and Peace Commission executive officer Peter Arndt said.

“It will include challenges to people to make practical changes – reducing their carbon footprint, reducing our waste, caring for the natural environment – and maybe supporting poorer people who are facing the challenges of environmental damage like climate change.

“We are seeing Queenslanders in the Torres Strait, as well as people in the Pacific, who are facing serious problems because of climate change.”

Mr Arndt is a member of a newly formed Living with Laudato Si' steering committee, headed by Auxiliary Bishop Ken Howell, which is considering how Catholics could get involved.

“We really expect to dive into the six chapters of Laudato Si' one at a time ... then we'll start to look how we can roll it out in parishes, schools and agencies in the second half of 2018 and beyond,” he said.

“We are not starting from zero. There’s a lot of action already being taken, so in many cases we’ll be building on what is already there.”

The former director of Catholic EarthCare Australia Jacqui Remond will work as a facilitator on the project.

Mr Arndt ranks environmental protection as a crucial issue for Brisbane’s Justice and Peace Commission.

He spoke at a #Stop Adani anti-coal mining rally outside Queensland Parliament House on February 13, at which he advocated for alternatives to burning fossil fuels to reduce global warming.

“My speech was to address the concerns around employment and to say that one of the ways we can address the issues of concern to people in central and north Queensland is to build on the good work developing large-scale clean, renewable energy projects,” Mr Arndt said.

“Queensland is now the leading state with twenty large-scale projects in operation and more than five thousand full-time jobs – so that is quite a significant number directly employed there.”

<http://catholicleader.com.au/news/new-project-challenge-catholics-reduce-carbon-footprint-care-environment>

March 2, 2018

Religious investors welcome Midwest utilities' action on climate change

By Dennis Sadowski, Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Washington — Two religious communities have withdrawn shareholder resolutions filed with Midwest electric utilities after the companies announced they would publish climate risk assessment reports.

Officials at Michigan-based CMS Energy Corp. and WEC Energy Group of Milwaukee recently said their firms would publish an assessment looking at the long-term business impacts of limiting global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), the standard adopted by the Paris climate accord.

The resolutions had been filed by the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Aberdeen, South Dakota, with CMS Energy and by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific province (based in the central U.S.), with WEC Energy.

Corporations schedule annual meetings in the spring, giving shareholders the opportunity to file resolutions on which votes are taken in an attempt to shape company actions not just on social issues but business-related concerns as well.

The companies realized that it made sense from a business perspective to adhere to the Paris guidelines and work toward further reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, explained Frank Sherman, executive director of Seventh Generation Interfaith Coalition for Responsible Investment, of which the religious communities are members.

Sherman said it's unlikely that the resolutions from the religious orders alone persuaded the utilities to act, but that together with other investor voices, the companies realized it was important to align their business interests with the need to address climate change.

"The more enlightened companies recognize that their religious investors are the canary in the mine," Sherman told Catholic News Service. "It's happened with climate change, supply change

and human rights, and a host of social and environmental issues that eventually become front-page articles."

Presentation Sister Ruth Geraets called the companies' step "a big thing."

She said her congregation remains concerned about U.S. plans to withdraw from the Paris accord and the planned rollback of the Clean Power Plan, which called for significant reductions in power plant emissions by 2030.

"It's up to shareholders to put before corporations how important it is to work on less emissions," she told CNS.

The Notre Dame sisters were pleased to learn WEC Energy agreed with the congregation's view, said Tim Dewane, director of the province's Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office.

"For us, we think it is in the strategic best interest for the company. It also makes sense for the common good and care for creation," he said.

"For us, we're about educating, advocating, and acting with others to make this world a better place. We recognize if we're going to deal with climate change, it requires individual action, government action and private action," Dewane said.

The discussions the order had with company officials opened the door to meetings on other issues as well, he added.

CMS Energy announced Feb. 19 that is planned to reduced carbon emissions by 80 percent and no longer use coal to generate electricity by 2040. It said that it expected to produce more than 40 percent of its energy from renewable sources and energy storage within the same time frame.

The company in 2015 was the 21st largest emitter of carbon dioxide among U.S. power generators. Since then it has retired seven of its 12 coal-fired plants.

WEC is the 22nd largest U.S. utility and the 13th largest carbon dioxide emitter, according to the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, of which Seventh Generation is a member.

ICCR said in a news release that WEC had set an emission reduction target for 2030, but had not provided information on how to reduce its carbon footprint to align with the 2-degree scenario.

The investor groups and the congregations planned to monitor the company's actions to ensure that their commitments are met.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/religious-investors-welcome-midwest-utilities-action-climate-change>

March 5, 2018

Ottawa's conservation plan puts Indigenous people in charge of protecting land

By Gloria Galloway
The Globe and Mail

The federal government will ask Indigenous people to take on the job of protecting vast regions of Canadian wilderness after this week's budget promised "historic" investments in nature conservation.

Environmentalists, who praise Ottawa's decision to spend more than a billion dollars to meet the country's international biodiversity targets, say the Inuit, the Métis and the First Nations are eager to accept the official role of stewards of the land.

It is one, they say, that falls naturally to first peoples whose traditional territory encompasses most of the remaining undeveloped area of Canada, and who have both the traditional knowledge required to do the work and a personal stake in ensuring that the conservation projects are a success.

"They want to do it in a way that respects their culture, their history and their connection with the land, allowing them, for example, to harvest [natural resources]," Environment Minister Catherine McKenna said Wednesday in an interview with The Globe and Mail. "That's extremely important to them. And co-management is extremely important to them."

Finance Minister Bill Morneau has allocated \$1.3-billion over five years to be used to protect species at risk and to implement broad recovery plans. That will pay for the expansion of national wildlife areas and migratory bird sanctuaries, as well as the management of protected areas and national parks.

As expected, gender equality was a major theme of the 2018 federal budget. The budget includes new measures aimed at encouraging greater participation of women in the work force, along with a program to encourage more men to take paid parental leave.

The investment includes a \$500-million Nature Fund that Ottawa says will pair with matching funds from provinces, corporations and not-for-profit organizations to buy private lands, to support provincial and territorial conservation efforts, and to build the capacity of Indigenous people to conserve lands and species.

Under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, Canada has pledged to protect at least 17 per cent of its land and inland waters by 2020. The money in the budget should pay for what is needed to meet that commitment. But the Liberal government says it is also an investment to address reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous people.

Ms. McKenna pointed out that the federal government has already negotiated a number of conservation agreements with Indigenous people and said there are many models that the Inuit and the First Nations have adopted to play key roles in those efforts.

In 2015, the Thaidene Nene national-park reserve was proposed in a 14,000-square-kilometre swath of boreal forest and tundra on the eastern end of Great Slave Lake. It is co-managed by the Dene who are sharing their cultural heritage with visitors while protecting a vast area of the country's northern wilderness.

The 9,700-square-kilometre Torngat Mountains National Park in Labrador is being co-managed by Inuit, the staff is Inuit and the Inuit are protecting the endangered caribou herds.

And, in Gwaii Haanas National Marine Park Reserve on Canada's west coast, young Haida people who are part of an Indigenous Guardians Program are protecting the region but also introducing people to their culture and their connection with the land.

Some of the money promised by Ottawa could be used to train more Indigenous Guardians in other parts of the country, Ms. McKenna said. "Indigenous peoples are already engaged when it comes to species at risk," she said. "Indigenous peoples are living on the land and they can help."

Valerie Courtois, the director of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, a collective of Indigenous leaders who are working to strengthen Indigenous nationhood, said the \$1.3-billion commitment is "historic" and is exactly what the members of her group hoped to see in the budget.

In the past 20 years, Ms. Courtois said, the most creative, boldest and biggest proposals in terms of conservation and land use in Canada have come from Indigenous people.

Indigenous people across Canada "want to hold the pen on what happens to our lands," Ms. Courtois said, "because we have a responsibility to those lands and we have a right, as described in [the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples] to think about determining our future as a people and the way to do that, from an Indigenous perspective, is lands."

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/conservation-plan-puts-indigenous-people-in-charge-of-protecting-land/article38160267/>

March 6, 2018

'For us, land is life'

United Nations Environment Programme

It's a dangerous time to be an environmental defender. In [2017](#), 197 people – nearly four every week – were murdered for defending the environment.

To bring attention to this issue, UN Environment is launching today an [Environmental Rights Initiative](#), which aims to raise awareness of the links between human rights and the

environment. The Initiative will work with governments and non-state actors alike to help them promote, protect and respect environmental rights.

Dulphing Ogan, an indigenous leader from the Mindanao region of the Philippines, represents the kind of environmental defender that the initiative hopes to support. Ogan hails from a region where indigenous access to land has long been threatened by extractive industries and government overreach. To shed light on some of the issues facing environmental defenders, we asked him to describe his experience working in the region.

Tell us about yourself and where you come from.

My name is Dulphing Ogan and I am the Secretary General of Kusog sa Katawhang Lumad or KALUMARAN in Mindanao, which translates to strength of alliance of Lumad (indigenous) peoples in Mindanao. Our people face a variety of issues, but we are proud to say we are environmental defenders. We say “no to mining” and “no to logging” in our communities, to save the last remaining forests in Mindanao.

What are some key environmental issues on Mindanao?

Large plantations are a big driver of deforestation and forced displacements of indigenous communities. The problem is that the government and the Department of Natural Resources (DENR) are considering crops such as papaya and bananas a form of reforestation, despite the fact they are monocrops and are environmentally unsustainable. The DENR and companies support this and showcase this as a way of mitigating global warming. They use this strategy to get people to give their Free Prior and Informed Consent, or FPIC, which legally means that the indigenous peoples have been informed about the project and consent to it being implemented on their land. Thus, it's not always difficult for governments and corporations to get the consent of indigenous peoples and fool them into giving their FPIC, which opens the area up to destructive industries.

Once lands are opened to big corporations there are also environmental concerns like logging, mega-dams and destructive mining. Our stand is to resist these kinds of projects [and keep them] from entering our ancestral lands. As indigenous peoples, that's our biggest contribution to protecting the environment.

What are some of the biggest challenge you face as environmental defenders?

As indigenous peoples, many issues we face are interrelated. In places where outside interests want to exploit the land, environmental defenders from indigenous communities are accused with trumped up charges, threatened, and even killed. One recent example comes from the people of the Dulangan tribe. On 3 December 2017, eight tribal members were killed by government forces for resisting logging and coffee farming on their ancestral lands in the [Lake Sebu](#) area. This is only the most recent example of private industry being favoured over local communities.

Are there any possible solutions to the issues? Can communities, businesses, and the government coexist peacefully?

In fact, Lumads (indigenous people) have a system of sustainable agriculture, which counteracts the continuous degradation of the environment. At the same time, we have reforestation initiatives in areas where planting crops such as corn is not feasible anymore. We also plant root crops and timber trees in deforested areas and watersheds. It's a combination of protection and sustaining the economic needs of the people. The government should help local initiatives as well as allocate resources to help fulfill sustainable development programmes. What happens now is they prioritize big corporations, such as mining and logging, at the expense of the people. The government should support community projects that have proven to be environmentally sound and sustainable.

I think it's better to have businesses that can develop national industries that support local needs, not resource extraction for foreign export. For example, coconut farming could be developed as a sustainable and profitable industry, an alternative that benefits companies and communities. Businesses and indigenous communities can co-exist by building together national industries that support local needs.

Are indigenous communities the most effective stewards of the environment?

We are the remaining populations that value connections between nature and the people. For us, land is life. If you cut the tree, destroy watersheds, there will be no life. We are environmental defenders.

Learn more about UN Environment's [Environmental Rights Initiative](#).

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/us-land-life>

March 7, 2018

Lifestory: Evangelical Christian Makes the Case for Climate Change

By Sebastien Malo, Thomson Reuters Foundation
Sight Magazine

Katharine Hayhoe, a climate scientist and evangelical Christian, says she gets slammed every day on social media for her contributions to establishing that climate change is human-made.

But on Monday, she was welcomed with applause at a United Nations-backed climate summit in the capital of Canada's western province of Alberta, where polls show that climate scepticism rates are among the highest in the country.

Dr Hayhoe, a professor at Texas Tech University, has emerged in recent years as a leading voice sharing the science of climate change to sceptics - many of whom are fellow evangelical churchgoers.

A 2015 survey from the Washington DC-based Pew Research Center found that just one quarter of white evangelicals in the United States believe that climate change is caused by humans.

A separate Pew poll from 2016 showed that white evangelicals voted overwhelmingly to elect United States President Donald Trump, who has pulled his country out of the Paris agreement, a global pact to curb climate change.

But Dr Hayhoe said it is that same Christianity that fuels her dedication to climate science.

"I study climate change because I think it's the greatest humanitarian crisis of our times," she said.

"It exacerbates poverty and hunger and disease and civil conflicts and refugee crises," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Traits that have made Dr Hayhoe uniquely qualified to speak authoritatively in such conservative circles are best summed up by two accolades she has received.

For her work in explaining climate change, Dr Hayhoe has made *TIME* magazine's list of most influential people, and she was named one of the 50 Women to Watch by the evangelical magazine *Christianity Today*.

Her calling came "completely serendipitously."

Six months into her marriage, her husband, a linguistics professor, told her about his disbelief in global warming.

"You have somebody you respect and you also love, and you also want to stay married. I said well, 'Let's talk about it.'"

It took two years of discussion to agree that heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions attributable to human activity are driving today's climate change.

The marital episode and her subsequent engagement with faith groups have firmed up her views that the traditional conservative tenet of small government - not science - usually explains why some resist the issue.

"(It's) not because they really have a problem with the science," she said. "It's because they have a problem with the perceived solutions."

"Taxes, government legislation, loss of personal liberty...that's the real problem people have."

Dr Hayhoe did not field any questions from climate change sceptics during her talk at the summit in Edmonton. And her message struck particularly close to home in a province that is Canada's main oil producer.

"The world energy system is undergoing an energy revolution...from old dirty energies that we have been using for hundreds of years to clean, endless sources of energy like wind," she said, in an interview after her speech.

"Oil and gas companies, they look down the road and they understand that the world is changing."

Under the Paris agreement, nearly 200 countries agreed to curb planet-warming emissions enough to keep the rise in global temperatures to well below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times, ideally to 1.5 degrees.

But without unprecedented action temperatures could rise above 1.5 degrees, according to a draft report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change seen by Reuters earlier this year.

<https://www.sightmagazine.com.au/columns/lifestory/8908-environment-evangelical-christian-makes-the-case-for-climate-change-at-un-summit>

March 8, 2018

Pope chooses 2019 Synod of Bishops on Amazon theme, appoints council

By Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service
Crux

ROME — Pope Francis has chosen the theme and appointed members of the preparatory council for the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon region, which will take place in Rome in October 2019.

The theme, the Vatican announced March 8, is "The Amazon: New paths for the Church and for an integral ecology."

The pope also named 18 members for the pre-synod council that will collaborate with the secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops in preparing for the special assembly next year.

A synod council usually prepares an outline and list of questions, which bishops' conferences and other interested groups in the church respond to. The responses are then compiled and analyzed before a synod working document is prepared.

The synod will seek to hear the voice of those living in the Amazon region and identify new paths of evangelization, especially for indigenous people who are "often forgotten and left without the prospect of a peaceful future, including because of the crisis of the Amazon forest," which plays a vital role in the environmental health of the entire planet, the pope has said.

“We have to break with the historical paradigm that views Amazonia as an inexhaustible source of supplies for other countries without concern for its inhabitants,” he said when meeting indigenous people in Peru in January 2018.

Rich in biodiversity, natural resources and cultures, the Amazon rainforest is the largest in the world, covering more than 2.1 million square miles in South America. The rainforest spreads across Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela, Suriname, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Guyana and French Guiana.

Among the 18 new members of the synod council are three cardinals, 13 bishops, one nun and a layman — the majority of them are from countries in the Amazon region.

Council members include: Brazilian Cardinal Claudio Hummes, president of the Pan-Amazonian Church Network (REPAM); Ghanaian Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; Mexican Cardinal Carlos Aguiar Retes of Mexico City; British Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Vatican foreign minister; Sister Maria Lopes Dos Santos, a member of the Carmelite Missionary Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus and delegate of the Confederation of Latin American Religious; and Mauricio Lopez, executive secretary of REPAM.

<https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2018/03/08/pope-chooses-2019-synod-bishops-amazon-theme-appoints-council/>

March 9, 2018

In Peru's Madre de Dios region, church helps indigenous peoples survive

By Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Arazaire, Peru — Bishop David Martínez de Aguirre Guinea of Puerto Maldonado listened as Harakmbut leader Matilde Tije described the predicament of her people.

In this hamlet of 110 residents, there is no school or potable water, and children are seen drinking Coke from bottles. Although the Harakmbut obtained land titles in 1977, 18 mining concessions have since been granted on these lands. People say mining activities have polluted their rivers with mercury used in the extraction process, and the government body responsible for supervising forest resources constantly imposes fines and pressures community members to stop their agricultural, fishing and hunting activities.

"How can we live if we cannot fish or hunt?" asked Tije, tears streaming down her face.
"Sometimes all we have to eat is plantains."

Currently, three members of the Arazaire community are in detention for failure to pay stiff fines originally imposed because illegal loggers cut down trees. And, recently, state officials have

ordered that each of the 22 families living here must pay the government 35 soles (\$10) monthly for the rainwater they use.

"The situation you describe is the reason why Pope Francis visited Madre de Dios," Martínez told her, referring to Francis' [Jan. 19 visit to the Amazon](#).

Madre de Dios, the Kansas-sized region in the Amazon forest on the border with Brazil and Bolivia, has been described as "*la periferia de las periferias*" (the edge of the edge). Francis' decision to visit highlighted the plight of indigenous peoples and a valuable rainforest that spans nine countries; both will be discussed at a special [Synod of Bishops](#) at the Vatican in October 2019.

About 29,000 of the province's population of 348,000 are members of 22 indigenous tribes. They are descendants of people chained and enslaved on the plantations during the 19th-century rubber boom denounced by Pope Pius X in his 1912 encyclical *Lacrimabili Statu*.

Today, gold lures prospectors to scramble on the artisanal mines here. The gold rush has brought environmental degradation; human trafficking, as indigent young girls are tricked into working as prostitutes in the illegal mining centers; and violent clashes between armed groups vying for the most lucrative seams. Madre de Dios today has the second-highest homicide rate in Peru.

Caritas, the church's charitable agency, has worked with the Arazaire community to draw up a communal plan that sets out the collectively defined needs, priorities and proposals for income-generating activities. This key document is used as a baseline in all negotiations with the state or other stakeholders.

The church also is working to promote environmental and socially responsible initiatives to mitigate the damage wrought by uncontrolled mining activities. One such example of their help is in the settlement of Fortuna, where the people have opted for the creation of a responsible mining enterprise, Fortumil. The socially responsible gold-producing company, founded by 16 partners, is using minimal mercury, and profits benefit the entire community of 40 families. No alcohol is allowed here and prostitution is banned.

The Peruvian bishops' social action commission and the U.S. bishops' Catholic Relief Services have provided advice on running a small business and have generally accompanied the process.

A further priority for the church is income-generating agroforestry initiatives that revitalize the soil. About 25 miles from the wilderness of La Pampa, an association of cocoa producers — accompanied and supported by Caritas — is selling cocoa, fruits and vegetables at international fair trade and local markets.

Such initiatives, as well as promoting environmental restoration, also support the inhabitants of the region; Martínez worries about conservation groups that fail to take into account the needs of the people.

"These people must fish and hunt to survive, and their activities are small scale and sustainable," said Martínez. "Environmental policies to protect the Amazon must include the survival of its peoples."

The bishop is hopeful that the 2019 synod will bring improvements for the indigenous peoples here. Church organizations are already preparing for the synod.

The Amazon Center of Anthropology and Practical Application, known by its acronym CAAAP, is preparing extensive consultations with the local indigenous peoples of all the Amazon regions in Peru. The 13 bishops of the Peruvian Amazon created the social organization in 1974.

"We hope that the synod will raise awareness that the Amazon region is not just a pantry to be raided for its resources, but a space to protect," said Martínez. "We are an Amazon church, with the Amazon at its heart. We have to ensure the peoples of the Amazon have a stronger participation in the church, and that their contribution shows us the face of Christ and can enrich us."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/perus-madre-de-dios-region-church-helps-indigenous-peoples-survive>

March 11, 2018

Clifton Diocese: Laudato Si' inspiring reflection and action

By Clifton, Mary Colwell, and Ellen Teague
Independent Catholic News

Catholic environmentalists Mary Colwell and Ellen Teague led a day of reflection on Saturday in Salisbury, focusing on the imperatives in the 2015 environment encyclical of Pope Francis - Laudato Si'. Around 40 people attended the event, 'Laudato Si': A Call to Action', organised by Salisbury Justice and Peace Group and Clifton Diocese Justice and Peace Commission.

Participants came from as far afield as Bristol, Bath, Rochester, and Swindon, and the day was ecumenical, with Quakers and Anglicans, including two Anglican priests and a strong representation from Salisbury Cathedral's Justice and Peace Group. "We have peregrines on the Salisbury Cathedral spire" reported one of them. An advisor to Catholic schools in Salisbury said she wanted "as a Christian to find out what my responsibilities are towards addressing justice issues and environmental problems". Others said they simply wanted to be encouraged in their work to care for God's creation. Many had already studied the themes in Laudato Si' and were active in promoting "ecological conversion". One was involved in Salisbury's Transition Town Movement and participates regularly in the international webinars of the Global Catholic Climate Movement.

Suggestions for personal change towards sustainable living included eating less meat, wasting less water and finding out more about virtual water. Using less plastic, particularly single use,

was moving up priorities and supporting green electricity and public transport. The Laudato Si' Prayer would be brought back to parishes and consideration given to celebrating First Communion and Confirmations by planting trees. The livesimply award programme and eco-church were discussed. Many are involved in planning for Earth Day on 22 April and for Creation Time 1 September - 4 October. There was interest in the 'Joy in Enough' programme of Green Christians which looks at sustainable living.

Mary Colwell, an award-winning producer of programmes on nature and the environment, lamented the disconnection between human society and the natural world. "To me, God created this extraordinary universe which blows our minds with power, energy, diversity, constant transformations" she said; "the natural world speaks to me of what a wonderful God we have".

She led a reflection on the view from the venue's extensive windows, which overlooked a busy roundabout with the green oasis at its centre and a Church by the road. The Church was constructed using flint, an ancient building material, and perhaps built on an older site of worship. Cars whizzed round the noisy roundabout, prompting reflection on busy lives and the failure to slow down and appreciate nature. Within the roundabout bulbs could be seen appearing in the grass and Indian bean trees swayed in the wind, but there was little human access to the site. However, "we instinctively put nature back in our lives" reflected Mary, who has led a campaign to protect disappearing Curlews.

With Laudato Si' Pope Francis has brought the Catholic Church to the forefront of the ecology movement, according to Ellen Teague of the Columban JPIC team. Pope Francis has added his extraordinary moral leadership to the fight against climate change, she said, quoting his words that, "the climate is a common good" and "there is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy". Pope Francis also says that, "living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience". Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.

Ellen highlighted campaigns to tackle the commodification of natural resources, particularly water, and to urge the UK government to implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. She facilitated a group reflection on creation-centred spirituality, and quoted eco-theologian Thomas Berry's words that, "our fulfilment is not in isolated human grandeur but in our intimacy with the larger Earth community".

LINKS

Clifton Diocese Justice and Peace Commission

<https://cliftondiocese.com/departments/services-and-commissions/justice-and-peace/>
<https://cliftondiocese.com/faith/care-of-creation/>

ICN Review of Mary Colwell's Book on John Muir
www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=26792

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/34498>

March 12, 2018

Buddhist traditions and conservation programmes protect rare otters on Tibetan plateau

Alliance of Religions and Conservation

In early 2018 Flora He Yifan volunteered at the Shanshui Conservation Center, working on Eurasian otter monitoring, human-wildlife conflict resolution, and ecotourism development in the Sanjiangyuan region in Qinghai, China. She is a recent Master's graduate from the School of Environment and Sustainability, University of Michigan, and later this year will join Conservation International as a social science coordinator. Read the [full report](#) on Mongabay. This is a brief summary.

Buddhist traditions protect the rare Eurasian otter.

Although the Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) is locally extinct in most of its former range in China due to a combination of hunting (for its pelt) water pollution, and general habitat destruction, in one area there is a healthy population. In Yushu, Qinghai, a city of 200,000 people on the eastern Tibetan Plateau Buddhist traditions linked with conservation initiatives have helped preserve a healthy population of otters. "Two rivers — Zhaqu and Changu — flow through the city to join the Tongtian River in the east, the headwater of the Yangtze river. During a one-month survey, researchers from Shanshui Conservation Center recorded Eurasian otter activities 66 times with seven camera traps. Over 200 spraints (otter dung) and footprints were also discovered along 45 kilometers (about 28 miles) of river, indicating a thriving population of the species.

Yushu is a Buddhist area

One unique fact about Yushu, He Yifan writes, is that over 95 percent of its population is Tibetan. Consequently, this area is heavily influenced by Tibetan Buddhist traditions, which support the conservation of individual organisms and habitats in many ways. A fundamental component of Buddhism is compassion for all living beings. It comes partly from the idea of reincarnation and the belief that an animal could be one's parent, sibling, or friend in another life. "While meat consumption is necessary for local herders to survive in the harsh climate of Tibet, many choose to eat larger animals like yaks, so that fewer lives are taken. For this reason, many locals do not eat fish or other aquatic creatures, securing ample food sources for the otters. "Also, the locals believe that cutting trees on sacred mountains will offend mountain gods, and, similarly, polluting water sources will infuriate the water gods. By protecting sacred natural sites in Tibetan Buddhism, people are also conserving important wildlife habitats. "What's more, the

demand for otter pelts in the Tibetan region has been drastically reduced in recent years due to the advocacy of religious leaders against the use of animal fur."

Combining religious traditions with effective conservation

Lutra lutra is now listed under CITES Appendix I and the Schedules of Nationally Protected Fauna and Flora in China, and stricter law enforcement has reduced hunting. Since the 1990s the Chinese government has set conservation as a priority in the Sanjiangyuan region, a 316,000-square-kilometer area that includes the headwaters of three great Asian rivers: the Yangtze, the Yellow, and the Mekong. Over 40 percent of the land has been designated as the Sanjiangyuan Nature Reserve, and a series of conservation projects are in place, including grassland restoration, a firearm ban, and anti-poaching measures. Being part of the Sanjiangyuan region, Yushu benefits greatly from these projects.

There are problems from traditional Buddhist practices in the region

In the same rivers where the otters live, people have been releasing fish as a practice of sparing lives that were to be slaughtered. Most of these non-native fish die, but a few carp species appear to be doing well, raising concerns over invasive species. Conservationists working in this area must address these kinds of challenges in ways that the local people are willing to accept.

NOTE FROM ARC: Elsewhere in China, however, Buddhist leaders have recognised that Mercy Release is a problem for both the environment and the animals that suffer from it. They have alternatively promoted the concept that the best form of Mercy Release is adopting a vegetarian diet, either through your life, or on Buddhist special days. [Read more here](#), including a cartoon for children.

Future plans

While the otters in Yushu benefit from both Tibetan traditions and conservation actions, they still face a number of threats, including levee construction, water pollution, and growing traffic in the city. To better understand the impact of human activities on the otter population, Shanshui Conservation Center will continue its efforts in monitoring and research. Eventually, Center staff hope to inform actions such as habitat restoration, anti-poaching, and native fish conservation, based on their findings, He writes.

Links to other successful Buddhism and Conservation programmes:

[The Snow Leopard Foundation leads workshops with Buddhist monks and nuns in Ladakh and Zaskar](#)

[Mongolian monks lead conservation projects](#)

[Bhutan Compassion and Conservation conference](#)

["The best mercy release is a vegetarian diet"](#).

["The Karmapa's Guidelines for the Environment.](#)

[17th Karmapa holds landmark Buddhist Environment Conference.](#)

<http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=875>

<https://northernspiritradio.org/episode/different-kind-green-book-qur%E2%80%99-0>

March 14, 2018

The Koch brothers preached the fossil fuel gospel in Virginia. Then, black churches fought back.

By Kenya Downs
Grist

Rev. Paul Wilson fastens enough buttons on his jacket to stay warm on a chilly fall afternoon but still keep his clergy collar visible. He's whipping up a crowd of demonstrators in downtown Richmond, Virginia, where they're waiting to make a short march from Richmond's Capitol Square Bell Tower to the nearby National Theatre. His eyes covered by sunglasses, and his head by a newsboy hat, Wilson speaks to the assembled about their Christian responsibility to protect the planet.

They've gathered for the [Water Is Life Rally & Concert](#), an event to protest the proposed construction of the [Atlantic Coast Pipeline](#). The development, a joint venture between several energy companies (including Richmond-based Dominion Energy), would carry natural gas 600 miles from West Virginia to North Carolina.

The pipeline's proposed route runs directly between Union Hill and Union Grove Baptist churches, the two parishes where Wilson serves as pastor in rural Buckingham County, 70 miles south of Richmond. The proposed site for the pipeline's 54,000-horsepower, gas-fired compressor station is also set to be built right between them.

Wilson fears the station could put his congregation and the surrounding community at risk of a range of ailments, especially asthma, because [those living near natural gas facilities](#) often suffer from chronic respiratory problems.

"God gave man dominion over the earth, but not permission to destroy it," Wilson later tells me as we discuss the pipeline over coffee at a diner in a suburb north of Richmond.

Even though the Water Is Life Rally was held in the Bible Belt, Rev. Wilson was the only speaker who cited scripture and invoked Jesus Christ. Drums and tambourines reverberated in unison to chants of "No justice, no peace! No pipelines on our streets!", and the event's other speakers railed against the greed of Big Oil companies and U.S. imperialism.

At another rally focused on fossil fuels a year earlier in Richmond, religion was front and center.

In December 2016, gospel music stars descended on a local community center in Richmond's East Highland Park neighborhood. Hundreds of residents from throughout the area had answered the call to attend a concert marketed as an opportunity for enlightenment, both spiritual and environmental.

As a sea of hands waved through the air as eyes closed in prayer, what many in the crowd didn't know was that they were the target of a massive propaganda campaign. One of the event's sponsors was a fossil-fuel advocacy group called Fueling U.S. Forward, an outfit supported by Koch Industries, the [petrochemicals, paper, and wood product conglomerate](#) founded by conservative billionaires Charles and David Koch.

The gospel program was designed to highlight the benefits of oil and natural gas production and its essential role in the American way of life. During a break in the music, a panel discussion unfolded about skyrocketing utility costs. The lobbyists and businesspeople on the panel presented a greater reliance on fossil fuels — billed as cheap, reliable energy sources — as the fix. Later, a surprise giveaway netted four lucky attendees the opportunity to have their power bills paid for them.

The event was one big bait and switch, according to environmental experts and local activists. Come for the gospel music, then listen to us praise the everlasting goodness of oil and gas. Supporting this sort of pro-oil-and-gas agenda sprinkled over the songs of praise, they say, would only worsen the pollution and coastal flooding that come with climate change, hazards that usually hit Virginia's black residents the hardest.

“The tactic was tasteless and racist, plain and simple,” says Kendyl Crawford, the Sierra Club of Richmond's conservation program coordinator. “It's exploiting the ignorance many communities have about climate change.”

Rev. Wilson likens that gospel concert to the Biblical story of Judas accepting 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus. Like many African Americans in Virginia, he initially didn't connect environmental policy with what he calls the “institutional racism” — think racial profiling, lack of economic opportunity, etc. — that can plague black communities nationwide. Now he considers “the sea level rising or the air quality in the cities” another existential threat.

So in response to the Koch brothers' attempt to sway their flocks, Wilson and others affiliated with black churches in Virginia have channeled their outrage into a new calling: climate advocacy. For Wilson, environmentalism has become a biblical mission.

“The climate is changing,” he says. “And it's black folk in Virginia who will lose the most.”

The billionaire Koch brothers are one of the driving forces behind right-wing campaigns throughout the country. One of their primary activities is promoting fossil fuel production.

According to Virginia environmental groups, that involves efforts to [deny the existence of climate change](#) and [stifle renewable energy policies](#).

In struggling cities and towns, Big Oil bills itself as a savior, raising the hope that new plants and pipelines, like the Atlantic Coast project, will bring jobs and tax revenue. With an [extensive network of advocacy groups](#) throughout the country, the Koch brothers can spread that message anywhere, outsourcing efforts to sway public opinion without people realizing they're pulling the strings.

Fueling U.S. Forward, until recently, was one of those campaigns. When [HuffPost first reported on its existence in early 2016](#), the group had an annual budget of roughly \$10 million and was run by Charles Drevna, a former petroleum industry lobbyist, and James Mahoney, a board member and former executive for Koch Industries. Later that summer, Drevna spoke at the Red State Gathering in Denver, telling the right-wing activist conference — [in a speech where he referred to EPA employees as “clowns”](#) — that the fossil fuel industry was losing ground because it was failing to connect with the public, especially minority communities, on a cultural, emotional, and personal level.

“We’ve done a terrible job in working with individual communities, working with the minority communities on how important energy is to them,” he said in a Facebook Live chat during the gathering with Fueling U.S. Forward’s communications director at the time, Alex Fitzsimmons. “And who gets hit the hardest when there’s a spike in energy costs? They get hit the most, and they get hit the hardest.”

A year ago, the New York Times reported that the nonprofit [had started making inroads](#) among African Americans. The group had helped sponsor the National Black Political Convention in 2016 where delegates added language to their platform characterizing policies that subsidize electric cars and residential solar as benefiting the rich at the expense of African Americans.

At the Richmond gospel concert, Fueling U.S. Forward sought to link energy production to the everyday issues that it said stymie economic mobility for African Americans — such as prices at the gas pump, heating, and electric bills. That message was delivered in part through [discussions featuring prominent African-American business leaders](#).

“It was a deliberate strategy to manipulate black Virginians into supporting fossil fuels,” the Sierra Club’s Crawford says.

One of the participants was [Derrick Hollie](#), a career marketing consultant who is also the founder of [Reaching America](#), a nonprofit that describes itself as “focused on innovative solutions for African Americans not based on right or left wing views but what makes sense for a more united America.” Reaching America cosponsored the Fueling U.S. Forward gospel concert along with Radio One, an entertainment network targeting African Americans now known as Urban One. The corporation once [employed Hollie as a national sales manager](#).

Despite Reaching America’s nonpartisan claims, Hollie has been [associated with the black conservative network Project 21](#) and [identified as a right-winger on TV news shows](#). And much

of Hollie’s environmental advocacy has been in line with the Koch brothers’ priorities. His arguments focus on what he calls “[energy poverty](#)” — when low-income households spend large portions of their disposable income to keep the lights on and fill up their gas tanks. He’s invoked the phrase while speaking in support of [fracking in Maryland, Rick Perry’s appointment to lead the Department of Energy](#), and most recently, [the Trump administration’s planned withdrawal from the Paris accord](#). Hollie did not respond to requests for an interview.

While Hollie has remained visible since the Richmond event — launching a [Reaching America podcast series](#) and [palling around with Perry and other Cabinet secretaries](#) — Fueling U.S. Forward has gone dark. Calls and emails to Fueling U.S. Forward and its president Charles Drevna to comment for this story were not returned.

Fitzsimmons, the group’s communications director, has moved to Perry’s Department of Energy, where he’s the chief policy advisor in the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. The organization’s website appears to have been shut down last fall, [all videos from its YouTube page have been removed](#), and its social media platforms haven’t been updated in more than a year.

But Fueling U.S. Forward’s message lives on. Scott Pruitt, head of the Environmental Protection Agency, employs talking points that echo those Drevna used while promoting the organization in conservative circles, complaining that the EPA’s regulations pick “winners and losers” in the energy space.

Rev. Faith Harris remembers first hearing ads about the Fueling U.S. Forward gospel concert on urban radio stations back in 2016. A minister, teacher, and environmental activist at Virginia Union University, a Richmond-based historically black college, Harris was among many African Americans in the region angered by what she calls a “purposeful misinformation” campaign. She says it was surreal to hear a D.J. invite listeners to “learn the truth” about whether the country is using enough fossil fuels.

“I called the radio station to ask, ‘How could you do that?’” she recalls. “The debate isn’t whether there are *enough* fossil fuels, but about the health and environmental impact they have on the way we live on this planet.”

In the months after the gospel concert, the backlash bubbled slowly through neighborhoods, led mostly by community activists and clergy like Rev. Harris. It picked up steam following the Times article. Ultimately, Fueling U.S. Forward’s strategy of influencing one of the black community’s most sacred institutions — the church — would prove to be folly.

Within environmental advocacy circles, Harris says, there was an increased urgency to tell neighborhood leaders that the concert was part of a public relations campaign for oil and gas interests. The campaign had the unintended effect of [rallying the Richmond black community against the Kochs and their goals](#).

Revs. Harris and Wilson now regularly tell their congregations how the fossil fuel industry harms low-income communities and people of color. Sea-level rise on Virginia's coast has put low-lying cities in the Hampton Roads area, including Norfolk and Newport News — both of which are more than 40 percent black — [at risk of extreme flooding](#). A hurricane during high tide could see entire neighborhoods populated primarily by African Americans and the poor swallowed up by the Chesapeake Bay.

“We in the church community have a moral responsibility to be out-front on protecting our flock from climate change,” Harris says. “I call it an authentic pro-life agenda. The Christian church, for too long, has allowed ‘pro-life’ to be defined solely as conception when, in fact, life is much more complex. It includes our quality of life while we’re here.”

The state's African-American residents already face high rates of respiratory problems related to the processing of fossil fuels, like those that would flow through the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. In Norfolk, clouds of dust from [coal residue from nearby shipping yards and factories](#) often cover parked vehicles. With such close proximity to toxic air pollution, nearly [11 percent of the state's black population has asthma](#), higher than the [national average of 7.6 percent](#).

Richmond remains one of the [deadliest places in the U.S. for people suffering from asthma](#), according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, a consequence of a [high poverty rate and a large proportion of uninsured](#). The chronic respiratory condition is linked to living near industrial factories, as well as urban planning that drove interstate highways — and their accompanying diesel pollution — through many black neighborhoods.

“We have a coal factory right in the neighborhood,” says Antonio Branch, a community organizer with Richmond-based [Virginia Civic Engagement Table](#), an organization aimed at educating vulnerable communities about risks to their health. “I’m asthmatic. My mother is asthmatic and she grew up in the same area. My son is asthmatic, and I have a baby boy who may soon be diagnosed.”

Branch considers the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline “part of a larger environmental attack” on minority communities in Virginia and neighboring North Carolina, two states on planned pipeline route. Many of the region's proposed oil and gas projects sit near poor and rural areas. In Virginia's Buckingham County, home to Rev. Wilson's churches, the community closest to that facility is [85 percent African American](#). By contrast, the state's overall black population is 19 percent.

“This isn't a coincidence,” Branch says.

While gospel provided the soundtrack to the Fueling U.S. Forward event in Richmond, it was bluegrass and folk that pumped through the loudspeakers at December's Water Is Life Rally. Rev. Wilson was one of a dozen or so African Americans taking part in the event. Most of those assembled to protest the Atlantic Coast Pipeline were white millennials and baby boomers who

donned anti-establishment paraphernalia and waved “No Pipeline” signs to the honking cars that passed by.

Kiquanda Baker, the Hampton Roads organizer for the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, helped put together the Water Is Life Rally. She sees African-American leadership as an essential part of changing the narrative surrounding climate change. But she admits that while the community is becoming more engaged in green issues, it hasn’t quite begun to break down the archetype of the white environmentalist.

Adding environmentalism to the fight for social justice that’s part of the African-American experience, she says, is the most critical aspect of swaying communities of color to fight global warming.

“Our role as community leaders is to show that all of these issues are connected,” Baker says. “The more aware we are of environmental injustices, the less likely our communities can be tricked into rallies by the Koch brothers.”

Baker says outreach efforts are slowly making progress throughout the state, even if community members aren’t yet the most vocal activists. But she’s encouraged that African-American residents are [increasingly active where it counts most](#): the voting booth.

“A few folks I talk with, they may not be at the point where they’re ready to canvas or march,” she says. “But they are better informed about who they’re voting for and which corporations and interests would also be getting their vote.”

Virginia’s black community is also becoming more active in pressing elected officials on the environment and climate change. Two months after the gospel concert, clergy members joined the Virginia Conservation Network — a coalition of organizations and community members that advocates for clean energy and environmental justice — for a panel discussion on how to inoculate themselves from Fueling U.S. Forward-type messaging. Freshman Democratic Congressman A. Donald McEachin, who’d recently been elected to represent Virginia’s 4th District — which runs from the southwestern suburbs of Richmond to the southeast corner of the state — joined the discussion. He has since joined with two other freshman representatives to form the United for Climate and Environmental Justice Congressional Task Force.

After Harris and other activists spent months petitioning the state government, Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe established an [Advisory Council on Environmental Justice](#) in October. Its role is to provide the governor with independent recommendations on combating “disproportionately high or adverse effects from pollution” that fall on low-income residents and communities of color. Harris is one of the advisors, and she sees her participation as part of a larger theological crusade.

“In black communities, the clergy has always been the leading voice of the oppressed,” she says. “So when it comes to making sure our flock have a planet to call home, it’s a fight we have to be in front of.”

Rev. Wilson has also been preparing for the battle ahead. He's already been [arrested for protesting the Atlantic Coast Pipeline](#) at the Virginia Governor's Mansion. (He was sentenced to community service.) But as he made the trek back to Buckingham County after the Water is Life Rally, he was worrying about what the future holds, both for the pipeline he's battling and his community.

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline is already a year behind schedule, and last [November's statewide elections](#) could signal that momentum is swinging back in environmentalists' favor. Democrats picked up seats in the House of Delegates, which could alter the timeline of the pipeline's development. Several bills are currently up for vote that would require pipeline operators to obtain more permits before construction could begin.

When he's not tending to his two churches, Wilson is a fifth-generation owner of a funeral home. He expects his daughter to take over the family business in the coming years, and his grandson has already chosen to study mortuary science, making it likely he'll be the seventh generation to oversee the funeral home. Wilson hopes that by the time his grandson is running things, the environmental threats to his family and church members won't have business booming at the funeral home for all the wrong reasons.

"God didn't put me on this earth to pimp death for profit," Wilson says. "That's what the Kochs and these energy folks are doing to my people now. It's up to us in the church to stop it."

<https://grist.org/article/koch-brothers-preached-the-fossil-fuel-gospel-in-virginia-then-black-churches-fought-back/>

March 14, 2018

At Lekòl Jezi-Mari, little by little, the bird builds its nest

By Geri Lanham
Global Sisters Report

Notes from the Field includes reports from young people volunteering in ministries of Catholic sisters. A partnership with [Catholic Volunteer Network](#), the project began in the summer of 2015. This is our seventh round of bloggers: Viviana Garcia-Blanco is a Dominican Volunteer at the United Nations and Geri Lanham is a volunteer with the Religious of Jesus and Mary in Gros Morne, Haiti.

Giving directions to Lekòl Jezi-Mari, a primary school in the neighborhood zone of Fon Ibo, is a bit morbid. The first landmark is a mint green morgue, followed by the stump of a mango tree.

But then the landmarks change and become living and life-giving. As I walk along the dirt road, I pass living walls of cacti that mark a garden's boundaries and an attempt to protect the growing produce from the never-satisfied stomachs of the local goat population. Then I follow the final

bend in the road and am greeted by the cheerful yellow-and-chocolate-brown walls of Lekòl Jezi-Mari.

There is no mistaking this place, with its large, bright buildings. It is a testament to permanence in an agrarian neighborhood of subsistence-farm families where people struggle to put food on the table each day.

As I approach, I see students looking sharp in their pressed sunshine-yellow and chocolate-brown uniforms. These 576 students are a living, breathing embodiment of Lekòl Jezi-Mari and the education they are receiving, which is a lifeline for many of their families.

The majority of these students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. For them, the school is not just a place of book learning. It is also a place to learn life skills and to learn to interact with one another and with teachers who have compassion for them and who want them to succeed against the odds stacked against them. Some of these students will be the first in their families to graduate from sixth grade.

After an afternoon rain shower, I am always humbled to see how the older students pick up the younger students and place them on their backs to carry them across the muddy river that before the rain had been a road. No adult asks them to do this, but the older students feel a responsibility to help the younger ones arrive at their destination. I do not have the balance to pick up anything or anyone on the muddy road, so I am in awe to see sixth-graders balancing a kindergartener in front, a second-grader in back, and their backpacks on their heads. These students may not be taller than me, but their sheer force of will makes them far stronger than me on this path.

Lekòl Jezi-Mari started under a mango tree in 1998. It was a group of children brought together by Claude Etienne and Jean Desinor, two community leaders in Fon Ibo who believe the children of the neighborhood merit a formal education.

Since that simple beginning, Lekòl Jezi-Mari has blossomed under the care of Sr. Pat Dillon of the Religious of Jesus and Mary, who has seen the school grow from a single classroom building to 16 classrooms today. The parish school is administered by the Religious of Jesus and Mary, and although it is a Catholic grade school, it welcomes students of any religion.

Sister Pat works tirelessly with Claude and Mèt Leny, the principal, to create a compassionate learning environment where the students can strive to achieve their potential. This includes engaging with the parents, many of whom are illiterate, to encourage them to support the learning of their children to the best of their ability.

When students have a scuffle on the playground that comes to blows, they do not face corporal punishment. The students face something much harder: a mandatory attitude adjustment. Mèt Leny hears both sides of the disagreement then sends the offending parties to sit under the mango tree to think about what they did. When they have calmed down and come to an understanding of how they will live together peaceably, they return to Mèt Leny and explain to him their solution to the disagreement. Lekòl Jezi-Mari students are challenged to learn and live the fact that one's right to swing one's arm ends when it hits another's face.

Lekòl Jezi-Mari students have some life-changing opportunities when they come to school. Thanks to the support of [Mercy Focus on Haiti](#), Friends of Haiti and [Fundación Juntos Mejor](#), the students enjoy a midday meal, which gives them the strength to learn. The lunch program is augmented with produce from the school garden, which is tended by the fifth-grade class.

Each week, classes spend at least one session in the solar-powered computer lab, where students use their math skills to save penguins from falling asteroids and do further research to expand their knowledge of topics in their history books. Students learn about their place in the world, and they are invited to think about how they will strive to change the reality of their neighborhood in order to begin to change the reality of their country.

There is a Haitian proverb, "*Ti pa ti pa zwazo fè nich*," which means, "Little by little, the bird builds its nest." Step by step, we change the world. The kindergarten teachers participate in a formation program called *ti pa ti pa*, since they are helping the children take their first steps into learning.

With the foundation they receive at Lekòl Jezi-Mari, these little ones will be able to grow into bright young people who will have the skills and the capacity to be life-giving agents of change in their families and in their community if they can only find the opportunity to utilize these skills growing within them.

[Geri Lanham lives in community with the Religious of Jesus and Mary in Gros Morne, Haiti.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/blog/gsr-today/ministry/lek%C3%B2l-jezi-mari-little-little-bird-builds-its-nest-52536>

March 15, 2018

Papua New Guinea's first Cardinal says climate change is 'disaster' for his people

The Tablet

"Most of the islands are in danger," he told an audience at The Catholic University of America on Tuesday

People of the southwest Pacific Ocean nation of Papua New Guinea face severe threats from rising sea levels caused by climate change, the country's first cardinal said during a visit to Washington this week.

Cardinal John Ribat, archbishop of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, shared stories of his fellow Papuans who have been forced to move inland from ancestral lands along the ocean as rising seas have inundated their homes.

The same is true on hundreds of tiny islands throughout the Pacific basin, he told Catholic News Service yesterday, before a visit to Capitol Hill to plead for action to protect the environment and address climate change.

Ocean levels have risen in recent decades, overtaking low lying areas on tiny island nations and large land masses alike. Scientists attribute higher seas to melting polar ice as greenhouse gases from the burning of fossil fuels accumulate in the earth's atmosphere, causing the planet to warm.

"We are responsible to voice this...If nothing is happening to us in the way of help, our people will be faced with disaster," Cardinal Ribat said. The Catholic Church must accompany people who face any type of difficulty, he added.

Since being appointed the country's first cardinal in 2016, Cardinal Ribat has focused much of his ministry on addressing climate change. He has called the environment the most important issue for the Papuan Catholic Church to address because of the risks facing thousands of people in the country of 8 million.

"We're accompanying people through this," the cardinal said, calling climate change a family issue that connects the words of Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on the family, "Amoris Laetitia," and his encyclical on the human relationship with the environment, "Laudato Si".

"The issue for us is the families are suffering," Cardinal Ribat said. "They are the ones that will be in more of a struggle."

Rising seas are affecting islands through the western Pacific, and Cardinal Ribat, who is president of the Federation of Catholic Episcopal Conferences of Oceania, said his fellow bishops agree that immediate action is needed to assist people who are being forced to relocate.

"Most of the islands are in danger," he told an audience at The Catholic University of America on Tuesday.

Drinking water also is at risk, he said. Some communities have seen their wells infiltrated by sea water, causing an increase in salinity, and some people have had to abandon traditional gardens, he said.

Cardinal Ribat arrived in the US to speak on the environmental impact of climate change at St Ignatius Loyola Parish in New York City on 12 March. A member of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, he also received an award from the parish for his commitment to upholding the principles of Jesuit spirituality in his ministry.

He decided to add a stop on Capitol Hill, where, he said, he hoped that the stories of the climate challenges confronting average people will influence members of Congress to act to protect the environment.

The cardinal also expressed concern that US President Donald Trump had committed to withdrawing the country from the Paris climate accord reached in 2015.

"Pulling out of this is not realising the struggle we are going through," he explained. "I don't think they are fully aware of the costs of this. The pulling out by the president is so difficult for us to understand. We are the victims of what is happening."

Papua New Guinea is an overwhelmingly Christian nation. About 27 percent of residents are Catholic and 70 percent are Protestant. The remainder follow Baha'i, Islam or indigenous religions.

Cardinal Ribat's visit was coordinated by the Franciscan Action Network, Global Catholic Climate Movement, Catholic Climate Covenant, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic University's School of Theology and Religious Studies.

<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/8738/papua-new-guinea-s-first-cardinal-says-climate-change-is-disaster-for-his-people>

March 16, 2018

In Midst of 'Immense Suffering' Caused by Climate Crisis, Caribbean Religious Leaders Call for Debt Relief

By Jake Johnson
Common Dreams

Citing the destruction wrought by last year's [uniquely devastating Atlantic hurricane season](#) and other natural disasters, a group of Caribbean religious leaders issued a [letter](#) (pdf) on Friday calling on governments and international financial institutions to relieve the debt of island nations and allow them to devote their resources to meeting the needs of their citizens.

"Across the Caribbean, we still see immense suffering from the hurricanes that landed last year," Jubilee USA executive director Eric LeCompte said in a [statement](#) endorsing the Caribbean leaders' call. "Islands that are struggling to recover after natural disasters and meet basic needs of their people should not be making debt payments."

Signed by 22 faith leaders from several Caribbean islands, the letter notes that research "points to the fact that the growing severity of hurricanes in the Caribbean is related to man-made climate change."

"We in the Caribbean, like some other nations elsewhere in the global south, are least responsible for but most affected by climate change," the letter continues. "The few dozen small Island States across the world, for example, have neither the size nor developmental history to have been major contributors to current climate change. Yet these small Island States are the most easily devastated by rising seas and harsher storms. Our brothers and sisters who inhabit these places are in peril, through no fault of their own."

In order to be prepared for the next hurricane season and future disasters caused or made worse by the climate crisis, the faith leaders made three demands:

- Our own heads of state and government must unite and collectively demand the creation of an efficient debt relief option ahead of the next hurricane season through all available means, including the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions.
- The IMF must use its rule-setting power to endorse a full debt moratorium once a hurricane or any other serious disaster brings destruction beyond a predefined level and make sure that a serious debt restructuring of all external commitments shall be possible under due consideration of our peoples' human rights.
- The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank must act as supporters of a comprehensive debt restructuring process once it is needed.

"As churches in the Caribbean we have witnessed the grief and despair of our people last September, and we are not prepared to enter the next hurricane season without at least being able to tell them that our authorities shall be able to use scarce resources for immediate relief and midterm reconstruction rather than debt service," the statement concludes.

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2018/03/16/midst-immense-suffering-caused-climate-crisis-caribbean-religious-leaders-call-debt>

March 18, 2018

China is taking action to better protect its rivers

Feng Shuang, Editor
China Daily

The International Day of Action for Rivers has been celebrated across the world since 1997. Every year, on March 14, ordinary people raise awareness about the importance of healthy watersheds and the equitable and sustainable management of rivers. [*\[Special Coverage\]*](#)

China's rivers are an important part of its identity and heritage, having sustained Chinese people for more than 5,000 years. China's rivers have allowed the country to develop and prosper economically. They are important sources of food, energy and production of goods. By itself, the iconic Yangtze River contributes 73 percent of the country's hydropower while the provinces and municipalities in its basin contribute 42 percent of China's GDP.

Intensive development, however, has taken its toll on Yangtze and on all rivers in the country. The National Bureau of Statistics documented 50,000 rivers in China in the 1980s. Only 23,000 are left today. More than half of China's rivers have disappeared or become polluted. Travel to the countryside in China, and you will hear stories about the disappearance of these life-giving arteries. Look out of your window as you fly domestically, and you will see dry riverbeds where

water once flowed. Protecting these powerful yet fragile life-support systems should be a strong focus to develop a "Beautiful China" by 2035.

There are encouraging developments. Measures are being taken to conserve the Yangtze River basin. In early 2016, China announced the creation of the Yangtze River Economic Belt which forbids any additional large scale development projects within one kilometer of a stretch of the Yangtze River, from Chongqing to Shanghai, as well as for the Yangtze's major tributaries. Large-scale heavy manufacturing and chemical plants already present are being forced to close or relocate.

Since the middle of last summer, over 200,000 river chiefs have been tasked and are being held accountable for the protection of China's rivers. River chiefs are government officials who have responsibilities related to water resource protection, pollution control and ecological restoration. There are billboards by many rivers with telephone numbers and QR codes so that citizens can report any water pollution or contamination.

In the past two years, provincial leaders in Southwest China's Yunnan province have taken important measures to protect the Nu River from large-scale and small-scale hydropower development. The Nu River is an ecological gem that hosts over 6,000 plant species, and supports 50 percent of China's animal species.

It is important that China continues to take leadership on river protection. Healthy rivers in China contribute toward regional stability and peacefulness among neighbors. China shares 110 of its rivers and lakes with 18 downstream countries, and 2 billion people depend on these rivers. In most cases, China controls the headwaters of these rivers.

Consequently, it is critical for China to manage these rivers in a consultative and cooperative manner and create transboundary environmental compensation mechanisms and transparent information sharing. China is building cooperation among Mekong countries by leading the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Framework, but there is an urgent need for more collaborative leadership. Though it is challenging, these rivers provide opportunities for cooperation across boundaries.

China continues to play a large role in creating a more sustainable planet by pursuing an "ecological civilization" and more balanced growth. As China curbs climate emissions, it must be careful not to sacrifice rivers by exploiting them for their hydropower potential. Rivers are global carbon sinks and ensuring their protection means that they can remove more carbon from the atmosphere. Healthy rivers help us to be resilient in the face of climate change.

A new Ministry of Natural Resources is being set up to manage State-owned natural resource assets and the environment. This will be a breakthrough, since currently Chinese ministries have unclear and overlapping divisions of responsibilities and compete to manage the country's water resources and rivers.

Rivers are the arteries of China and are powerful representations of the Chinese nation. Keeping the rivers of China healthy and free-flowing will continue to sustain the Chinese people and

downstream neighbors for generations to come. Keeping healthy rivers will also help ensure internal stability and peaceful relations with China's neighbors.

The author Stephanie Jensen-Cormier is China program director, International Rivers.

<http://www.ecns.cn/2018/03-18/296162.shtml>

March 18, 2018

Water Woes at Katas Raj

By Syed Muhammad Abubakar

Dawn

Legend has it that, after the death of his wife Sati, Lord Shiva cried so inconsolably that his tears formed a pond that came to be known as the Katas Raj pond. Around this pond, temples were built dedicated to the Hindu deities Shiva, Ram and Hanuman. It is the modern-day Lahore-Islamabad motorway that leads tourists to the arcane and sacred site. Situated in Punjab's Salt Range near Kallar Kahar (at an altitude of 2,000 feet), the Katas Raj Temple complex is considered the second-most sacred shrine in Hinduism. The pond from the Hindu legend occupies an area of two kanals and 15 marlas, with a maximum depth of 20 feet.

The seven temples at Katas — believed to have been built around 650 and 950 AD — are connected to one another by walkways. The name of the temple complex is derived from the Sanskrit word 'kataksha' which means 'tearful eyes' and every spring and autumn, Hindu pilgrims from Pakistan and India visit the pond to bathe in it and 'wash off their sins'.

The Katas pond drew attention last year when the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Mian Saqib Nisar [took notice of the drying up of the pond](#). He stated, "This temple is not just a place of cultural significance for the Hindu community, but also a part of our national heritage. We have to protect it."

Located in the Salt range, the second-most sacred shrine for Hindus faces peril at the hands of industrial development

Water from this pond has been used to irrigate the orchards of loquats in Choa Saidan Shah, a small town and union council in Chakwal district. It also supplied water to the nearby town for drinking purposes but now its own survival is at stake, with unsustainable development threatening its very existence.

This is not the first time the water body has faced perilous conditions. In the early 2000s when cement factories began to be set up in the Salt Range, popularly known as Kahoon Valley — a rain-fed zone — the local communities started to experience a sharp decline in groundwater levels, as their bore wells started to dry out. The Katas Raj pond was no exception to this, and the

pond slowly began to dry up. By May 2017, the water level of the pond was so low that it left the temple stairs, which were previously submerged, exposed.

Waseem Ahmed Raja, a resident of Chakwal has been fighting to save Katas Raj pond from drying up for years. He has suffered the wrath of those sitting in power corridors having been served non-bailable warrants and even having been barred from entering Chakwal on one instance. Raja explains that the pond began drying slowly in 2009 and, by 2012, had nearly dried up altogether. “The situation re-emerged in 2017 and since it is an internationally renowned site, the issue was highlighted [in the news],” he adds.

Raja explains that in order to ascertain the reasons behind the depletion of water in the pond, it is important to understand what led to this. He holds the cement factories, which became operational in 2007, responsible. “In October 2008, I filed an application to the Environment Protection Agency [EPA] that one of the cement plants prior to installation had said that they will bring water for their use from Malkana, a nearby village. They later deviated from their commitment.

“As I moved the application,” he says, “a site inspection was done on January 14, 2009, which confirmed that the factory deviated from their Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA], thus threatening the local flora and fauna. The District Officer Environment also confirmed that the springs of the valley are drying up but, in the end, the EPA gave an ambiguous verdict that the deviation [from the commitment] had been proved but water scarcity could not be proved. The cement factory was then asked to plant 30,000 trees and stop causing pollution.”

In a report submitted to the Supreme Court, in answer to the CJP questioning the Punjab government for failing to safeguard the Katas Raj pond, the Punjab government admitted that an aquifer feeding the pond was depleting due to boring of tube wells by a cement factory.

The CJP advised the government that if the pond is drying due to groundwater abstraction by factories, an alternative water supply scheme should be found to spare the pond. “We have to find a solution as to how water can be provided to the pond. Even if we need to close down tube wells or halt the water consumption of the factories, we will do it,” he observed. A timeline was demanded of the factories for making alternative arrangements for water disbursement.

The National Assembly Standing Committee was told that these cement factories should be constructed on the other side of the valley, preferably in Lilla, as we knew that the pond at Katas Raj would dry up in a few years,” says former director-general of the Environment Protection Agency.

Asif Shuja Khan, former director-general of Pakistan EPA told *Eos* that when plans to build cement factories in Kahoon Valley were underway, he along with the then secretary to minister for environment strongly opposed the move for their construction, stating that a pristine environment will be devastated and all of its water springs will dry up, especially the Katas Raj pond. Despite their repeated warnings, Khan says, the EPA Punjab issued the environmental approval to the factories.

“The National Assembly Standing Committee was told that these cement factories should be constructed on the other side of the valley, preferably in Lilla, as we knew that the pond at Katas Raj would dry up in a few years,” adds Khan.

The CEO of WWF-Pakistan, Hammad Naqi Khan says that an EIA is a planning tool used worldwide to gauge whether a project should be undertaken or not. It is instrumental in identifying potential impact, alternate sites and processes that bear a sustainable environment in mind.

“Before the factories were established,” he says, “there was a plan to construct them in Lilla, a union council of Jhelum district, which was of course a viable option, and water availability was much easier, as the Jhelum river was close to it, but Chakwal was chosen due to proximity to the Lahore-Islamabad motorway.

“The present devastation of Kahoon Valley could have been prevented had the Environment Protection Department (EPD) and the project proponents incorporated WWF’s comments on EIA reports,” adds Hammad Khan.

“The Chief Justice of Pakistan has now expanded the scope of the investigation and ordered to submit a detailed report on how cement plants are affecting the entire area,” adds Raja who is also party in the case.

The Tehsil Municipal Officer (TMO) Choa Saidan Shah, confirms that the cluster of cement factories in the area has led to the depletion of water levels. “The main water source at Katas Raj adjoining the cement factories and the tehsil municipal administration of Choa Saidan Shah provides water to the inhabitants of the area. This practice was enforced on a daily basis, but now the provision of water is limited to every four days.” The report even stated that if the situation persists, this “barani [rain-fed] area will face drought in future.”

Local communities say that these factories, in addition to producing cement are also producing ‘clinker’ which was not included in the approved plan, which means that the factories are consuming more water than their approved limits.

Naseem-Ur-Rehman, director of EPD, recalls that when the Katas Raj pond dried up previously, it was revived after de-silting. However in 2017, when de-silting was no longer helpful, Rehman suggested engaging the engineering department to solve the problem.

Rehman argues, “It is not correct to say that the cement industry is solely responsible, as excessive water consumption by domestic users of Kahoon Valley is also a major reason.”

Rehman points to population bulge, climate change and unpredictable rainfall patterns as contributing factors. He further said, “The groundwater level across Punjab has gone down and there is a need for groundwater regulation.

“An alternate solution to reduce burden on groundwater resources of Kahoon Valley, and discussed previously as well, was to bring water from River Jhelum for the cement factories,

which can now be considered. We have also asked the cement factories to draw only the required amount of groundwater,” Rehman adds.

URGENT MEASURES

Asif Shuja Khan thinks that prospects of saving the pond are bleak. “It is too late now,” he says, “as water depletion has exacerbated to unprecedented levels. However, the last hope of saving Katas Raj pond is to chalk out a master plan of its environmental protection, entailing a thorough EIA and its subsequent implementation. An Environment Management Plan should be devised by independent consultants and then create a fund which the cement factories should contribute to, along with introducing inverted wells in the area to improve groundwater situation.”

Though cement factories are major stakeholders in the valley, pumping out water for their use, a surge in population, changing agriculture patterns and increased plantation of fruits and vegetables, increase in domestic tube wells and rainfall variability, along with other sources, are also responsible for worsening the situation. The hydrological study which is currently underway by the provincial government can help fix responsibility on the factors behind the groundwater depletion of the sacred pond.

The issue is not just of Katas Raj pond but for the survival of the entire Kahoon valley. If the situation goes unabated, a time may come when the groundwater for the valley is depleted, triggering migration of the local population. This would be a sheer violation of the land rights of indigenous communities, which have been duly recognised by the United Nations (UN). Moreover, it is open defiance of the international environment-related conventions, especially the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN’s Paris Climate Agreement, that Pakistan is signatory to.

Syed Muhammad Abubakar is an environmental journalist. He tweets [@SyedMAbubakar](#)

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1395457>

March 19, 2018

Iowa IPL Names New Director

Iowa Interfaith Power & Light

Iowa Interfaith Power & Light (Iowa IPL) has named Matt Russell, a sustainable agriculture leader at the Drake University Agricultural Law Center, as its new executive director.

Russell, a farmer and outspoken advocate for finding solutions to climate change, will fill the position starting in April. The Rev. Susan Hendershot Guy, the former executive director, left the organization in January to lead the national movement as president of Interfaith Power & Light.

“Matt was chosen to lead our statewide, faith based, grassroots organization because of his personal and professional commitment to care for creation,” says Brian Campbell, president of the Iowa IPL board of directors.

“Climate change is the greatest challenge of our time,” says Russell. “Iowa’s communities of faith play an unparalleled role in helping Iowans understand the moral imperative in solving this problem caused by human activity. I am excited and honored to lead Iowa Interfaith Power & Light into new opportunities, resources, and action.”

Under Russell’s leadership, Iowa IPL will develop a program to engage Iowa agriculture on climate change as well as continue its advocacy for sustainable energy policies and efforts to help Iowans reduce their carbon footprint.

Russell has spent his entire career with non-profit organizations in addition to eight years at USDA as a member of the Farm Service Agency state committee. Currently, Russell works as the Resilient Agriculture Coordinator at the Drake University Agricultural Law Center. He farms with his spouse in rural Lacona and grew up on a family farm near Anita. He received a bachelor’s degree from Loras College and studied for the Catholic Diocese of Des Moines at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein Seminary in Illinois. He earned a master’s degree in Rural Sociology from Iowa State University.

Starting April 1, 2018, Iowa IPL’s new director can be reached at director@iowaip.org and 515-689-1112.

<https://iowaip.org/2018/03/19/iowa-ip-names-new-director/>

March 21, 2018

The last male rhino of its kind dies. African religious leaders call it a spiritual loss.

By Fredrick Nzwili
Religion News Service

NAIROBI, Kenya (RNS) — Religious leaders who campaign for wildlife conservation are mourning the death of the world’s last male northern white rhino, calling the subspecies’ likely extinction a spiritual loss.

“We are staring at the extinction of the animal type, under our watch. I think it’s a spiritual matter,” said the Rev. Charles Odira, a Roman Catholic conservationist priest from Kenya, where the rhino lived.

“I feel as if we have neglected our duty as stewards of creation and should have done more for this species.”

The 45-year-old rhino – named Sudan – was euthanized Monday (March 19) after suffering an infection and serious complications due to his advanced age. He was kept under armed guard at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy, north of Nairobi, and left behind two female white rhinos — a daughter and granddaughter.

The two offspring have health problems that mean neither can likely carry a pregnancy to term, and that they will likely die as the last of their kind.

Sheikh Ole Naado, deputy general secretary of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, urged wildlife conservationists to take the lessons from the death of Sudan.

“It is a kind of warning that others are taking a similar path. It could be telling us that something bigger is happening — like the possible extinction of a community,” said Ole Naado, referring to the Maasai tribe to which he belongs and whose lands bridge Kenya and Tanzania.

Many Maasai fear encroaching government and commercial interests and the effects of global warming will compromise or obliterate their traditional way of life. But they themselves understand that they must co-exist with wildlife, said Ole Naado.

As religious leaders preach protection of the natural world, some spiritual beliefs are also part of the problem.

Many people in Asia believe that various body parts of rhinos, elephants and other endangered animals possess healing powers or bring luck. Poachers — driven partly by this demand — continue to hunt these species relentlessly.

While a few northern white rhinos roamed Africa wild in the 1960s, by 2008, they lived only in zoos around the world.

Campaigns against the use of elephants’ ivory tusks for carving religious objects in Asia have met with some success, but the demand for rhino is still high. In countries such as Vietnam, a belief that rhino horn cures hangovers and cancer is widespread.

“Religious demand for wildlife products in parts of Asia has been a problem. We have talked to religious leaders in the region about how this is killing our wildlife,” said Odira.

“We believe God cannot commission the death of species that he had brought to life,” the priest added.

<https://religionnews.com/2018/03/21/the-last-male-rhino-of-its-kind-dies-african-religious-leaders-call-it-a-spiritual-loss/>

March 21, 2018

The Pacific Ocean, suffering servant

By Karan Varker
Global Sisters Report

What does the Jesus of Good Friday have to do with the Pacific Ocean?

In *Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home, Pope Francis writes, "In the Christian understanding of the world, the destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ ... 'All things have been created through him and for him' (Col.1.16) ... the mystery of Christ is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole." Francis reminds us that our earth is a "mother who opens her arms to embrace us ... [but] we have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will."

The Good Friday liturgy puts before us Jesus, the Suffering Servant: "He was despised and rejected by others, a man suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces, he was despised and we held him of no account"(Isaiah 53:3).

Once I flew from New York to California. I had been away from Australia for some months. As the plane neared Los Angeles, I looked down and sighted the familiar, beautiful Pacific Ocean. I felt joy because I knew I was on my way home. I had grown up on the eastern coast of Australia, and the Pacific nurtured my love for the ocean, its life and those who live on its islands.

The islands of this ocean are home to many different peoples, speaking hundreds of languages. Some, like the Philippines, New Zealand, Indonesia and Japan are well-known.

Less known, yet equally important, are the people: Polynesian, Micronesian and Melanesian — all have lived in the Pacific for thousands of years. The Pacific has been the mother who protected and sustained them.

I spent considerable time during my ministry among the Melanesian and Polynesian peoples, whom I called "rainbow people" because of their colorful beauty. It was always a surprise and delight for me to learn about their cultures, languages and way of life.

I was particularly interested in their dancing, and their reasons for dancing; eventually I was able to tell their islands of origin by the way they danced. The Melanesian people of Papua New Guinea danced on serious occasions like funerals or at war dances — with much stomping of feet. In the Solomon Islands dancing was accompanied by flute and drums. In Polynesia, dancing was a joyous celebration of their culture and included wonderful arm and finger movements.

In living among these generous people, I learned that to survive I had to depend on them and trust them. Yet, I was often appalled at how they were treated. Many of these beautiful people can identify with Jesus, the Suffering Servant, as their needs are ignored and their countries exploited by the wealthy and powerful of the world.

While teaching in Melanesia on Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, I experienced the beginning of a vicious ten-years civil war, in which thousands of people died. In part it centered around the peoples' exploitation by foreign owners of one of the world's largest copper mines.

In the Solomon Islands, I saw foreign companies raping the sea with drift net and long line fishing; they were also logging the land, which resulted in disastrous mud slides. Local people showed me wrecked planes and tanks dumped by troops after World War II.

Because many Pacific Islands in Micronesia are low-lying coral islands, people are struggling with rising sea levels and the destruction of their homes due to global warming.

I taught in Samoa in the mid-1990s, during the latter years of the French nuclear testing. The people's main food crop, taro, became diseased with taro leaf blight, and I wondered if in some way this may have been connected to atmospheric nuclear fallout, as Samoa is only an hour's flight from French Polynesia.

Nuclear testing in French Polynesia had been done over several decades, and nuclear testing and nuclear waste are still contaminating the Pacific. Nuclear ballistic missiles are still being fired into the northwestern rim of the ocean.

In the same area, a tsunami caused one of the world's worst nuclear reactor disasters, and toxic waste from that is likely to be dumped into the sea.

Just recently, it was reported that highly contaminated radioactive nuclear waste is leaking on Runit Island, near the Marshall Islands, halfway between Australia and Hawaii. The waste had been buried by the USA in the late 1970s, under a vast 85,000 cubic meter concrete dome. This dome is now cracking and people who live on surrounding islands fear for their lives and for the widespread contamination of the Pacific Ocean and its food chain. It would likely be the largest nuclear cleanup in US history.

Closer to home, here in Australia, the Pacific Ocean offers us many great treasures. Among these is the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef. Sadly, so much of the reef is dying due to global warming, illegal poaching of fish, increasing numbers of the coral-eating crown of thorns starfish, and chemical run-off from agriculture and mining.

Mine run-off is a significant problem. There is fierce opposition to the government support of the development of the foreign-owned Adani Carmichael mine in Queensland, which would be the largest coal mine in Australia. The Sydney-based Climate Council of Australia recently warned the government that this mine would be a disaster for the Great Barrier Reef, for global warming and for people's health.

Another Australian treasure is our whales, particularly humpback whales. These amazing creatures make their mating journey annually from the Southern Ocean to the Reef. Afterwards the whales — including the mothers and calves — travel back to their home in the Southern Ocean, where they are facing major problems.

Because of global warming, Antarctic ice sheets may be melting more quickly than anticipated. Whales' major food source is the tiny krill that thrive in icy waters. As the ice melts, the migrating whales will be forced to travel much further south to their food source. The other danger is that they are still being illegally slaughtered by Japan, and perhaps for political, diplomatic reasons little is said about this.

As an Australian woman of Celtic origin, I have absorbed Christian Celtic spirituality in which the Divine presence was recognised in nature, landscapes and in the sacredness of everyday places. I have been influenced by Australian indigenous peoples' spirituality of the land, in which the earth is our mother from whom we come and to whom we return.

Reflecting on Scripture and theology has deepened and broadened my understanding of the presence of Christ, "the firstborn of all creation ... in whom all things have been created."

I have been influenced by the thinking of Teilhard de Chardin, who saw the cosmic Christ as the Omega point of all creation, and by Saint Francis, who called Water his Sister.

So I believe that a oneness exists between the sufferings of creation and those of Christ, the Suffering Servant.

I believe that the Pacific Ocean, with all its peoples and living creatures, reflects Jesus, the Suffering Servant. So I conclude with a simple poem I wrote about our connectedness with the ocean:

I've a passion for the sea, and it's renewed in me

Each time I stand and let it be a part of me.

[Karan Varker is a Sister of Charity of Australia. She has been a teacher in Papua New Guinea, American Samoa and Australia, served as a principal in Australia and Samoa, and trained Catholic teachers in Samoa and the Solomon Islands.]

<http://www.globalsistersreport.org/column/spirituality-environment/pacific-ocean-suffering-servant-52711>

March 22, 2018

Cardinal Ribat raises concerns with rising seas, deep-sea mining

By Brian Roewe
National Catholic Reporter

Rising seas and new technology to mine beneath them are forefront concerns these days for Cardinal John Ribat of Papua New Guinea.

During a 12-day U.S. trip along the East Coast that concludes March 22, the head of the Port Moresby archdiocese on the South Pacific island nation has in numerous settings expressed his worry with the continuing impact of climate change on his and other islands, as well as the development of first-of-its-kind deep seabed mining in waters off his homeland.

Ribat, 61, has long spoken out about the impacts of climate change on the people of the Pacific islands, considered one of the ground zeros of global climate change, where rising seas have submerged portions of islands and have already led to communities relocating from their homes to nearby islands.

Last week, Ribat raised his concerns about climate change again on Capitol Hill in meetings with Sen. Edward Markey (D-Massachusetts) and officials for Sen. Jeff Markley (D-Oregon). Both sit on the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, and its subcommittee on fisheries, water and wildlife.

In their meeting, the cardinal pointed out on a map to Markey, who is Catholic, the locations of the islands as he described how rising seas have forced people to relocate farther inland every few years as the tides rise and come in farther themselves.

On Bougainville, one of Papua New Guinea's roughly 600 offshore islands, the diocese has offered a piece of land to help people resettle from the [Carteret Islands](#), which have shrunk under rising ocean tides. Ribat said that during a trip around Easter last year to Ahus and Andra islands he witnessed similar scenes of shorelines and agricultural lands that had washed away.

Sea level rise is driven by two primary factors: the oceans expanding as waters warm, and increased water mass due to melting ice from glaciers and ice sheets. According to [a climate science special report](#), published in November and compiled by 13 U.S. federal agencies, global mean sea levels have risen roughly 7 to 8 inches since 1900 — three inches since 1993 — with human-driven climate change making "a substantial contribution" during that period. Scientists project further rise of 1 to 4 feet by 2100 and have not ruled out a rise as high as 8 feet.

"When you're on an island, you get it, when you got to keep moving your house," said Franciscan Fr. Michael Lasky, who helped organize the cardinal's trip.

In the Capitol Hill meetings, Ribat also raised another problem accompanying rising tides: seawater seeping into the freshwater table underground and turning some crops inedible. "When they harvest them it's salty. They cannot eat them anymore because the sea is rising," he said.

Clean water impacted

The impact of rising seas on clean water came up as well during a meeting March 15 with officials at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. He also reiterated concerns he shared with the senators' offices about new seabed mining technology set to begin next year in waters east of Papua New Guinea.

Nautilus Minerals, a Canadian-based company, in 2011 received a mining lease from the Papua New Guinea government for extracting deposits of copper and gold from the floor of the Bismarck Sea. [The project will be the world's first attempt at mineral extraction from the deep sea.](#)

The mining operation — which would occur 1,600 meters, or nearly 1 mile, under the sea about 20 miles off the western coast of New Ireland and 31 miles north of New Britain, both islands east of Papua New Guinea — is set to begin in 2019. According to Nautilus, the deposits of the deep sea Solwara 1 Field ("salt water" in the Tok Pisin language native to Papua New Guinea) contain copper and gold at grades much higher than typically found in land-based mines.

The potential mining site holds added significance for Ribat, who calls home Watom Island, off New Britain's north coast. While on the island at Christmas, fishers shared with him anxieties over how the mining may impact fishing grounds. During meetings with U.S. government officials, the cardinal described the seabed mining process as "taking the lawnmower over the reefs where people fish," according to Lasky.

Ribat told NCR he is concerned that the project does not include the necessary oversight and monitoring of any underwater mining operations, particularly since the machines would be remote-controlled from a large sea vessel, and that not enough is known at this point to what effects such mining will have on local marine life and people reliant on fishing and the sea for their livelihoods. A particular concern is the mining operation's proximity to a tuna breeding ground.

"There's no clear information about how or what the negative effect it will bring to the environment and also to the marine life that we have," he said.

In an [August 2016 statement](#), the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania, of which Ribat is president, voiced their opposition to seabed mining, and instead endorsed sustainable development in coastal communities through tourism, fisheries and agriculture.

"The sea is a treasure for all and should never become a 'playground of exploitation,' " the statement said.

Ribat suggested it would be best "to delay this operation until we have people better prepared to assess and monitor this operation, so we're not destroying the environment for the sake of just testing this technology."

In an emailed response to NCR, a Nautilus Minerals spokeswoman called the Solwara 1 site "one of the best studied deep sea ocean sites on the entire planet," and said the company's work has been reviewed by external independent experts for the Papua New Guinea government and the International Seabed Authority.

"All of these reviews have confirmed that seabed mining has limited environmental impacts, and has positive net benefits," said Noreen Dillane, corporate communications manager for Nautilus Minerals.

She said that "independent expert observers" chosen in consultation with nearby provinces would be aboard the vessel to ensure compliance with the permit conditions. Its [environmental impact statement](#), completed in 2008, found there would be no impacts from mining on reefs or tuna fisheries, and that any impacts would be limited to a 27-acre area and beneath 1,300 meters (.8 miles) below sea level.

Critics of the seabed mining project contend there has been no independent environmental study and the present one contains gaps. In December, the [Guardian reported](#) that the Centre for Environmental Law and Community Rights, in Port Moresby, filed suit on behalf of several coastal residents over the operation, alleging that key documents were withheld and that residents had a constitutional right to that information. They have also questioned the relationship between Nautilus and the Papua New Guinea government, which holds a [15 percent share](#) in the Solwara 1 project.

Dillane said that Nautilus has conducted "regular awareness meetings" in the coastal communities near the project site and has reached more than 30,000 people through such programs since 2008. She added that information sessions were being held in the western coastal areas of New Ireland this week.

As for communication with Ribat, Dillane said Nautilus Minerals and the government have made numerous attempts to meet with him.

"To date the Cardinal has not accepted any of these attempts to meet in person to discuss the topic, and provide him with all the independent expert advice in person. Similarly, the Company has never been approached by the Federation of Catholic Bishops to provide information on the Project, or to discuss their concerns one on one," she said in an email.

The cardinal did not respond for follow-up comment.

Raising awareness

The cardinal said he hoped his visit to Capitol Hill and EPA headquarters would raise awareness of what's happening in the South Pacific and amplify efforts to address issues they're facing, given that other islands in the region are U.S. territories.

While also in Washington, Ribat, who was elevated to cardinal in November 2016, spoke about climate change and mining March 13 at the Catholic University of America, and later met with a group of roughly 80 religious seminarians to talk about his vocation.

Before departing for home, he was set to meet in New York with members of Franciscans International, the religious order's NGO at the United Nations, to further discuss sea rise and seabed mining. He was also scheduled to meet March 21 with Karenna Gore, the founder of the faith-based Center for Earth Ethics at Union Theological Seminary; Gore is also the daughter of former vice president and climate activist Al Gore.

It was an award from the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, in New York City, that spurred the trip for the first cardinal of his island country. On March 11, Laetare Sunday, he presided at Mass and was honored with the parish's Loyola Medal, which recognizes people who have made significant contributions to their community.

"Our [parish] Lenten theme is healing," Elizabeth O'Sullivan told NCR. "And we believe that Cardinal Ribat's work in climate change, which is healing on a global level, is worthy of acknowledgement and worthy of honor."

Throughout his time in the U.S., Ribat has received updates from Papua New Guinea about the aftermath of an earthquake that rocked the island in late February.

In the early morning Feb. 26, a magnitude-7.5 earthquake struck the Southern Highlands province, that along with a landslide, [has killed at least 145 people](#) and displaced upwards of 35,000 others. The inland region is a remote part of the island, overlapping with the Mendi diocese led by U.S.-born Bishop Donald Lipert, which has made relief efforts and communication more difficult.

"The earthquake has been very devastating," Ribat said.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/cardinal-ribat-raises-concerns-rising-seas-deep-sea-mining>

March 22, 2018

Pastor mobilizes black churches to act on climate

By Diana Madson
Yale Climate Connections

His own church is teaching children how to care for creation.

Reverend Doctor Ambrose F. Carroll says that African American churches are not often associated with environmentalism. But he wants to change that.

So he founded [Green the Church](#), a campaign to motivate environmental action at black churches.

Carroll: "We are people of the African diaspora. We're people who are ex-slaves, people who are migrant farmers, people who have spent eons with our hands in the ground, and even though we don't talk the language of environmentalism, it's really very close to who we are."

At Green the Church trainings, workshops, and conventions, faith leaders teach pastors and other church representatives the religious importance of protecting the earth. And, they provide strategies for engaging churches in renewable energy, food security, and environmental justice.

Carroll says that action takes many different forms. For example, his church in Berkeley, California has switched to LED lighting and launched a program to teach children to care for God's creation. He says the campaign inspires action, and shows that, in fact ...

Carroll: "The African American church is engaged."

Listen to this podcast here:

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2018/03/pastor-mobilizes-black-churches-to-act-on-climate/>

March 23, 2018

Latin American bishops call for 'ecological conversion'

By Barbara J. Fraser, Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Lima, Peru — Less than two months after Pope Francis spoke out about environmental destruction in the Amazon basin during a visit to Peru, bishops from Latin America and the Caribbean have issued a pastoral letter calling the region's Catholics to an "integral ecological conversion."

The letter, published in early March, reflects on environmental issues in Latin America in light of "Laudato Si'," on Care for Our Common Home," Francis' 2015 encyclical.

The Latin American bishops' council, CELAM, spent seven years drafting the pastoral letter, which will serve as input for the commission planning the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon, to be held at the Vatican in 2019.

The letter highlights "the serious consequences of the unbridled exploitation of natural resources and awareness that we must care for our common home," said Archbishop Pedro Barreto Jimeno of Huancayo, Peru, who oversaw much of its drafting.

The economies of many Latin American countries depend largely on exports of raw materials, especially minerals, the bishops note. Those countries experienced an economic boom over the past decade and a half because of high prices for oil, minerals and other commodities.

But while those revenues helped decrease poverty rates, the income gap in Latin America widened during those years.

Industries such as mining, oil and gas, timber production, industrial agriculture and large-scale energy projects cause "multiple impacts on the lives and health of people living near the projects, the environment and our entire region," the bishops wrote.

They called on business executives, government officials and investors to "prioritize the lives of territories and their people over any financial interest."

Governments must "fully assume their responsibility to protect the most vulnerable people and place the common good ahead of any private interest," the bishops wrote.

The pastoral letter reinforces ideas expressed by Francis during his encounter with indigenous people in Puerto Maldonado, a city in the Peruvian Amazon, during his January visit. The pope stressed the importance of safeguarding indigenous people's rights to their territories and the natural resources there.

The bishops emphasized that local communities must play an active part in decisions about development projects.

People today must safeguard the land, water and climate for future generations, the bishops wrote, because "justice demands that we give them a world fit for habitation."

On a page illustrated with a photo of Sister Dorothy Stang, a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur who was murdered in Brazil in 2005 for her defense of small farmers' land rights, the bishops called for safeguards for "those who care for our common home."

The bishops wrote that those people "often are threatened, abused, repressed and imprisoned for proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and denouncing the gods of power and money."

"There are many martyrs in Latin America who have given their lives in the struggle for the defense of life," the bishops wrote. "Their blood is the seed of freedom and hope."

Caring for creation is the task of all, the bishops said, adding, "The important thing is to 'begin at home.'"

Individuals can take steps to conserve energy, recycle, consume less and waste less, they wrote, while Christian communities should "live their mission of caring for the earth and for the lives of people, particularly the poor."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/latin-american-bishops-call-ecological-conversion>

March 23, 2018

At global forums, church leaders advocate for safe water for all

By Lise Alves, Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Brasilia, Brazil — Erileid Domingues said most of her indigenous village has, at one time or another, fallen ill due to contaminated water.

Domingues said her village in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul is surrounded by large soybean and corn plantations that use agro-toxins in their crops, which eventually seep into the soil and make their way into the waterbeds, contaminating rivers and wells used by her Guarani-Kaiowa tribe.

"Our fish have become contaminated; we can't grow a vegetable garden because the water is also bad," she told Catholic News Service. "Days after small planes spray the plantations, water from our wells turns milky white and remains that way for several weeks. Many of us suffer from chronic stomach pains and allergies."

To tackle the question of global access to clean water, hundreds of experts, policymakers, nongovernmental groups and members of civil society came together for two water forums held in mid-March in Brazil's capital, Brasilia.

Access to clean water is a fundamental right must be a global priority, said Catholic leaders present at the 8th World Water Forum and the Alternative World Water Forum. Catholic representatives spoke about the need to find ways to create a sustainable supply of fresh drinking water for all, especially the poorer populations around the world.

"We have a mission," said Msgr. Bruno-Marie Duffe, secretary of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. "The church has the responsibility to protect human rights, to protect the poorer communities, and this also includes being able to make sure these populations have access to clean water."

Msgr. Duffe attended the official forum. He said that, although the Holy See recognizes the enormous contributions of local communities and civil society, it is also important to listen to policymakers and politicians and to encourage them to look closely at the water issues and invest in improving sanitation and water, even in the poorest and most remote regions of the globe.

"The reality is that we have many people that live in terrible situations. There is data from 2015 that shows that over 844 million people around the world have no drinking water, and that more than 2 billion people drink contaminated water," said the Vatican official, who has worked for many years on issues involving human rights and pastoral care.

"We have the technical capacity and technical means to treat, transport, and transform sea water into drinking water," he told CNS. "It is not a question of not having the knowledge, it is a question of political and moral will."

Auxiliary Bishop Leonardo Ulrich Steiner of Brasilia, secretary-general of the Brazilian bishops' conference, spoke at the opening session of the alternative forum.

"We are not discussing what we should be discussing, deforestation. Society is not concerned with water sources and deforestation," he said.

"Pope Francis believes that we need to compensate the debt we have with the environment by now taking care and cultivating land and water. We do not wish to explore, but to cultivate and take care of our lands and waters," said Steiner, referring to "Laudato Si'."

"This is our common home; we should take better care of it," he added.

Patricia Antunes do Reis, representative of the Catholic Climate Movement and Franciscan Action Ecology and Solidarity, said she believes society must monitor more closely the private sector.

"Almost 100 percent of productive activities need water, so it is necessary to seek a more equitable system for distribution between the consumption by the productive sectors and consumption by human beings. Currently, there is no such equity, and the sacrifices fall mainly on the average consumer, with little restriction put on big industries," she said during a session of the alternative forum.

Although at different forums, do Reis echoed the words of Duffe, saying that access to clean water "is not a question of lack of resources, but a political and economic option to benefit private interests."

Caritas Internationalis, the confederation of Catholic relief, development and service organizations, called on all sectors -- international organizations, affected communities, and the political and social sectors -- to pull together to tackle water challenges in a "holistic and multidisciplinary approach."

"Water scarcity conditions compound already difficult situations on social, political, ethnic and religious levels; this may lead to conflicts or forced migration, with disastrous consequences for the communities involved and neighboring states," said the statement issued by the agency during the alternative forum.

Caritas called on each country to accept its responsibility "to guarantee access to safe, quality water for everyone, especially the most disadvantaged."

For the Brazilian bishops' Indigenous Missionary Council, or CIMI, the demarcation of indigenous territory by the Brazilian government would also help the water issues in the interior of the country.

"The indigenous are known for taking care of their land, their rivers and their water," said Cleber Cesar Buzato, CIMI's executive secretary.

Buzato said tribes such as the Guarani-Kaiowa have been waiting years for the permanent demarcation of their land. He said they are making do in temporary villages surrounded by farms or cattle ranches and are unable to protect rivers and water sources, which once their ancestors revered and shielded.

"When our land is finally given to us we will be able to take care of it," said Domingues, adding, "We live because of nature, so we have to take care of nature."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/global-forums-church-leaders-advocate-safe-water-all>

March 24, 2018

From Ecuador's Amazon to president's palace, indigenous women demand end to drilling

Stabroek News

BOGOTA, (Thomson Reuters Foundation) – Indigenous women from Ecuador's Amazon rainforest have called on the country's president to end oil and mining projects on their ancestral lands, as the nation pushes to open up more of its rainforest to drillers.

Their meeting with Lenin Moreno at the presidential palace in the capital Quito late Thursday comes after the Andean nation launched a new bidding round this month for foreign companies to develop oil and gas reserves.

Ecuador, one of the smallest producers in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), hopes to attract some \$800 million in investment to boost production that the government says is vital to improve its sluggish economy.

But women from Amazon indigenous groups say oil exploration damages their livelihoods, the environment and water sources on ancestral lands, and comes amid growing deforestation in unspoiled areas of the biodiverse region.

"We don't want more oil and mining companies," Alicia Cahuiya of the Waorani group told the president at the meeting.

"Oil has not brought development for the Waorani – it has only left us with oil spills and sickness."

The women also told the president, who was flanked by several ministers, that the government was failing to consult properly with indigenous communities about planned oil and mining projects on their lands, a right they are entitled to under law.

"The oil and mining issue does not stop worrying me, because there is a future to take care of," Moreno said at the meeting, which was streamed live on Facebook.

"What you are completely right about is the importance of dialogue consensus, dialogue decisions ... about any decisions of my government with respect to oil and mining concessions."

The women presented the president with a list of demands they call the “Mandate of Amazonian Women”, which includes stopping oil, mining and logging projects, and conducting official investigations into attacks against indigenous leaders.

“I hope (the president) will take this mandate seriously,” Nina Gualinga, one of about a dozen women who took part in the meeting, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Simmering tensions – including protests – between indigenous communities seeking to protect their lands and state-owned and foreign oil companies have been ongoing in Ecuador for decades.

The issue has come before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which in 2012 ruled in favour of Ecuador’s Sarayaku indigenous community in the Amazon.

The court said Ecuador had violated their right to prior, free and informed consultation before drillers in the late 1990s started exploration on lands where the Sarayaku people live.

“We will return to our communities and wait for a response from the government,” said Zoila Castillo, vice-president of the parliament of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE).

“If we do not receive a response in two weeks, we will be back,” she said.

<https://www.stabroeknews.com/2018/news/regional/03/24/from-ecuadors-amazon-to-presidents-palace-indigenous-women-demand-end-to-drilling/>

March 26, 2018

Irish missionaries aiming to plant a million trees in parched regions of Africa

Irish Examiner

Irish missionaries are spearheading a bid to plant a million trees as part of the re-greening of one of Africa's most parched regions.

The Republic has been invited by the United Nations to take a leadership role in helping deliver the Great Green Wall and combat desertification in a massive swathe of land south of the Sahara known as the Sahel.

The Laudato Tree Project, run by the Society of African Missions (SMA), hopes to create a lasting legacy from the Pope's visit to Ireland this August.

Irish President Michael D Higgins is expected to deliver a major speech on the issue of desertification and the country's response in Dublin today.

Don Mullan, a spokesman for the Society of African Missions (SMA), said: "As the emerald island, Africa's Great Green Wall gives Ireland an opportunity to establish a new beginning and demonstrate a new commitment to achieving promises made during the Paris Accord."

Africa's green wall, when completed, will span 13 countries. It will measure 8,000km long (4,970 miles) and 15km wide (nine miles).

The UN's proposal would also involve schools, parishes and community groups in planting trees in Ireland, increasing biodiversity and contributing to atmospheric improvement.

Mr Mullan added: "We will be asking the Government to consider matching every tree we plant in Ireland with 5-10 along the Great Green Wall."

The project takes its name from a 2015 papal encyclical by Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, on caring for the environment, and is intended to be a visible expression of the encyclical's intervention.

The Pontiff is visiting Ireland this summer as part of the World Meeting of Families in Dublin.

Mr Mullan said: "We are hoping that this will become a legacy project for the World Meeting of Families with the hope that the groups coming will bring the idea of the Laudato Tree Project back to their respective countries with the intention of increasing biodiversity at home while championing the cause of Africa's Great Green Wall.

"We are hoping this might become a world movement in support of Africa."

The executive secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, Monique Barbut, will meet the President and members of the Government this week.

Mr Mullan added: "The UN have put forward a major proposal to Ireland in terms of taking a leadership role in Europe and the international stage in helping progress, develop and accomplish the Great Green Wall."

He said: "Unlike the wall proposed along the US-Mexican border, this is a wall the whole world can believe in."

"It is about combating global warming and helping to provide food, jobs and a future for the millions of people who live in a region that is on the frontline of climate change."

Ireland has one of the lowest forest coverage levels in Europe and Mr Mullan said that needed to be increased to promote biodiversity and as a statement of intent that Ireland is serious about meeting its greenhouse targets and delivering on commitments made during the Paris Accord.

He and his colleagues are pressing for Government support as a way of redressing perceived shortcomings surrounding green energy use.

A range of views have been expressed about whether Ireland is on track to meet its 2020 renewable energy targets.

Irish government chief whip Joe McHugh is to co-ordinate a high-level ministerial meeting this week in Dublin with those behind the plan.

He said: "This is a hugely ambitious project and when you think about it, it's exactly the type of global response that's needed to tackle climate change.

"I've seen the impact on rural communities in Africa and at the heart of it, it's about protecting life and preserving livelihoods and communities in some of the hardest hit parts of the planet.

"It's time to open our hearts and minds to big ideas like this."

<https://www.irishtimes.com/breakingnews/ireland/irish-missionaries-aiming-to-plant-a-million-trees-in-parched-regions-of-africa-834310.html>

March 28, 2018

Deep incarnation liberates all creation

By Marian Ronan
National Catholic Reporter

CREATION AND THE CROSS: THE MERCY OF GOD FOR A PLANET IN PERIL

By Elizabeth A. Johnson

256 pages; Published by Orbis Books

\$28.00

In January, Scientific American shared some disturbing news: Researchers had determined that between 1990 and 2015, concern about the environment and climate change had declined among U.S. Christians. Since the study didn't distinguish between denominations, and since Pope Francis' environmental encyclical, "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home," was published in 2015, you may find yourself hoping, as I did, that U.S. Catholics don't share this decline in concern.

Unfortunately, certain powerful theological paradigms going back well before the Reformation make such a distinction unlikely. In her splendid new book, *Creation and the Cross*, theologian St. Joseph Sr. Elizabeth Johnson takes on one of them: the notion that salvation is an exclusively human matter, having nothing to do with the rest of creation.

"What would it mean," she asks, "to rediscover the biblical sense of the natural world groaning, hoping, waiting for liberation?"

Johnson traces this dualism between redemption and creation back to the work of the 11th-century theologian Anselm of Canterbury and, in particular, to his "satisfaction theory" of salvation, as formulated in his book *Cur Deus Homo (Why God Became Human)*. Anselm's answer to the question, Johnson explains, is that Jesus had to become human and die on the cross to pay back what was due to God for human sin. This theory, we learn, has played a pivotal role in Christian theology and practice ever since.

But Anselm's satisfaction theory is an interpretation of the cross, not its only possible meaning. Like all interpretations, it is shaped by the social context from which it emerged, in this case, feudalism, where local rulers required subjects to make satisfaction — to pay — for breaking the law.

In contrast, Johnson proposes an accompaniment theology of salvation, in which Jesus' brutal death "enacts the solidarity of the gracious and merciful God" with all those who suffer, including the poor, species that undergo extinction, and all the rest of creation. She traces this back to the creator God of the Hebrew Bible, the Holy One of Israel who promises liberation to the Israelites in Egypt and later in Babylon.

But this redemption is not some tradeoff, as the satisfaction theory implies, but a redemption poured out by a God whose compassion for us is that of a mother for her child, a redemption that causes streams to flow in dry land and wilderness to bloom.

It is this liberating God who sends Jesus, not to pay for our sins, but to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to let the oppressed go free. But Jesus' proclamation of God's kingdom constituted a serious challenge to the Romans who ruled Israel during his lifetime. The cheering crowds who greeted him, especially during his entry into Jerusalem, as well as his confrontation with the moneychangers in the Temple, constituted such a threat to the unjust power of empire that the rulers crucified Jesus in order to silence him.

Yet, instead of death silencing him, the Resurrection made Jesus present to the disciples in an entirely new way, enabling them to take the liberating message of the compassionate God to the ends of the Earth and to all of creation. And through the early church's recorded memories of the crucified and risen Christ, this understanding of the cross as an expression of the compassion and mercy of God spread throughout the world.

The culmination of this accompaniment theology is something Johnson calls "deep incarnation." The creator God is, she explains, the God of all flesh, with flesh not signifying only sin, as the dualism between spirit and matter suggests, but the finitude and death suffered by all creation, including God's own son. With the Resurrection, this "flesh was called to life again in transformed glory."

Creation and the Cross concludes with a call to all of us to a conversion, in our actions as well as our beliefs, to love of the Creator/Redeemer of the whole world and the entire cosmos. Within this conversion, mistreatment of the Earth is as much a sin as mistreatment of other humans.

In order to repent, we must understand ourselves as members of the whole "community of creation," whose suffering is our suffering. The cross, then, is the icon of God's compassionate love for everyone and everything.

For all Johnson's disagreement with Anselm's satisfaction theory, she does show her appreciation for another aspect of *Cur Deus Homo*, and to such an extent that she actually imitates it: the question-and-answer format Anselm uses to make his theology accessible. Of course, no book is perfect, and in the case of *Creation and the Cross*, Johnson's interlocutor, "Clara," sounds, from time to time, suspiciously like a theology professor.

That limitation notwithstanding, the Q&A format, combined with Johnson's gift for clarity and strategic summarizing, makes this book an ideal tool for helping us all expand our understanding of redemption to include all of God's beloved creation.

In a review of this length, it is not possible to do justice to the range of biblical and theological sources Johnson draws upon to lay out her deep incarnation theology. The depth and accessibility of such material throughout the book makes *Creation and the Cross* an ideal resource for RCIA participants seeking to achieve an understanding of the faith.

But, really, given the feeble concern so many U.S. Christians feel for God's creation even in the face of increasing numbers of massive fires, extreme weather events, droughts and flooded cities, *Creation and the Cross* is a book we all need to read, and we need to read it soon.

[Marian Ronan is research professor of Catholic studies at New York Theological Seminary. Her seventh book is *Women of Vision: Sixteen Founders of the International Grail Movement*, co-authored with Mary O'Brien.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/deep-incarnation-liberates-all-creation>

March 29, 2018

Q & A with Sr. Miriam MacGillis, co-founder of Genesis Farm

By Dan Stockman
Global Sisters Report

Sr. Miriam MacGillis of the [Dominican Sisters of Caldwell](#), New Jersey, was a very happy art teacher in the 1960s. Then one of her students began to ask her questions about the Vietnam War, questions she had trouble answering. Questions that showed how naive MacGillis was on the issue.

Soon, MacGillis, now 77, had her own questions about the war and how the world works and her role in it.

Those questions would lead her on a path to a farm, of all places. And not just any farm: MacGillis in 1980 became the co-founder of [Genesis Farm](#) in Blairstown, New Jersey, which became a [model](#) for 50 similar ecological centers founded by women religious in North America.

GSR: How do you go from being an art teacher to a farmer?

MacGillis: I wouldn't call myself a farmer because that's an incredible vocation. I've been holding the vision of this farm since 1980, but other than some small gardens on the side, I don't do any real farming.

I had a major shift in my worldview back in the 1960s. My questioning went on for five years until I went into working for justice and peace. By 1974, I was focusing on world hunger, which by then was emerging as a major world crisis.

I found myself asking: How could there be hunger on a planet of such abundance? So I began delving into an analysis of the economics and policies that were shaping the growing and distribution of food.

Then, in 1977, I heard Passionist Fr. [Thomas Berry](#) for the first time. In 1979, I came to Genesis Farm, which had been left in someone's will to the Dominican sisters. We didn't really know what we were doing, but we were entering into an effort to live in harmony with the Earth.

So that's what we've been doing for the last almost 40 years. We look at local, national and global policies and systems, such as economics, health, governance and architecture, based on Berry's profound understanding.

Mankind has been farming for [thousands of years](#). What makes Genesis Farm different?

We have grown up for thousands of years believing that humans who engage in farming are growing food. That is absolutely not the case. The earth basks in sunlight, synthesizes it and returns it to itself, and all the living things then live on that. The earth is growing the food. You're just a participant in the already-existing miracle of that.

Our model of how the world came to be that's described in the sacred texts is a very, very different perspective than what we understand through our scientific research. It calls everything into question that you once thought and once believed. You are part of the earth, not separate from and walking on the earth.

When you talk about these things, you almost never mention God. Some people would be surprised to hear a sister talking about creation and not mention God. How do you explain that to them?

It's an understandable question. The answer is that God is a mystery. We make images and pictures to describe the mystery, but those things limit the limitless. A picture is a prison for that mystery.

When we say, "Where is God?" we know from what we've been able to observe that the universe goes back almost [14 billion years](#). But even that's so far beyond our brains' ability to comprehend, why don't we let it be what it is and be grateful? It's 13 billion years later, and you're standing in a field, and that initial energy [from creation] has morphed all that you see into these different things. You're barely able to take it in. It's phenomenal.

Either the whole of everything that is reveals that mystery or nothing does.

So what has happened on the farm in the last four decades? What has changed?

The first 10 years, we were really struggling, not just to physically and economically survive, but more importantly, to clarify what our mission would be. For almost 20 years, we had residential programs where people could come here to study. Gradually, it became a program of undergraduate and graduate certification, where you take a 12-week plunge into ecology. And not just farming and ecology, but the implications of all that. What does it mean to be a human, and how do we bring our own activities into harmony with the Earth and the universe?

Lately, we have been in a revisioning period, which has taken almost six years of groping in the dark, asking: How can we take this same mission and put it into forms that are accessible for anyone who were to come here, not just for graduate credit?

There are two new and very serious circumstances around that. The first is climate change, which is irreversible and more serious than any leader is telling us about. The second is the implosion of our institutions, which are not capable of dealing with the crisis. The volatility of it, the unpredictability of it is just imploding everything. That will color everything we do in the future.

We need our old institutions. We need our religious wisdom, we need our governmental institutions, but they're no longer adequate on their own. They taught us that we have dominion over the Earth and that we could buy it and sell it. But we have to try to decontaminate radioactive water still leaking from [Fukushima](#) — no religion can help that. We have 85,000 synthetic chemicals we've made since World War II that we are now finding in mothers' milk and polar bears. We thought those things were part of progress, and we're realizing now it's not. It's a whole new order of wisdom that we need.

These are the real questions. These are the religious and spiritual questions. There's something terribly wrong with our Western civilization's way of thinking. And you can't solve it inside the worldview that created the problem.

If the universe is holy and everything is holy and sacred, we sure don't act like we believe that.

[Dan Stockman is national correspondent for Global Sisters Report. His email address is dstockman@ncronline.org. Follow him [on Twitter](#) or [on Facebook](#).]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/blog/q/ministry-spirituality-environment/q-sr-miriam-macgillis-co-founder-genesis-farm-52891>

March 30, 2018

SE Asia's 'Environmental' Monks Need International Support

By Kalinga Seneviratne
Eurasia Review

A 76-year old Buddhist monk living on his own in his forest monastery in North-eastern Thailand has appealed for international help after receiving death threats from illegal loggers according to a report in Bangkok Post.

In neighbouring Cambodia, monks who are mobilizing under the banner of 'Independent Monk Network for Social Justice' have regularly put their lives in danger in fighting illegal logging operators who sometimes have the protection of government officials. They also spoke out July 2016 in an appeal via the German television network [Deutsche Welle \(DW\)](#).

The Germans were given access to film a workshop the monks conducted near Prey Lang – one of Cambodia's largest and evergreen woodlands. In the workshop the monks taught the local people how to use social media to protect themselves and the forests. Large parts of the forest has already disappeared paving the way for plantations and those that remains, illegal loggers are at work cutting tree after tree as government agencies that are supposed to protect the environment turn a blind eye.

In Thailand's Si Songhram district, illegal loggers are threatening to cut down trees in a forest that has over 1,000 old trees, which is ironically a part of a royal project to promote conservation. The monk, Luang Pu Kittiphong Kittisophon, abbot of Wat Pa Kham Sawang temple in Tambon Nakham has formally petitioned the local authorities asking them to help save the forest surrounding his temple that has over 1,000 Siamese Rosewood trees that are believed to be 2 to 3 centuries old.

The monk wants the provincial governor to step in to protect the trees, and has also called upon the local media to help him fight the logging gangs after shots were fired at night into a hut near to his own. He believes this is a warning for him to leave the forest temple so that the loggers can have their way.

Both in Thailand and Cambodia rural monks often "ordain" trees, chanting and wrapping them with the yellow robes so that devout Buddhists will not touch them. The ceremonies are large and well publicized in a hope to discourage loggers who might not want to make the bad karma of cutting down the forest around an ordained tree. But the greedy loggers and corrupt

government officials – who sometimes include law enforcement officials – have no respect for such religious traditions.

In Cambodia – which has one of the world’s highest de-forestation rates – Buddhist monk Buntenh who has been a monk for 16 years, told DW that he is trying to convince the people that the world cannot exist without trees. “The people who cut down the forest think they are superior, but in reality they are stupid. Only the forest is superior,” he argues. “No one has told me that I should go out there to protect the forest, but for me it was a logical thing to do. I am doing all I can to save it. I plant new trees, I help the people who live from the forest, I am reminding the government of the promises they’ve made.”

Bhikku Buntenh’s network consists of over 5,000 monks, and they believe that saving the forests needs to be fought with the same passion and determination as the fight for independence against the French in the 1950s. But, this time they may have to fight their own government that is indifferent to the environmental concerns of the people.

In Cambodia, Buddhism has undergone a miraculous revival after it was almost destroyed by the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s. Today over 90 percent of the people consider themselves as Buddhists and the orange-robed monks enjoy great respect.

Thus, as activists they enjoy a certain amount of protection from government crackdowns against civil society protest groups. As Bhikku Buntenh told DW, the monks are speaking out because it is the peoples’ right to live in a healthy environment with trees and nature. It is what their religion also encourages.

Cambodian strongman, Prime Minister Hun Sen has spoken publicly in support of the monks’ concerns and he even gave the police permission to use rocket launchers and helicopters in the fight against illegal logging. The monks, however, remain sceptical.

Meanwhile in the Buddhist kingdom Thailand, following Bhikku Kittisophon’s petition to the provincial governor Somchai, he has visited the temple accompanied by local police, military and forest protection officials to discuss with the monk measures to protect him and the surrounding forests.

In 2017, the 120-rai forest has become part of a forest protection project implemented by the Royal Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, but the monk has told the Bangkok Post that although he has complained to the local police about logging activities there, no serious attempt has been made by the police to deal with the logging gangsters. Instead the loggers have made threats against the monk, which made him to go public regarding the issue.

The governor has asked the rural community to work with the local authorities to share information to fight the loggers and emphasized the importance of the local community taking an active role to save the environment.

In Asian Buddhism, forests have been a tangible part of Buddhist practices for centuries. The monks see the forest as one of their closest connections to the teachings of the Buddha. The

Buddha spent over 6 years in the forests of India gathering wisdom, and was enlightened under the Bodhi tree. For centuries monastics have used the forests as a way to truly understanding the Buddhist path and the spiritual well being of the population.

But, in the modern world of greedy consumerism, these monks need international support in identifying the perpetrators of these environmental vandalism, who are usually foreign companies working in tow with corrupt local politicians and government officials, and perhaps mounting international campaigns to boycott their products – some of the forests are cut for palm oil plantations – and businesses. International organisations and media could also help to name and shame corrupt politicians, whom the local monks may not be able to do.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/30032018-se-asias-environmental-monks-need-international-support/>

March 30, 2018

Faith-based group launches Asia Pacific faith-based coalition for sustainable development

World Vision International

BANGKOK - World Vision in partnership with ACT Alliance, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Soka Gakkai International, Arigatou International, and Asia Civil Society Partnership for Sustainable Development launched the Asia Pacific faith-based coalition for sustainable development during the [Fifth Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development](#) on March 28, 2018, Bangkok Thailand.

The coalition was formed to amplify and engage with the voices of faith communities in Asia Pacific, focusing contributions on achieving the SDGs, represented by different faiths towards achieving sustainable development and peace.

"Faith-based organizations are unique as they are able to represent their faith communities on issues of social justice, enabling organisations and faith leaders to come together and effect change inside and outside of their communities," says Norbert Hsu, World Vision Regional Leader in Asia Pacific.

At the forum, representatives from different Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) in the region tackled the importance of bringing FBOs in advancing development goals and how best to engage them at local, national and regional levels to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“We have seen results of advocacy efforts at regional platforms, of joint capacity building initiatives at regional levels engaging faith leaders. Another is by developing faith-sensitive materials, collaborative regional research of how FBOs can work together, organizing some big

events, faith-inspired action as well as joint position papers around critical issues like climate change,” says Masud Siddique, Head of Asia Region of Islamic Relief Worldwide.

During the panel discussion, the group emphasized that encouraging faith-based groups to tap opportunities and participate in more dialogues are valuable to share common goals. The group also challenged FBOs to prioritise the vulnerable groups and build up efforts in making communities resilient and socially cohesive to achieve sustainable development.

“Some challenges are unique to the entire region (Asia Pacific) while others are more specific to subregions, countries or communities. So as we move forward in our joint efforts, we could explore flexible approaches and arrangements based on the needs,” says, Hiro Sakurai, Director of the Office for UN Affairs, Soka Gakkai International.

John Patrick Murray, the representative from National Catholic Commission on Migration added, “At the core of our faith is social justice, social teachings, and those teachings both give us a guide and motivate us to action and they motivate faith people through faith to act in their world.”

In response to coordination and working alongside with UN and Civil Society Organizations in addressing issues, Shinji Kubo, UNHCR Representative suggested, “Dialogue is the most important tool for us. So I really believe that the FBOs should find a way to mobilize their communities to work together especially by disseminating what these SDGs are.”

Moving forward, Anselmo Lee representative from Asia Civil Society Partnership for Sustainable Development, suggested to come up with a simple policy review of why SDGs matter for people from different religions and faith. “We need to come up with a good narrative and capture stories on how different religions can work together to achieve the SDGs,” says Lee.

On March 28-30, 2018, the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, is engaging member States, United Nations bodies, other international organizations, major groups and other stakeholders in highlighting regional and sub-regional perspectives on the theme of the high-level political forum in 2018, “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”.

The forum will support the presentation of voluntary national reviews and will assess the progress made with regard to the regional roadmap for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

The Member States, major groups, and other stakeholders and representatives of the international community will be invited to share their views and recommendations to improve implementation of the SDGs and quality of data to assess progress in Asia and the Pacific Region.

World Vision Background

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organisation conducting relief, development and advocacy activities in its work with children, families, and their communities in nearly 100 countries to help them reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.

World Vision is the convener of the Asia Pacific faith-based coalition for sustainable development this year.

Media contacts:

Abid Gulzar

Director Advocacy and Justice for Children, World Vision International

(abid_gulzar@wvi.org)

Sudarshan Reddy Kodooru

Director, Faith & Development, World Vision International

(sudarshan_reddy@wvi.org)

<https://www.wvi.org/pressrelease/faith-based-group-launches-asia-pacific-faith-based-coalition-sustainable-development>

April 6, 2018

Islam's green future: Inside Europe's first eco-mosque

By Anna Pukas
Arab News

CAMBRIDGE: Green is the color of Islam and also the color that symbolizes eco-friendly, sustainable living.

A building under construction in Cambridge seeks to marry both in what will be Europe's first eco-mosque.

The project is 10 years in the making and has tested the ingenuity of architects and engineers. But it is on track to open in early 2019 not only as a place of prayer but also a space for teaching and welcoming people of all faiths.

"It is a place for the whole community, not just Muslims," said Tim Winter, a lecturer in Islamic studies at Cambridge University.

Winter converted to Islam almost 40 years ago, taking the Arabic name Abdal Hakim Murad. He has studied in Egypt and Saudi Arabia and performed Hajj three times. His day job is lecturing in Islamic studies, but his other passion is the mosque.

A place for Cambridge Muslims to worship in is long overdue. According to the last census in 2011,

Cambridge is home to 8,000 Muslims, but that figure fails to take into account overseas students at the two universities (Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin) and 50 language colleges, or the growing number of “new Muslims.”

At last count, there were 100,000 Muslim converts in Britain.

Cambridge has five mosques, but none is purpose-built and all are too small. For years, worshippers have made do with rented halls, often spilling out into the corridors or street. So, 10 years ago, Winter established the Cambridge Mosque Trust, a registered charity dedicated to raising funds to build a mosque that was fit for purpose.

It was also his idea to make the mosque as “green” as possible. Care for the environment is important in Islam, but the eco-mosque should also keep the bills down, too.

In 2008, the trust acquired a one-acre derelict site for £4 million in Mill Road, an area of Cambridge with a significant Muslim population. The city council unanimously granted planning permission and, in 2009, an international architectural competition was held to find the right design.

A jury with representatives of the trust, the Muslim community and an architecture lecturer chose a design by London architects Marks Barfield, the firm behind the London Eye.

Winter gave Arab News an exclusive tour of the project. Even in its half-finished state, the building looks breathtakingly lovely. Curved timber supports shaped like trees hold up a latticed ceiling. The walls will be clad in honey-toned gault bricks with red bricks in relief. Entrance to the mosque from the street will be through a garden and open portico with Turkish marble tiles featuring a geometric design.

As well as a prayer hall holding 1,000 worshippers, the complex will have a restaurant, teaching spaces, a room for weddings, an exhibition area for local artists (of any faith), and two four-bedroomed apartments for a resident imam and the center’s director.

At the rear of the building will be a fully fitted mortuary for those taking their last journey, and another garden with a play area for children.

The mosque’s green credentials are impressive. The timber supports are made of Scandinavian larch wood from a sustainable forest. The complex has underfloor heating and rainwater collection points on the roof. Water from the ablution areas will be recycled for use on the garden and for toilet-flushing.

The roof will be covered in sedum moss, which improves insulation and provides an environment for insects and birds to thrive. Heating and hot water will come from photovoltaic

panels donated by a local businessman. A sophisticated heat pumping system will identify pockets of warmer air and constantly adjust the overall temperature.

“As technology improves over time, we should be able to reduce our energy costs even more,” said Winter.

The complex also has eight boxes for swifts. These will provide a habitat for a species that is endangered in Britain and also evoke the sight of the birds that circle the Suleiman mosque in Turkey.

“It’s called ‘creation care’ —

acknowledging and respecting the order in nature created by a higher being,” said Winter.

Raising the £22 million cost of the project began with crowdfunding and has continued with private donations. Some have been sizeable — a million riyals from a Saudi princess, an even larger sum from an Emirati, and substantial sums from a Muslim group in Hong Kong — but most are small amounts from individuals.

“We carry out due diligence for anything over £10,000. We have to be sure where the money is coming from and there must be no strings attached. It would be hard to say no to requests or demands if there are strings,” said Winter.

He hopes the mosque will host parties of schoolchildren and other visitors “coming to learn about a religion that is misrepresented and misunderstood.”

The Cambridge community has been almost entirely supportive, he said. “The only opposition has been from the far right. There have been two marches organized by the English Defense League and the police operation was the biggest ever in South Cambridgeshire. The people in the march were not local, they were bussed in. The local people are all on our side and we had a spike in donations afterwards.”

The prayer hall has two spaces for women: one an area with partial screening at different heights “for those who require it” and a gallery upstairs “for those who want a grand view of what’s going on.”

Cambridge has a long association with Islam, dating back to traders and scholars in the Middle Ages. After the Crusades, masons came from Syria and worked on English Gothic architecture.

More recently, Muslims began arriving in the 1950s and 1960s, mainly from Bangladesh and Pakistan. Today, there are also sizeable contingents of Turks, Kurds, Algerians and Kazakhs, as well as “new Muslims.”

“At last count, there were 100,000 converts in Britain,” said Winter.

Sunnis and Shiites will worship together at the new mosque “as they do in most places.” The imam will be chosen carefully. “There is no place for sectarianism or radicalism here.”

Winter, 57, is a founder of the Cambridge Muslim College, which trains British-born imams (and where he is known by his Arabic name Abdal Hakim Murad). A widely respected scholar, he is frequently included in the list of 500 most influential Muslims published by the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Center. Shepherding the mosque project is clearly an act of faith, but it is also a labor of love.

“I want this to be a place that brings people together and benefits not only Muslims in Cambridge but anyone from anywhere who comes here,” he said. “This is not a place to keep Muslims apart but a place for the whole community to enter.”

As to what form the grand opening will take or who will officiate, Winter said there are no firm plans yet.

A member of the royal family, perhaps? “I really don’t know — although we do have a Duke of Cambridge, don’t we?”

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1279731/world>

April 9, 2018

Baptism is our call to care for water

By Martha A. Kirk

National Catholic Reporter

In this Easter season, when we were blessed again with the waters of baptism, do we have eyes to see the sacredness of water? May we who have passed through the waters of baptism recognize that as our call to speak and work passionately so all in our global family may have clean water.

What if I had a day without water? No coffee, no toilet, no water to brush my teeth, no refreshing drink at the water fountain in the hall between classes, nothing to wash the dishes and the clothes — not to mention the dirt on my windshield — no water along the way as I bike a few miles, no water to make the soup for supper, no hot shower (not even a cold one).

I could endure a day, but what if I were a mother with small children in sub-Saharan Africa, where the deserts are increasing in size? Or what if I was one of the children I saw last summer in Chimbote, Peru, in a neighborhood without a clean water supply?

My heart was cracking open, and when I came home, I invited people in our city of San Antonio to be a part of the [Global Water Dances](#) movement, and join groups on six continents who are focusing on water issues.

We danced at the dry "Blue Hole."

Though my community, the [Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word](#), did not have enough money in the late 1890s to purchase the land around the headwaters of the San Antonio River from Col. George Washington Brackenridge, they worked hard to raise money over a period of years. They believed that being close to nature is educationally beneficial and spiritually renewing. People need to learn of nature and learn to care for nature.

Abundant springs once bubbled up from the [Edwards Aquifer](#), providing for the growing population and delighting sisters and students. The aquifer has been depleted and now the "Blue Hole," the largest of the springs considered sacred by the native peoples, is almost always dry.

Nothing but a dry hole is now at this place, the Headwaters of the San Antonio River, where students and sisters once enjoyed abundant springs and boating, circa 1907.

This was the beginning of the San Antonio River and it has drawn people for over 11,000 years. When there are very heavy rains, some water may come up for a while, but then the hole is dry again.

[World Water Day](#), observed annually on March 22, [reminds](#) us that 2.1 billion people live without safe drinking water at home, which affects their health, education and livelihoods.

Wars have been fought over power, land and oil. Now, life's most basic need — water — is causing escalating violence.

If we want a safe world, if we want a healthy world, now is the time to rally about the United Nations [Sustainable Development Goal 6](#), and work together to ensure that everyone has access to safe water by 2030. Budgets for water have more potential to contribute to global security than budgets for weapons.

Because water easily comes out of your faucet now, don't forget that the city of Cape Town, South Africa, is due to run out of water this year. Its [reservoirs](#) are nearly dry.

Let us consider that we may be called to the spiritual discipline of learning where local water supplies come from, or following state and national legislation relating to water issues — and using our individual and corporate influence to advocate for the wise use of it.

The theme of [World Water Day](#) 2018 was "Nature for Water." Many problems like damaged ecosystems can be helped by nature-based solutions.

And working for water may call us to global solidarity.

[Last year](#) at the [U.N. Commission on the Status of Women](#), we attended a session given by Lisa Uribe, director of [Women's Global Connection](#) — one of our sister's ministries. Lisa told a story about a girl in Tanzania who was often punished for being late to school, but she couldn't get there sooner because she had to carry water for her family.

Women's Global Connection started a rainwater-harvesting project to assist and encourage local women; now, there are 700 women in 60 villages harvesting rainwater. The little girl was profoundly grateful and could get to school more easily.

In the midst of the San Antonio metropolitan area of almost 2.5 million, our sisters are the guardians of a 53-acre nature sanctuary, the [Headwaters at Incarnate Word](#). This nonprofit Earth care ministry seeks to increase biodiversity and benefit local wildlife, offers educational programs for adults and children, and provides a sanctuary where people are encouraged to reflect and reconnect with the Earth.

As we let the Earth restore us, we can be better at restoring the Earth.

As we renew our baptismal promises and reflect on the waters of our baptism, may we deepen in our commitment to ensure life-giving water for all.

[Martha Ann Kirk, a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word, is professor of religious studies at the University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, and the author of [Iraqi Women of Three Generations: Challenges, Education, and Hopes for Peace](#), based on her exhibit of photos and interviews.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/column/spirituality-environment/baptism-our-call-care-water-53106>

April 9, 2018

Native Americans, Fossil Fuels and Climate Change

By Tracey Osborne
Scientific American

Indigenous people are rejecting oil, coal and gas extraction in favor of renewable energy to save their land, increase employment and fight global warming

A historic number of Native Americans are running for political office this year in congressional, state legislative and gubernatorial races. Although candidates are running on a variety of platforms, candidates like Deb Haaland put the environment front and center. Haaland, who is making a bid for Congress in New Mexico, is committed to addressing climate change through a transition to 100 percent renewable energy. "[The fight for Native American rights is also a fight for climate justice](#)," she said in an interview

In the U.S. Native American reservations represent [only 2 percent of the land but hold approximately 20 percent of the country's fossil fuel reserves](#), including coal, oil and gas. Together these fuels are worth some [\\$1.5 trillion](#), according to the Council of Energy Resource Tribes. Whereas some have called for privatizing and exploiting native lands to unleash the economic potential of fossil fuels, many indigenous leaders from both the U.S. and other countries disagree with this approach.

Patricia Gualinga, for example, the international relations director for the Sarayaku indigenous community of the Ecuadorian Amazon, has traveled around the world to fight fossil-fuel exploitation—including the United Nations’ annual climate change meetings, where I first met her. Following the 2014 People’s Climate March in New York City she wrote in a blog: “[The Sarayaku indigenous people believe that instead of bringing ‘development,’ the oil industry is destructive for indigenous society, nonindigenous society, the planet and nature.](#)”

This worldview gives considerable weight to the social, cultural, ecological and sacred value of land over the purely economic, and it was evident in the Standing Rock conflict, where thousands of indigenous peoples and allies challenged the completion of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The project was suspended by Pres. Barack Obama, but under the administration of Donald Trump it was approved and completed last year. Oil has begun to flow under Lake Oahe, the main water source for local communities and a sacred site for the Lakota and Dakota peoples.

In addition to approving the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines, the Trump administration has introduced numerous policies to promote fossil-fuel development as a strategy for job creation. To be sure, stimulating energy-related employment is important, but fossil fuels are the wrong place to look: It is well documented that the renewable energy sector is not only better for the environment but also better at job creation. According to a [World Bank report](#), wind and solar produce about 13.5 jobs per \$1 million spent in the U.S. compared with the 5.2 jobs created in oil and gas and 6.2 in coal.

Furthermore, according to the [U.S. Department of Energy](#), whereas the number of U.S. jobs in coal, oil and gas have declined in recent years, the workforces for solar and wind power increased by 25 and 32 percent, respectively, in 2016 alone. The future of employment in the energy sector—including construction workers, technicians and engineers—lies in renewable energy not fossil-fuel extraction.

This fact has not been lost on those advocating for renewable energy on native land. Given the current economic challenges of the coal industry in Arizona, exemplified by the scheduled closing of the Navajo Generating Station in 2019, Jihan Gearon, executive director of the [Black Mesa Water Coalition](#), is calling for a transition to renewable energy on the Navajo Nation to create jobs and support tribal sovereignty.

Tribal sovereignty has been consistently undermined by fossil-fuel development, as evidenced by the Trump administration’s recent unleashing of two million formerly protected acres in Bears Ears National Monument for oil and gas extraction. The monument was designated by Obama at the request of several Southwestern tribes including the Navajo, Ute, Paiute, Hopi and Zuni, who claim ancestral and ongoing ties to the land. Given the growing impacts of climate change, instead of opening new areas to drilling we should respect the demands of indigenous people and keep fossil fuels in the ground.

Honoring such demands would also dovetail with arguments by leading climate scientists that the best, perhaps only, way to reduce emissions is to stop extracting fossil fuels. According to a [2015 study](#) by Christophe McGlade and Paul Ekins at University College London, more than 80

percent of coal, half of gas and one third of oil reserves must be left untouched in order to stay beneath the 2-degree Celsius upper limit for global warming set by the Paris agreement.

Meanwhile climate inaction carries an enormous price tag. Last year alone the types of extreme weather events likely to increase in a warmer world, such as Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, have cost the U.S. an estimated [\\$150 billion to \\$200 billion](#). Avoiding these costs will greatly strengthen the economy in the long run. This is even more evidence in support of a just transition to renewable energy that represents our best bet for protecting people and the planet.

It is time world leaders honor indigenous sovereignty over their ancestral lands and promote renewable energy as an important strategy for mitigating global climate change.

Tracey Osborne is a professor at the University of Arizona with expertise on climate change and Indigenous rights, Director of the [Climate Alliance Mapping Project](#), and is a Public Voices Fellow with the OpEd Project.

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/native-americans-fighting-fossil-fuels/>

April 9, 2018

'It's our lifeblood': the Murray-Darling and the fight for Indigenous water rights

By Anne Davies
The Guardian

When the water levels of the Darling river fall, local elders in Wilcannia, [New South Wales](#), say, the crime rate spikes, particularly juvenile crime.

It seems like an odd correlation until the elders explain just how important the river is to their everyday lives.

“It’s boring here when the river stops running,” says Michael Kennedy, chairman of the Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council. “It becomes a lifeless place. We can’t find the tranquilities and therapies of the river.”

The people of Wilcannia are Barkandji people. The Darling river is known in the local language as the Barka and the Barkandji are, literally, people of the river. The Darling has sustained them for thousands of years but now they say the river is in crisis.

Badger Bates, a Barkandji elder, says when he was a child growing up at Wilcannia, the river always had water.

“It might have only been a foot but it did not run dry as it does now,” he says.

Kerry King, an elder and a director of the land council, says: “It’s much harder to get a feed from the river.

“I used to go with my mother to collect duck eggs and catch ducks. Now the closest the kids get to a duck dinner is watching My Kitchen Rules.”

Now a major campaign is under way to give meaning to the idea of Indigenous cultural flows. A [major research project](#) documenting the case for cultural flows is due to be released around April. Representatives of Indigenous nations along the Murray-Darling river system have also stepped up their lobbying of federal politicians.

The Murray-Darling basin plan recognises Aboriginal people have a right to cultural flows for spiritual, economic and environmental purposes but in practical terms the concept of cultural flows remains just that: a concept.

In the same way as Indigenous people secured native title, this campaign to secure water allocations would enable Indigenous communities along the river to take part in the management of the river system.

A 2012 study undertaken as part of the Barkandji native title claim – one of the largest in Australia – found only 0.01% of water rights are under Aboriginal control.

“Back in 2015, the government gave us native title rights but no water rights,” Bates says. Exactly what quantum of water will be sought will probably hinge on the cultural flows project and the outcome of political wrangling.

Environmental flows are not the same as cultural flows, Bates says. There will likely be overlap in the objectives of a healthy environment and Aboriginal custodianship of water but a release for environmental reasons – say to flush a wetland – might not necessarily align with Indigenous environmental aspirations for the river.

Along the Murray, the campaign for cultural flows is further advanced.

The [Nari Nari Tribal Council](#), a not-for-profit Indigenous environmental conservation organisation, holds five water entitlements and manages 11,300ha of riverine land.

It has completed projects in cultural site protection, revegetation, bank stabilisation and water efficiency to the value of \$1.2m.

In 2001, the Indigenous Land Corporation, on behalf of the NNTC, purchased three pastoral leases, Toogimbie, Lorenzo and Glen Hope station, situated 40km west of Hay. These properties include regionally important environments such as plains rangelands, seasonal floodplain wetlands and an 18km riparian zone along the Murrumbidgee river.

The group leases land to a farmer and temporarily trades its high-security water licence to generate income for its environmental and cultural preservation activities.

Will Mooney, executive officer of the Murray-Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN), is at the forefront of a campaign that is seeking greater ownership of water rights by Aboriginal nations across the basin, which could be used by communities for cultural, environmental or economic purposes.

“We need policies that give voice to these aspirations,” he says.

When the cultural flows project is released, it may well redefine the water equation, which currently defines it as a balance between farming and the environment.

Several groups are planning to make claims for hundreds, even thousands of gigalitres of water in the Murray-Darling system to be put under Indigenous control.

The cultural flows project will include detailed evidence of Indigenous relationships with river systems and how water is used by Indigenous people, as well as an attempt to identify what sort of policy changes are needed to make cultural flows a reality.

Bates argues that, without control or access to water in the dry inland, native title can have only limited utility.

“What good is all that land if we don’t have a say in the way the river is managed? It’s our lifeblood,” Bates says.

Mooney also sees ownership of water as a way of building capacity in their communities, in dealing with water agencies and providing employment and skills in the same way that stewardship of land has created jobs as rangers.

Central to Barkandji culture, spirituality and teachings is that the Barka is home to the Ngatji (Rainbow Serpent), who created the lands and the rivers. The Barkandji are responsible for the Ngatji’s health and wellbeing, although they find this increasingly outside of their control under contemporary water governance arrangements.

“If we don’t protect the river, the serpent will get wild with us,” Bates says.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/10/its-our-lifeblood-the-murray-darling-and-the-fight-for-indigenous-water-rights>

April 10, 2018

Indigenous knowledge is critical to understanding climate change

By Timothy J. Greene
Seattle Times

As we prepare to join Saturday's March for Science, please understand that by integrating traditional knowledge with Western science, we can solve some of our biggest challenges, including those brought by our changing climate.

Good science is critical to our health, ability to live full lives and community well-being. We use science to advance medicine, enhance our use of natural resources, ensure our food supply and much more. That's why more than a million people around the world joined the March for Science in 2017 and why we are gearing up again to march for science on April 14.

Western science is just one way of knowing. Indeed, traditional knowledge and wisdom of indigenous peoples is recognized by the United Nations for its potential to sustainably manage complex ecosystems. Yet all too often, Western science has disregarded centuries of science-based knowledge coming from Native Americans and other indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples have lived in our particular locations for many generations, and we define ourselves in relation to our home environment. Our deep and long-standing relationships with the environment are unique; our very existence depends on our ability to conserve and maintain our lands and waters for future generations.

Today, tribes, First Nations, indigenous peoples and Aboriginals are sounding a loud alarm about the impacts of climate change. Rising sea levels, broken natural systems, and increasing fire and flooding are apparent and documented.

For example, stocks of many fish species like Pacific hake are sensitive to ocean temperature along the California Current, and recent declines in their numbers have serious implications for the well-being of my own Makah Tribe.

While others debate the causes of climate change, we who live close to the land are experiencing major impacts from our changing climate and call for immediate and strong action to protect the resources on which we all rely. We can't afford to disregard indigenous knowledge about climate change.

Growing up as a member of the Makah Tribe, I relied on the empirical knowledge of my ancestors to determine where to fish and how to locate other sources of food. My community relied on indigenous experiences to understand how to keep ourselves healthy.

When I was a child, my father taught me to navigate our ocean territory through currents, tides and landmarks. This knowledge, along with the life cycle of fish and time of year, allowed for the successful, sustainable harvest of species such as halibut, black cod and lingcod. In the years that followed, my peers and I transferred knowledge to other members of the family who integrated the information into current fishing and management practices.

As a youth, I'd get up in the mornings, often before sunrise, and leave the house overlooking a beach. There was no backpack, no lunch box. I was taught what our land would provide through all the seasons: roots, berries, sea urchins and mussels, to name a few. The knowledge of how, where and when to harvest is a way of life, always done in a manner that ensures the resources

are sustained for the next person. These teachings and values laid the foundation for the work I completed in tribal leadership.

To our north, Tlingit and Haida elders observe young herring following older herring to spawning grounds. When industrial fishing removes the elder herring from spawning sites, the stock is destroyed, as the young fish can no longer find their way home. Failure to heed these traditional observations is leading to the demise of herring and threatening aspects of Tlingit and Haida culture that are closely tied to herring.

A recent news item featured the astonishing observation that birds in Australia intentionally spread fire by carrying burning sticks. While this is fascinating, it has long been known to the Aboriginals. Using fire as a management tool is widespread throughout indigenous cultures. Makah is no exception. For centuries our ancestors used fire to manage crops of cranberries and tea. These resources are currently threatened by our changing climate, as well as the laws and regulations that govern the use of fire.

Respecting and embracing indigenous knowledge as important science benefits all of us. In looking for solutions to the environmental dilemmas that confront us, it is critical to apply indigenous knowledge. All of us are looking for a better understanding of the Earth and her ecosystems. By integrating traditional knowledge with Western science, together we can solve some of our biggest challenges, including those brought by our changing climate.

As communities worldwide prepare to March for Science, this focus is appropriate and important. Threats to scientific knowledge must be rejected, and decision making based on fact must be embraced. Equally important, we should also embrace 10,000-plus years of field observation by indigenous peoples around the world.

This empirical knowledge has sustained people and cultures and has laid the groundwork for many modern “discoveries.” Indigenous peoples are truly the experts of their area and place, with a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of nature and our role in conserving resources for future generations.

Timothy J. Greene Sr. is a former chairman of the Makah Tribal Council and a trustee for The Nature Conservancy in Washington.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/indigenous-knowledge-is-critical-to-understanding-climate-change/>

April 11, 2018

Syracuse Symposium to Conclude with Visit by Writer, Zen Teacher David R. Loy

Boulder native will consider social, ecological implications of Zen Buddhism

By Rob Enslin
Syracuse University

[Syracuse Symposium](#) concludes its yearlong look at “Belonging” with a contemplation on the Buddhist concept of nature.

On Thursday, April 19, [David R. Loy](#), a renowned professor, writer and Zen teacher in the Sanbo Zen tradition of Japanese Zen Buddhism, will give a public talk titled “[Does the Earth Belong to Us, or Do We Belong to the Earth?: Buddhism and the Ecological Challenge](#).” The lecture is from 7-9 p.m. in Watson Theater (382-392 Waverly Ave., Syracuse). He also will lead a group meditation from 6-6:45 p.m.

The following day, Loy will lead a small-group workshop called “[Healing Ecology: A Buddhist Perspective on the Eco-Crisis](#)” from 9-11 a.m. in 304 Tolley. The event will explore in detail some of the ideas from the night before. Space is limited; registration is required. To R.S.V.P. or request special accommodations, please contact Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz in Hendricks Chapel at Bshoultz@syr.edu.

Syracuse Symposium is sponsoring both events, which are free and open to the public. For more information, contact the Syracuse University Humanities Center in the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) at 315.443.7192, or visit humcenter.syr.edu.

While in Syracuse, Loy will participate in two other events, which are free and open to the public. On Saturday, April 21, he and Onondaga Clan Mother Freida Jacques ’80 will discuss “Buddhist and Indigenous Values and Perspectives on the Ecological Challenges Facing Us” from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Skä•noñh—Great Law of Peace Center (6690 Onondaga Parkway, Liverpool). The session includes a light vegetarian lunch.

On Sunday, April 22, Loy will celebrate Earth Day with a special Dharma talk from 10-10:50 a.m. at the Zen Center of Syracuse (266 W. Seneca Turnpike).

Additional support for his visit comes from Hendricks Chapel, the University’s Contemplative Collaborative, the Department of Religion in A&S, the Student Buddhist Association in the Division of Student Affairs and the Zen Center.

“David Loy works at the unexpected intersections of Buddhism and secular society,” says Vivian May, director of the Humanities Center and professor of women’s and gender studies in A&S. “He is primarily concerned about social and ecological issues, and suggests that Buddhism says a lot about our personal and collective predicaments in relation to the rest of the biosphere.”

In addition to being a regular magazine contributor, Loy is the author of 13 books. His best known ones are from Wisdom Publications and include “A New Buddhist Path: Enlightenment, Evolution and Ethics in the Modern World” (2015); “The World Is Made of Stories” (2010), which *Spirituality & Practice* named one of the year’s best books; and “Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution” (2008), available in eight languages.

Loy is co-founder of the Rocky Mountain Ecodharma Retreat Center, near his home in Boulder, Colorado. He also serves on the advisory boards of the Buddhist Global Relief, the Clear View Project, Zen Peacemakers International and the Ernest Becker Foundation.

For more than 45 years, his work has straddled theory and practice. “He understands the dialogue between Buddhism and modernity, particularly the social implications of Buddhist teachings. This likely is an outgrowth of his philosophical education,” says May, referring to Loy’s Ph.D. in philosophy from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and M.A. in Asian philosophy from the University of Hawaii.

In addition to studying analytic philosophy at King’s College London, Loy has trained under Yamada Koun Roshi and Robert Gyoun Aitken Roshi, seminal figures in the Western expansion of Sanbo Zen, an international Zen school in Kamakura, Japan.

A professor of Buddhist and comparative philosophy, Loy has held appointments at NUS (Malaysia), Bunkyo University (Japan), the University of Cape Town (South Africa), the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel), Radboud University (The Netherlands), Xavier University in Cincinnati and Naropa University in Boulder.

His visit coincides with Earth Day on Sunday, April 22.

“Without a better understanding of the ways in which we belong to and depend on the Earth, and greater awareness of other ways of dwelling on it, it is likely that our now-global civilization will remain unable to respond adequately to this new challenge,” May says. “Rather than thinking of ‘Belonging’ in dualistic terms—who belongs and who does not belong—David Loy offers a non-dualistic approach to understanding belonging and living.”

Organized and presented by the Humanities Center, Syracuse Symposium is a public humanities series that revolves around an annual theme. Programs include lectures, workshops, performances, exhibits, films and readings. Located in the Tolley Humanities Building, the Humanities Center serves the campus community by cultivating diverse forms of scholarship, sponsoring a broad range of programming and partnerships and addressing enduring questions and pressing social issues.

Contact Information

Rob Enslin
rmenslin@syr.edu
315.443.3403

<https://www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/10562-The-litter-collecting-lama-of-Tibet>

April 13, 2018

The litter-collecting monk of Tibet

By Feng Hao
China Dialogue

A Buddhist lama and his local volunteers search for a solution to the growing piles of rubbish on the remote Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau

It's seven o'clock in the evening Beijing time, but out on the Ganjia grasslands, in [Xiahe county](#), the sun shows no sign of setting. Outside the yurts of Sirou village several marmots rest by their burrows, plump rears upturned, showing no fear of people.

I was enjoying this scene when Sangay Gyatso, sitting by my side, suddenly asked: "Do you know any Tibetan?"

"Um... Tashi delek [hello]?" I replied.

"Yes! The 'ta' in tashi delek means ecological balance," Sangay said, explaining that maintaining a balance between humans and nature is a central part of Tibetan Buddhist teachings.

Sangay is a lama (a teacher of the Dhamma in Tibetan Buddhism), with a degree from the nearby [Labrang Monastery](#). He believes that the ideals of environmental protection match up closely with the traditional culture and Buddhist thought he has spent years studying.

"The core of our traditional culture is the foundation and motive for my work on environmental protection here," said Sangay.

And his main task when protecting the environment of his home? Collecting litter.

Junk food creates junk

The Ganjia grasslands lie in the north-east of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, a vast and fertile plain on the border of Gansu and Qinghai provinces, encircled by precipitous mountains. In recent years, livestock on the pastures have started dying inexplicably – and plastic food wrappers have been found in their stomachs.

In the past the herders ate meat and butter tea, natural foods, and any waste would naturally degrade. But with the growth of modern lifestyles, processed foods have become popular and herders discard the plastic packaging on the grasslands when they are grazing their livestock, polluting the environment.

Wandaike, a Tibetan youth from the village, said much of the litter he sees isn't left by tourists, but by the herders themselves.

In 2013 Sangay founded the Ganjia Environmental Volunteers Association, building on existing local volunteer teams that clean up in and around Waerta village about once a fortnight.

The villagers thought they were daft and their families didn't understand. "Why are you doing that, you're not getting anything in return?" they said. Local volunteer Leihexi found the criticism hard to deal with at first, but he continued with his task: "When you see the sheep cut open and their stomachs are full of plastic, then you'll understand why we do it," he explained.

Grassland rubbish, water pollution

Grasslands across the plateau have been facing the same problem. It's a similar story in Yueguzongli, a grassland at one of the [sources of the Yellow River](#).

Rigzin Dorje is a local of Qumarleb village and one of the founders of the Sprouting Grain Association, an environmental organisation. He said that organisations come from all over China to work on environmental protection, community building and conservation – but actually litter is the most pressing issue.

In 2013 Sangay founded the Ganjia Environmental Volunteers Association, building on existing local volunteer teams that clean up in and around Waerta village about once a fortnight.

The villagers thought they were daft and their families didn't understand. "Why are you doing that, you're not getting anything in return?" they said. Local volunteer Leihexi found the criticism hard to deal with at first, but he continued with his task: "When you see the sheep cut open and their stomachs are full of plastic, then you'll understand why we do it," he explained.

Grassland rubbish, water pollution

Grasslands across the plateau have been facing the same problem. It's a similar story in Yueguzongli, a grassland at one of the [sources of the Yellow River](#).

Rigzin Dorje is a local of Qumarleb village and one of the founders of the Sprouting Grain Association, an environmental organisation. He said that organisations come from all over China to work on environmental protection, community building and conservation – but actually litter is the most pressing issue.

Rubbish is a particular scourge during the [big annual horse-racing festival](#). Young people and children love to drink soft drinks as part of the celebrations, but when the races are over metal, plastic and glass containers are left scattered across the ground. These are eaten by livestock or slowly leech toxins into the ground, polluting nearby water sources. And up on the high grasslands, nobody collects the waste for recycling. The litter sits there forever, with huge environmental consequences. The Qinghai Tibet Plateau is the source of Asia's major rivers and so this pollution will make its way downstream into China and other parts of Asia.

Wang Yongchen is the founder of Green Earth Volunteers, a group that documents the environmental problems along the course of the Yellow River and she has been visiting the river's source for [seven years](#). She explained that the rubbish problem has improved in recent years with the growth of volunteer litter pickers. In the past, waste was simply dumped by the river side, she said.

Sacred rubbish

[Gongbu Zeren](#) is a lecturer in natural resource management at the Southwest University of Finance and Economics. He believes the Tibetan traditions of circumambulation of sacred mountains, and making sacrifices in sacred lakes, are contributing to the mounting litter problem.

Ritual offerings are placed in ceremonial bottles, sometimes made of plastic, or wrapped in a scarf and then thrown into a lake. Those bottles have become one of the main sources of pollution threatening the local ecosystem, he explained. Scarves made from synthetic fibres and plastic bottles can take over a century to break down, during which the pollutants released threaten local plants and wildlife.

Sangay and his volunteers in Ganjia are aware of the problem and focus on areas around water sources and sacred sites during their clean-ups. An increasing number of people come to worship at two sacred sites, the White Rock Cliffs and a limestone cave set within those cliffs. Volunteers have set up signposts and started collecting litter along a circumambulation route. Government waste collection and disposal systems simply don't reach as far as these remote grassland sites.

The litter problem

The locals have gradually come to understand what the volunteers are doing and the team has expanded to include 230 people across the 13 villages on the Ganjia grasslands. Thanks to Sangay's efforts, the association has won some funding to pay for the gloves, brooms, bags and transportation the volunteers need.

Transportation costs have always been a headache for Sangay. "If the government could invest a little more money and labour to build waste sorting points in villages, so waste could be handled centrally, there'd be a bigger impact," he said.

But the local government doesn't have the funding or the organisational capacity to set up such a system. Peng Kui, a conservation expert with the [Global Environmental Institute](#), said that centralised systems, where waste is collected at the village level and transported to the county town for treatment, make economic sense in more populous areas, but are unsustainable and impractical in vast herding areas.

It isn't that the local government doesn't want to help, said Peng, there's just nothing they can do. "It's not even happening at the city and county level, so how can there be the spare capacity and funding for townships and villages?"

Peng explained that GEI's "Clean Water Sources Programme" is trying a new approach. In the village of Maozhuang in Yushu, Qinghai, they formed a team of volunteers to teach people in schools, monasteries and villages how to sort and reduce waste. They then allocated volunteers to clean-up areas around water sources, so waste is regularly removed before finally being transported for sorting at a community waste facility. The volunteers separate and store recyclable materials until there is enough for a trip to sell them at the county seat. Non-recyclable materials are used as fertiliser, burned or buried. This method has reduced the burying of waste by 70%.

A different approach

The serious problem of waste collection and disposal across the vast grassland area has attracted attention from commercial businesses. Taiwanese firm [Miniwiz](#) has designed the [Trashpresso](#), a mobile and solar-powered unit which provide plastics recycling in remote areas.

In 2017 [Miniwiz](#) arrived in Zaduo county, the source of the Lancang River, and turned a week's collected waste into environmentally-friendly building materials. Founder Huang Qiangzhi told *chinadialogue* that the technology behind Trashpresso isn't actually that advanced, but he hopes the project will show the local nomadic herders that their waste can be turned into something useful.

Sangay is also trying to come up with new ideas. He believes the whole community will need to get involved if they want to significantly reduce waste. Recently, he and some PhD students from Lanzhou University have been working on a plan to get environmental experts to train his volunteers in more formal approaches to waste handling and sorting.

The grassland ecology in Qinghai was once only supported yaks and herders, but rapid modernisation has changed all that, and old approaches will not work on new problems. But Sangay hopes that his innovative ideas and growing band of volunteers can restore the delicate ecological balance to the grasslands.

<https://www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/10562-The-litter-collecting-lama-of-Tibet>

April 14, 2018

Activist priest John Dear tours with new book on resisting climate change

By Tom Boswell

National Catholic Reporter

Just prior to the December 2015 Climate Change Conference in Paris, Pope Francis [warned a group of reporters](#) that the world is on the brink of committing "suicide." Less than a year later, Donald Trump won the U.S. presidential election and then, after he took office, [pulled out of the Paris accords](#). These days, it's hard to believe that the state of our planet could be more dire.

But John Dear, Catholic priest, longtime peace activist and, more recently, a global-warming warrior, still brims with hope, energy and optimism.

"There's more happening in active nonviolent movements around the planet right now than ever before in history," he told NCR in an interview in early April. "There's massive change happening beyond the bad news from the current administration. There's incredible organizing going on, such as the teacher's strikes, such as the [anti-gun-violence organizing](#), such as all the people working on immigration. And some people working against war, but not enough."

Dear visited Madison, Wisconsin, April 4 as part of a 50-city, three-month book tour to promote *They Will Inherit the Earth: Peace & Nonviolence in a Time of Climate Change*, the latest of his 37 books. A former Jesuit [who left the order](#) after 32 years, Dear is now a diocesan priest and a staff member of the national peace organization [Pace e Bene](#). He lives on a remote desert mesa south of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and east of Los Alamos, the birthplace of the atomic bomb.

Dear spoke at [James Reeb Unitarian Universalist](#) on the 50th anniversary of the [assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.](#) He sprinkled his talk with direct quotes and anecdotes from King's teachings on nonviolent social change.

"One of the great casualties of violence and warfare is the loss of imagination, the loss of vision," Dear said, and then quoted King as saying, the night before he died, "Hope is the final refusal to give up."

In *They Will Inherit the Earth*, most of it written while on a retreat with Buddhist leader and author Thich Nhat Hanh, Dear traces his personal spiritual journey, what he calls "a long pilgrimage of peace." The journey has included ministering to the family members of the victims of the World Trade Center attacks; visiting [Standing Rock](#) with more than 600 other clergy to stand in solidarity with the Dakota, Lakota and Sioux against the Dakota Access Pipeline; and presiding at Masses in Yosemite National Park.

"Because we have practiced violence — global, structured, institutionalized violence — and created systems of total violence, we have hurt and killed one another and destroyed the creatures and the Earth. With the onslaught of climate chaos, we have entered the full consequences of global violence. ... We are killing the Earth, but it will not go down without a fight."

In another chapter, Dear describes the struggle of the indigenous community of the Santa Clara Pueblo in New Mexico, whose home just below the mountain of Los Alamos and the nuclear weapons national laboratories has become a lethal radioactive waste dump. The labs upon the mountain make up "the second richest county in the U.S., with one of the highest per capita rates of Ph.D.'s and millionaires anywhere on earth," Dear points out. But down below is the second poorest county in the U.S. It's an egregious example of environmental racism.

During his Madison talk, Dear stressed what Christians and everyone else can and must do to resist the Earth's doomsday scenario.

"I think the only way change happens is bottom-up, people-powered, grassroots movements of creative nonviolence in the tradition of Gandhi and King, which, by the way, goes back to Jesus, who was a movement builder and organizer," he told NCR after his speech.

"After studying nonviolence for 40 years, I've decided that nonviolence requires three simultaneous attributes. First, you have to be nonviolent to yourself. We have to stop cooperating with our own inner processes of violence, beating ourselves up, fueling our anger, our rage, hatred and resentment. Second, we have to practice meticulous, interpersonal nonviolence towards everybody in our lives, everybody in the world, and all the creatures and Mother Earth. Third, you have to be involved in the struggle for justice, disarmament and creation.

"We're usually good at one of these," said Dear, "but very few of us reach the level of Dr. King, who did all three."

In both his book and talk, Dear outlined a list of "rules for living in solidarity with Mother Earth." The first speaks of our need to grieve and to be joyous.

"We need to take quiet time and sit in the beauty of creation in the presence of the Creator and grieve," he writes in his book. "We grieve for our sisters and brothers, for the death and extinction of billions of creatures, and for Mother Earth herself. The more we take formal time to quietly grieve for suffering humanity and suffering creation, the more nonviolent and compassionate we become."

Other "rules" include practicing meditation, prayer, mindfulness and nonviolent communication, cultivating fearlessness, taking public action for climate justice, and teaching nonviolence, particularly to priests and ministers.

Dear, who is a co-founder of Campaign Nonviolence, a project of Pace e Bene, was offered an opportunity to teach nonviolence to clergy two years ago, when 80 Catholic peacemakers from more than 25 countries were invited to the Vatican for [a conference](#) to discuss abandoning the church's just war theory. While there, Ken Butigan of Campaign Nonviolence, [Marie Dennis](#) of Pax Christi International, and Dear were asked to help draft a statement for the pope for the [2017 World Day of Peace](#).

It became the "first statement on nonviolence in the church since the Sermon on the Mount," Dear said, with obvious pride. "It's a huge breakthrough."

Now Dear is hopeful that Francis will craft an encyclical on nonviolence to match "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home," his [encyclical on the environment](#). "That's my personal hope and prayer and goal."

[Tom Boswell is a freelance journalist, photographer and poet living near Madison, Wisconsin.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/activist-priest-john-dear-tours-new-book-resisting-climate-change>

April 14, 2018

Midwest Catholic Workers hold retreat and pipeline protest

By Maria Benevento

National Catholic Reporter

Duluth, Minn. — A Catholic Worker retreat culminated in an action at a pipeline storage facility April 9 in Carlton County, Minnesota, where 27 people risked arrest for trespassing when they occupied the yard with banners, signs, jars of blessed water and sacred objects in an effort to "transform" the space and oppose a pipeline project.

"We're hoping that the prayers that we leave behind and the sacred items that so many people have put in ... will have an effect," Brenna Cussen Anglada of St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm in southwest Wisconsin told NCR the night before she risked arrest. "For a lot of us, we believe we're acting in cooperation with God's grace and, ultimately, God and love win out over evil."

The Midwest Catholic Worker Faith and Resistance Retreat, held April 6-9 in the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Duluth, was almost entirely focused on education, relationship building and action planning related to opposing the proposed Line 3 pipeline project in Minnesota.

Enbridge, the pipeline company, commonly refers to the project as a "[replacement](#)" of outdated pipes, but the Catholic Worker group and indigenous activists said the plan constitutes an "abandonment" of old pipes and an expansion of the pipeline through an alternate path that would threaten areas sacred to local indigenous people.

The pipeline currently cuts through the [Fond du Lac](#) and [Leech Lake](#) reservations, both located in Minnesota and home to groups of the Anishinaabe people. The proposed re-routing would skirt the reservations, but cross wild rice lakes that the Anishinaabe consider sacred and where they have the right by treaty to hunt, fish and gather.

Since the company does not have the necessary permits to start construction, a high level of confrontation with Enbridge was not possible or necessary, but "we can still invite them to transform what they have already done," said Michele Naar-Obed, a retreat organizer and member of [Hildegard House Catholic Worker](#) in Duluth.

Almost all of the approximately 60 retreatants attended the action along with a few additional protesters. Most were current or former members of the Catholic Worker movement — a decentralized network of houses of hospitality and farms whose members usually live in community, practice the works of mercy and protest violence and injustice. College students, extended community members, indigenous activists and others also attended.

Carrying signs and banners with slogans such as "Honor the Treaties," "Defend the Sacred," "Green Energy Now," "Pipe Organs not Pipelines," "Pipes Leak," "Pray for the Water" and "Sale: All Pipes Must Go," protesters did not attempt to damage the pipeline materials.

Instead, they placed jars of blessed water inside pipes and created a makeshift altar covered in sacred items they had collected over the past few months, including a carving of Jesus that belonged to Catholic Worker founder Dorothy Day, contributed by her granddaughter Martha Hennessy. (Hennessy was [recently arrested](#) for breaking into a nuclear weapons base as part of the Plowshares movement.)

Members of the group, who recorded their action in several livestreams on social media (posted on the [retreat's Facebook page](#)), also read a statement of purpose about the event, prayed, passed food and supplies back and forth through the fence, and sang songs modified to fit the occasion, such as "99 Pipes in the Pipe Yard."

Although the participants split into two groups based on whether or not they planned to risk arrest, with 27 entering the fenced-in yard where the pipes were stored while over two dozen others remained outside, law enforcement decided to let the protesters disperse naturally without making arrests. A small group remained until about 9 p.m.

Early that afternoon, Naar-Obed had told the group that "everything we envisioned happened," including placing the water and sacred items and receiving media attention from several outlets.

Some participants also emphasized that the action should be considered in the context of the whole retreat, which helped members integrate faith and action. It also provided them with knowledge and experience that they could apply to pipeline protests closer to home or use as inspiration for future actions near Duluth.

During the retreat, group members participated in a "blanket exercise," which visually represented colonization; visited the Fond-du-Lac Reservation; and listened to indigenous people talk about their spirituality, the effects the pipeline would have and efforts to oppose it.

"I think it's important to mention that it's called the Faith and Resistance retreat," said Steven Fisher from the [Su Casa Catholic Worker](#) in Chicago. "Because it's not just one or the other. ... We came here on Friday to gather together and think in terms of how [the protest] intersects with our prayer life, our spirituality, our commitment to Christ."

A common theme in discussions was how the history of racism and oppression of native people affected the mainly-white Catholic Worker group's efforts to build trust with indigenous people and collaborate with them in opposing the pipeline.

"I told some native friends that I was with the Catholic Workers," one indigenous activist said during the April 9 action, speaking into his phone as he livestreamed the event, but raising his voice so the crowd could hear. "And they said, 'Oh no, not them again!' " Over the crowd's laughter, he explained that this group might not fit his friends' negative expectations of Catholics.

Ricky DeFoe, a local linguistic, cultural and spiritual leader, spoke at the "teach-in" portion of the retreat April 7 about the damage caused by papal bulls that gave America to Europeans without regard for native people, and the hierarchical Catholic worldview that people have "dominion over all things."

But DeFoe also brought up the themes of solidarity and mutuality, saying that descriptions of genetic differences "never tell you about the spirit — all of these things are superseded by the spirit."

Sheila Lamb, an indigenous activist who spoke after DeFoe, echoed this theme and emphasized that the pipeline issue affected everyone. "I don't want to see any more of our people suffer," she said. "Or any of yours."

Meanwhile, several retreat participants said they were motivated both by solidarity with indigenous groups and by their recognition that environmental concerns affect everyone.

"The native struggle for their land rights and water rights are now the struggle for the planet and the survival of the species," said [Des Moines Catholic Worker](#) Frank Cordaro. "Here in Duluth, the Catholic Workers are connecting with the native impulse for survival — which is happening all over the globe — and we're lending our voices, our life, our tradition to their efforts."

"We're trying to figure out how we can be the best allies" for the native community, said Naar-Obed, "recognizing that what they're fighting against and what they're fighting for affects all of us, not just the native community, although they take a bigger hit because of what it means to them in their culture."

Cussen Anglada said that while she was generally opposed to increased oil flow, knowing the indigenous community opposed the pipeline was an even stronger motivation for her action.

"Meeting those people who it will impact, it has even more strengthened my resolve to speak out against it, even if it's at a personal risk," she said, "because whatever happens to me I know will be a slap on the wrist compared to what's happening to them."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/midwest-catholic-workers-hold-retreat-and-pipeline-protest>

April 17, 2018

Turn climate 'words into action' say Faith Leaders

Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)

Devastating flooding across South Asia in 2017 displaced 41 million people and resulting in the deaths of more than 1,000 people

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Williams and more than 170 faith leaders from across the Commonwealth have issued a call to governments to turn "words into action" on climate change at a summit in London this week.

[A letter published in the Daily Telegraph in London](#) and signed by dozens of religious leaders states that "Not even the remotest corner of the Commonwealth remains unaffected" by the changing climate, with the greatest impact felt by the poorest people in the group of nations.

The signatories – including archbishops, church moderators and rabbis from all continents in the Commonwealth – call for politicians attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to pursue "every effort" to keep global temperature rises below the Paris Agreement target of 1.5 degrees Celsius. The meeting will take place at Buckingham Palace, St James's Palace and Windsor Castle between Monday 16 and Friday 20 April.

Some of the religious figures to sign the letter include Cardinal Maurice Piat of Mauritius, the President of the Antilles Episcopal Conference Bishop Gabriel Malzaire, the General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of India Vijayesh Lal and Senior Rabbi of The Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London Alexandra Wright.

The official website for the summit states that "urgent action" on climate change is needed "to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience" and notes that 39 of the 53 Commonwealth countries are classed as small or vulnerable states.

The faith leaders' statement is the latest in a series of calls by religious figures for action on climate change at international summits. Several heads of government cited Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment as a catalyst for the success of the UN climate talks that resulted in the Paris Agreement in 2015.

The letter says:

We, faith leaders from across the Commonwealth, representing peoples of Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Europe and the Americas, come together in friendship and co-operation to mark the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London.

Not even the remotest corner of the Commonwealth remains unaffected or unthreatened by the impacts of climate change. Commonwealth citizens, especially the poorest, struggle to thrive amidst our changing climate.

Subsistence communities in African countries struggle to grow crops in increasingly arid earth. In the Pacific, rising sea levels threaten the existence of whole countries. In Asia, salination is driving people from their land. Arctic communities' ways of life are undermined. Ever more violent and unpredictable storms devastate the Caribbean.

At the scale of the Commonwealth we can see that the crisis of poverty and the crisis of ecology are one; each of our faith traditions reminds us of the deep interconnectedness of people and our planet. As a common problem, this crisis requires a common solution. And it is needed now.

The Charter of the Commonwealth affirms the foundations for cooperation between Commonwealth nations. But it is time to turn words into action. We call on the Heads of Government gathering in London to commit to urgent action on climate change adaptation and mitigation in line with the Paris Agreement and to pursue every effort to keep the increase in average global temperature below 1.5 degrees.

Our people call out to you. We stand beside them. Your time to act is now.

Signed by:

Africa : Frank Nubuasah, Bishop of Francistown, **Botswana**, Jan Ozga, Président, Caritas **Cameroon**, Ludovic Lado SJ, Former Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Management Catholic University of Central Africa, Yaoundé, **Cameroon**, Francis Dominic Mendy, Secretary General, Caritas **Gambia**, Samuel Zan Akologo, Executive Secretary, Caritas **Ghana**, Gabriel Dolan, Director Haki Yetu, **Kenya**, Susan Nagele, Maryknoll Lay Missioner , **Kenya**, Michael Kiburi, Deputy Director, Caritas Nairobi, **Kenya**, Benson Kibiti, National Communications and Advocacy Coordinator, Caritas **Kenya**, Angela Hartigan RSM, Mercy Congregation, **Kenya**, Adam Taaso, Bishop of **Lesotho**, Relebohile Mabote, National Director, Caritas **Lesotho**, Henry Harry Saindi, Secretary General of the Episcopal Conference of **Malawi**, Victor Mnelemba, Projects Officer, Diocese of Upper Shire, **Malawi**, Timothy P K Nyasulu, Moderator, CCAP General Assembly (**Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa**), George Buleya, Vice Chancellor, Catholic University of **Malawi**, Felix Chingota, Chairperson, Public Affairs Committee, **Malawi**, Charles Peter Chinula, Parish Priest and Diocesan Communication Secretary, **Malawi**, Matilda Tumalike Matabwa, **Malawi**, John A Ryan, Bishop of the Diocese of Mzuzu, **Malawi**, Patrick Jambo, Priest and Pastoral Coordinator of Nkhathe, **Malawi**, Maurice E. Piat, Cardinal Bishop of Port-Louis, **Mauritius**, Brigitte Koenig, President of Caritas Ile Maurice, **Mauritius**, Jacques Dinan OSK, Former Executive Secretary, Caritas Africa, **Mauritius**, Vicente Msosa, Diocese of Niassa, in **Mozambique**, Alberto Vera Aréjula, Presidente Caritas **Mozambique**, Manuel Ernesto, Bishop Suffragan of Niassa, **Mozambique**, Abel Gabuza, Bishop of Kimberley, South Africa and Chairperson of the Justice and Peace Commission of SACBC (**South Africa, Swaziland and Namibia**), Mrudula Smithson, Director, **South Africa**, Kgomotso Direro, Administrator, **South Africa**, Geraldine Hedley, Finance Manager, **South Africa**, Bishop Jan De Groef, Bishop of Bethlehem, **South Africa**, Rachel Mash, Environmental Coordinator Anglican Church of Southern Africa, **South Africa**, Samuel Sifelani, **South Africa**, Noeleen Mullett, Green Parish Co-ordinator, Johannesburg Anglican Environmental Initiative, **South Africa**, Joao Noe Rodrigues, Bishop of the Diocese of Tzaneen, **South Africa**, Geoffrey Francis Davies, Bishop, Founder and Patron of the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI), **South Africa**, Thabo Cecil Makgoba, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, **South Africa**, Martin Breytenbach, Bishop of the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist, **South Africa**, Saydz Sayed , Secretary, Interfaith Commission, **South Africa**, David Mark Franklin, Chairman of St Francis Parkview Eco group, **South Africa**, Steve Moreo, Bishop of Bishop of Johannesburg, **South Africa**, Anne Gaisford, Diocesan Administrator, **South Africa**, Michael Murphy, District Leader for St. Patrick's Missionary Society in **South Africa**, Anne Patricia Flynn, Congregational Leader Of Missionary Sisters of the Assumption, **South Africa**, Michael Bennett, Justice and Peace Chaplain, Diocese of

Tzaneen, **South Africa**, Giovanna Pesenti, Salesian Sister and Pre-School Principal , **South Africa**, Lidia Castro, Principal, Primary School, **South Africa**, Annie Elizabeth Foy, Salesian Sister, **South Africa**, Joseph Dube, Head of Department, Archdiocese of Johannesburg, **South Africa**, Pearl N Tsemame, Laity Council, Diocese of Aliwal, **South Africa**, Anne Gaisford, Diocesan Administrator, Diocese of Zululand, **South Africa**, Stephany C Thiel, Religious sister, **South Africa**, Okafor Chioma Immaculate, National Coordinator, A Rocha, **Nigeria**, Jwan Zhumbes, Bishop of Bukuru Diocese, Church of **Nigeria**, Robert Abuul , Head of Programs , **Nigeria**, Jean Marie Vianney Twagirayezu, Secrétaire Général, Caritas **Rwanda**, Denis Wiehe CSSp, Bishop of Port-Victoria, **Seychelles**, Edward Tamba Charles, Archbishop of Freetown, **Sierra Leone**, Christiana Eyatunde Sutton-Koroma, National Coordinator, Foundation for Rural and Urban Transformation, **Sierra Leone**, Ellinah Wamukoya, Bishop and Chair of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, **Swaziland**, William Nathan Mwaisumo, Program Officer, CEELS, **Tanzania**, Niyongere Pierre Celestin, Anglican Priest, **Uganda**, Bishop William Mchombo, Bishop of Eastern **Zambia**, Emmanuel Yona Chikoya, General Secretary, The Council of Churches, **Zambia**.

Americas: Gabriel Malzaire, Bishop of Roseau, **Dominica** and President of the Antilles Episcopal Conference (**Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and The Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago**), Frank Power SVD, Priest and Administrator, Holy Family Cathedral, **Antigua and Barbuda**, Sarita Vasquez RSM, Coordinator of the Mercy Community, **Belize**, Nigel J. Karam, Dean of Roseau Cathedral, **Dominica**, Julie Matthews, President, Sisters of Mercy, Caribbean, Central America, South America Community, **Guyana**, Susan Frazer, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, **Jamaica**, Jordan Cantwell, Moderator of The United Church of **Canada**, Ron Cutler, Anglican Archbishop of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, **Canada**, Muaz Nasir, Editor – Khaleafa.com, **Canada**, Brian Dunn, Bishop of Antigonish, **Canada**, Marian Lucas-Jefferies, Coordinator, Environment Network, Diocese of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island, **Canada**, Jim Hodgson, Justice Activist, **Canada**, Michelle Schofield Bull, Rector of Emmanuel Anglican Church, Spryfield, Nova Scotia, **Canada**, Matthew Sponagle, Priest and Regional Dean, **Canada**, Reid Moore, Layreader, **Canada**, Charles Edgar Bull, Rector, Anglican Parish of St. Margaret of Scotland, Halifax, Nova Scotia, **Canada**, Marg Murray, Retired Minister, Social Justice Division of London Conference, United Church of **Canada**, Jane Alexander, Bishop of Edmonton, **Canada**, Lucy Cummings, Executive Director, Faith and the Common Good, **Canada**, Jack Panozzo, Social Justice and Advocacy Program Manager, **Canada**, Margaret Newall, Unitarian Minister, **Canada**, Larry Dobson, United Church of **Canada**, Ian Dewar McPherson, Earthkeepers: Christians for Climate Justice, **Canada**, Douglas Buck, **Canada**, Jason Wood, Community Organizer, Earthkeepers: Christians for Climate Justice, **Canada**, Joe Gunn, Executive Director, Citizens for Public Justice, **Canada**, Karen Boivin, Minister and Senior Pastor, City View United Church, United Church of **Canada**, Mary Anne Byrne, Poet, **Canada**, Tim Kuepfer, English Pastor of Chinatown Peace Church, **Canada**, Arleen Brawleu, Treasurer, Sisters of Charity, **Canada**, Bernice Steele, Leadership Team, Sisters of Charity, **Canada**, Maureen Wild, Sisters of Charity, **Canada**, Sabrina Malach, Director of Community Engagement, Shores Jewish Environmental Programs, **Canada**, Helen Wallace, Sister of Charity, **Canada**, Sheila E. Moore, **Canada**, Sheilagh Martin, Teacher, **Canada**, Anne Harvey , Sisters of Charity, **Canada**, Susanne Lachapelle, Coordinator, Justice and Peace Commission, **Canada**,

Asia : Shourabh Pholia, Bishop of Barisal Diocese, Church of **Bangladesh**, Julian Leow, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, **Malaysia**, Joseph Hii Teck Kwong, Bishop of Sibu, Malaysia and President of the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice for **Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam** and **Singapore**, Geraldine Clare Westwood, Head of the Creation Justice Commission of the Diocese of Penang, **Malaysia**, Vijayesh Lal, General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of **India**, Allwyn D'Silva, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Bombay, **India**, Patrick Hansda, Caritas **India**, Charles Irudayam, Priest and Secretary of the Justice, Peace and Development Office, Catholic Bishops Conference of **India**, Liam O'Callaghan, Coordinator for the Ecology Commission of Hyderabad Diocese, **Pakistan**, Robert Younas, Regional President, World Apostolate of Fatima, **Pakistan**, Mahendra Gunatilleke, National Director, SEDEC/ Caritas **Sri Lanka**

Oceania : John Ribat, Cardinal Archbishop of Port Moresby, **Papua New Guinea** and President of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conference of Oceania (**Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu**), Eveline Crotty, Leader of the Sisters of Mercy (**Australia** and **Papua New Guinea**), Laiseni Fanon Charisma Liava'a, Priest, Anglican Diocese of Polynesia, **Tonga, Tuvalu**, Andrew Shepherd, National Co-Director, A Rocha Aotearoa **New Zealand**, Julianne Hickey, Director, Caritas Aotearoa **New Zealand**, Richard Milne, Associate Professor, University of Auckland, **New Zealand**, John Atcherley Dew, Cardinal Archbishop of Wellington, **Aotearoa New Zealand**, Patrick Dunn, Bishop of Auckland, President, **New Zealand** Catholic Bishops Conference, David McDonald, Leader of the Marist District of the Pacific (**Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Aotearoa New Zealand**), Bridget Crisp, Coordinator, Mercy Global Action, **Aotearoa New Zealand**, Mark Coleridge, Archbishop of Brisbane, Vice-President Australian Catholic Bishops Conference on behalf of the **Australian** bishops, Jeremy Greaves, Bishop, Northern Region of Southern Queensland, **Australia**, Peter Albert Moore, Chair, Angligrreen, Anglican Church Southern Queensland, **Australia**, Duncan Reid, Adjunct Lecturer, Trinity College Theological School Melbourne, **Australia**, Veronica Lawson, Sisters of Mercy, **Australia**, Judith Glaister, Sisters of Mercy, **Australia**, Theresa Ann Foley, Sisters of Mercy, **Australia**, Carol Mitchell, Director, Justice, Ecology & Development Office, Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, **Australia**, Katie Hunt, **Australia**, Roger Jaensch, President and Chair of the Board of Directors, A Rocha **Australia**, George Browning, Past Chair, Anglican Communion Environment Network, **Australia**

Europe : Charles J Scicluna, Archbishop of **Malta**, Bishop Mario Grech, Bishop of Gozo, **Malta**, Melissa Chedid, Executive Manager, Caritas **Cyprus**, Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, **United Kingdom**, Leo Cushley, Archbishop of St Andrews, Scotland, **United Kingdom**, David Pickering, Moderator of the United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland, **United Kingdom**, John Davies, Anglican Archbishop of Wales, **United Kingdom**, Loraine Mellor, President of the Methodist Church in Britain, **United Kingdom**, Alexandra Wright, Senior Rabbi, The Liberal Jewish Synagogue, London, **United Kingdom**, Jeffrey Newman, Emeritus Rabbi Finchley Reform Synagogue, **United Kingdom**, John Kafwanka, Director for Mission, Anglican Communion, **United Kingdom**, David Atkinson, Emeritus Bishop of Thetford, **United Kingdom**, Alan Yates, General Assembly Moderator, United Reformed Church in Great Britain, **United Kingdom**, Kevin Watson, General Assembly Moderator, United Reformed Church, **United Kingdom**

Kingdom, Philip Mounstephen, Executive Leader, Church Mission Society, **United Kingdom**, John Battle, Former MP and Minister, Chair, Diocese of Leeds Justice & Peace Commission, **United Kingdom**, Barbara Kentish, Coordinator of Westminster Justice and Peace, **United Kingdom**, Gregory Cameron, Bishop of St Asaph, **United Kingdom**, Andrew John, Bishop of Bangor, **United Kingdom**, Joanna Penberthy, Bishop of St Davids , **United Kingdom**, June Osborne, Bishop of Llandaff, **United Kingdom**, Richard Pain, Bishop of Monmouth, **United Kingdom**, Denise Boyle, Coordinator Global Justice Programme, **United Kingdom**, Monica Killeen, Sisters of Mercy, **United Kingdom**, Mary Judge RSC, **United Kingdom**, Chris Naylor, Executive Director A Rocha International, **United Kingdom**, Catherine Gibbons, **United Kingdom**, Peter Zabala, **United Kingdom**, John Keenan , Bishop of Paisley, **United Kingdom**, Michael Pryke, Youth President, Methodist Church, **United Kingdom**, Elisabeth Jill Baker, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference 2017-18, **United Kingdom**, Andy Atkins CEO, A Rocha UK and Chair, CTBI Environmental Issues Network, **United Kingdom**, Arthur Champion, Diocesan Environmental Adviser, **United Kingdom**, Geoff Foster, Environmentalist, **United Kingdom**, David James Goss, Parish Priest, **United Kingdom**, Brian McGee, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, **United Kingdom**

<https://cafod.org.uk/News/Campaigning-news/Turn-climate-words-into-action>

April 18, 2018

Do you believe in God? Then you have a moral duty to fight climate change, writes Jim Antal

By Tom Montgomery Fate
Chicago Tribune

Jim Antal recognizes that most Americans are not engaged by the climate change issue. “Two in three Americans think global warming is happening (67%), yet most Americans (65%) rarely or never discuss it,” he writes, citing a Yale study in his new book, “Climate Church, Climate World.”

Antal thinks a central reason we have ignored global warming is because the problem is a “long emergency” and overwhelming in scope. “(N)euroscientists tell us that our brains are not suited to respond appropriately to long-term threats such as climate change,” he writes.

This is why, he suggests, we know how to respond to the immediate threats and destruction caused by a major hurricane, like Harvey: by repairing Houston’s collapsed bridges and infrastructure and other present-tense problems. But we always seem to miss the big picture — for example, the fact that “Hurricane Harvey was Houston’s third once-in-500-years flood in the last four years.”

The question Antal poses is when will climate change feel immediate enough for us to think and act decisively on behalf of future generations? He argues that we’ve developed an “environmental generational amnesia,” and that we need to think long term in both directions. Thus, he includes a useful history of climate science and of our evolving understanding of the

problem. This runs from the 1850s, when John Tyndall first suggested that CO2 created a greenhouse effect, trapping the sun's energy and warming the climate, to Wallace Broecker's groundbreaking research and climate projections in the 1970s, to Bill McKibben's landmark 1989 book, "The End of Nature," and leading up to the policies of the [Trump](#) administration.

Given that President Donald Trump withdrew from the Paris climate accord and — along with Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt and U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry — doesn't view climate change as a crisis, nor tie it directly to human behavior, Antal doesn't place his hope for change in the current political leadership.

The subtitle of the book suggests where his hope does lie: "How People of Faith Must Work for Change." A longtime Congregational pastor and activist himself, Antal identifies with the social gospel and prophetic tradition of the church — going all the way back to the abolitionist movement. Early in the book he shares his central vision.

"I believe that people of faith the world over have the capacity to determine the trajectory of our common future," Antal writes. "Here in America, if Christianity continues to emphasize personal salvation while ignoring collective salvation, if we continue to reduce the Creator to an anthropocentric projection who privileges and protects humanity, however alienated we may be from God's created order, then the practice of religion will continue to diminish and it will add little to the redemption of creation."

After analyzing the history and social implications of climate change, Antal reimagines the role of church communities and their capacity to confront and resolve the problem. After each chapter throughout the book, there are discussion questions aimed at prompting readers to engage in their communities — through everything from Bible study to civil disobedience. Clearly, Antal's purpose in writing is not simply to educate but to inspire readers' hearts, heads and hands to "repurpose" the church, and reimagine its moral calling.

The chapter titled "Discipleship: Reorienting What We Prize" outlines the basic changes in social and economic priorities Antal thinks are necessary to realize this goal. Americans, he believes, must reject and rethink "our insatiable desire for material growth, our uncompromising insistence on convenience, and our relentless addiction to mobility."

But this is of course no easy task. Such a shift in priorities is antithetical to America's thriving high-tech culture of accumulation and convenience. The challenge is formidable. And it's complicated by the fact that climate change has not been a central focus or mission of the church until recently.

In his introduction, friend and fellow activist McKibben, explains: "For religious people the environment was a second tier problem: for liberal Christians it was secondary to the 'real issues' of hunger and war; to conservative people of faith it represented a way station on the road to paganism."

Nevertheless, in spite of all the challenges, Antal's central message is one of engaged hope. Like Pope Francis and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, he sees the current climate debacle as "a Kairos moment, an opportune moment fraught with God-inspired possibility."

"(O)ur present social and economic system needs a moral intervention," Antal writes. "And so does the church. It's time to declare a new moral era."

Tom Montgomery Fate, author of the nature memoir "Cabin Fever," is a professor of English at College of DuPage.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/books/ct-books-climate-jim-antal-0422-story.html>

April 19, 2018

'Laudato Si' universities' commit to forming environmental consciences

By George Rodriguez
National Catholic Reporter

Moravia, Costa Rica — Universities worldwide may be answering a call to become their communities' environmental consciences if they take an active role in an awareness effort launched by the Catholic University of Costa Rica, based on Pope Francis' environmental encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home."

The effort includes the launching of the *Laudato Si'* Observatory and the release of the first results contained in the *Laudato Si'* Social and Environmental Development Index. The index was developed from key actions taken during the symposium "*El Cuidado de la Casa Común, una conversión necesaria a la ecología humana*" ("On Care for Our Common Home, a necessary conversion to human ecology"), held Nov. 29 through Dec. 1 in Costa Rica.

The observatory and the index are meant to have an impact on the development of countries as well as environmental public policy, and universities are seen as a channel for this, Catholic University rector Fernando Sánchez told NCR at the education center's headquarters in Moravia, a district on the northeastern outskirts of San José, the Costa Rican capital.

The first such meeting held in Latin America — coinciding with Catholic University's 25th anniversary — the symposium, which was organized by the university and the Fondazione Vaticana Joseph Ratzinger — Benedetto XVI, was grounded on several basic premises, according to Sánchez.

"The first is that this is a real problem, it's an urgent problem, it's a global problem we can't simply ignore," and "the other thing is that, despite the data, we should not face this from a fatalistic perspective," he said.

Sánchez referred to data gathered for the first index, covering 127 countries that hold around 97 percent of the planet's population. According to the study "more than 55 percent ... live in conditions, whether human or environmental, that are not acceptable according to the Holy Father and the *Laudato Si'* encyclical," said Sánchez, an ex-congressman of the former ruling *Partido Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Party) and a former Costa Rican ambassador to the Vatican.

Among the top-20 countries in the index, the data places Finland in first position, with 88.77 points out of 100 for "care for our common home," followed by New Zealand (88.03) and Australia (86.78). Only two countries in the Americas made it into this group, with Canada ranking fifth (82.18) and Costa Rica placing in the 20th position (82.33).

"The Holy Father tells us: neither think that with some technical measures we'll solve the problem nor think that any human intervention is harmful — a balance must be sought," Sánchez said. This "must be done with a positive vision, one of hope, knowing that things can be changed because, if not, what are going to make the effort for?"

The effort calls for continuity, which opened the way for the creation of the *Laudato Si'* Observatory. Headquartered at the university in Costa Rica, its various aims include drawing up and publishing the index on a yearly basis. The observatory's main purpose is sharing the index with as many universities, Catholic and non-Catholic, as possible, and producing a local and international compilation of the best practices to help improve each country's index, Sánchez explained.

Sánchez underlined that since the encyclical, which he described as "within the church's social doctrine," deals with two major topics, "human development and environmental development or sustainable development." Prior to the symposium meetings were held with experts who, for years, have been measuring both situations.

"We are interested in knowing what's going on in the world that, one way or another, positively impacts the index," Sánchez said. "That is, which one, in one way or another, is improving or responding to what the pope requests in *Laudato Si'*."

Once it is published, if "we manage to have universities interested in receiving the index, the idea is for them to publicize it in their countries so they can also explain what's going on, why we did poorly or well, what we did wrong or well," Sánchez added.

Regarding the possibility of any positive action being taken, the universities "can tell us what initiatives in their countries are ... pushing the index upward and are thus responding to what the pope is asking of us," he said.

"The aim is that it acts as some kind of impact measure starting from the Holy Father's exhortations. And this is the observatory's other major goal: to cause positive impact wherever we have access," Sánchez said.

"At the end of the day, we'd want to be able to say that somehow, for some reason, knowledge of the index will generate some impact on the public policy of nations. That would be a major future goal, but if we have to have an impact ... we have to publicize it," he added.

That is where universities come in.

"The first thing that's going to happen is that those of us who adopt this have to be consistent universities," because "we can't go around preaching to everyone a conversion to human ecology if our university has not converted to human ecology," said Sánchez.

Some progress in this regard had been made already before the symposium, including the creation of *Laudato Si'* professorships and, in the case of Brazil's Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, PUC-Rio), the creation of rooftop gardens.

Sánchez stressed that some universities have been taking *Laudato Si'*-type initiatives: "What happens is that the symposium brings us all into a logic. So, now it will be very interesting to see how much universities that accept this initiative actually change."

In his view, the encyclical's major advantage is that it deals with an awareness issue more than a religious one.

"There could hardly be a more ecumenical issue than the environmental issue because we're all in the same, common home. Doctrinal differences have no weight. Awareness and responsibility have weight," he said. "We have some fertile ground to work on."

[George Rodriguez, a freelance correspondent based in Costa Rica, has reported for Reuters and other international news agencies.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/laudato-si-universities-commit-forming-environmental-consciences>

April 20, 2018

Access to clean water is a life issue that the church must defend

By Christiana Zenner
National Catholic Reporter

Five years ago, few people thought of the Catholic church as ecologically activist or environmentally diplomatic. But Pope Francis' election to the papacy changed that, especially since the promulgation of his 2015 ecology encyclical, "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home." In my analysis, fresh water is the most important point of papal reflection at the

intersection of environmental and social justice. Fresh water is, in no uncertain terms, a fundamental life issue.

The magisterial Catholic Church has articulated two fulcrums for environmental reflection — theological and ethical — that apply in specific ways to fresh water.

Theologically, water is the matrix of creation, a ritual substance par excellence, and a gift from God intended for the benefit of all people.

Ethically, fresh water is a substance that requires attention to justice: It is the poor and vulnerable who are first and most profoundly affected by lack of sufficient, clean, fresh water.

Francis is surely the most visible, and most recent, authoritative Catholic voice on the topic of the centrality of fresh water to environmental and social justice. Citing his and Pope Benedict XVI's papal precedent, Francis' concluding salvo at a 2017 Vatican-hosted "Dialogue on Water" exhorted:

The questions that you are discussing are not marginal, but basic and pressing. Basic, because where there is water there is life, making it possible for societies to arise and advance. Pressing, because our common home needs to be protected. Yet it must also be realized that not all water is life-giving, but only water that is safe and of good quality — as St. Francis again tells us, water that "serves with humility," "chaste" water, not polluted. All people have a right to safe drinking water. This is a basic human right and a central issue in today's world.

Both Francis and Benedict declared that the fundamental human right to water is a core aspect of Catholic social teaching, which now includes environmental aspects in a central way. The Catholic Church was among the first major international institutions to defend the idea that access to fresh water is a fundamental human right, and it has enshrined this idea in authoritative teachings, such as the 2004 Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, *Caritas in Veritate* and *Laudato Si'*.

There is abundant skepticism in Catholic social teaching that the mechanisms of the free market, especially the tendency to treat water as a commodity, are sufficient to ensure just access to fresh water for all. Water is to be seen as a human right precisely because it undergirds all life and is central to human dignity.

The popes also point out that fresh water is essential to the fulfillment of all other rights. More broadly, sufficient access to clean, fresh water is fundamental to the achievement of all manner of public and private goods, such as education, economic activity and social equity.

It's worth noting that the Catholic Church — despite its patriarchal structure, and yet in line with social realities around the world — has noted that gender is a major factor in water and sanitation, for it is often women and girls who bear the burden of procuring water when it is scarce.

Given papal leadership and the powerful tradition of Catholic social teaching, what more might be worth exploring with regard to fresh water? I suggest five aspects that will be important for the church to consider as it deepens its analysis and moral advocacy on the subject of water.

First, individual versus structural responses to water challenges. Fresh water is a reality that is simultaneously hydrological, climatological, social and institutional. The way fresh water flows depends not only on the weather and the water sources in a region, but also on the ways that infrastructure is constructed and access given to some users rather than others, as well as incentives given to some types of water uses over others.

Twenty-first century moral reflection on fresh water requires not just attention to individual practices of conservation, but also to the political and economic frameworks within which fresh water is withdrawn from its sources, valued, exchanged and distributed. The Catholic Church, as a repository of theological insights and ethical reflection, is a needed voice in defending the preferential option for the poor and marginalized.

Second, water and migration. Scientist Travis Huxman points out, "Water is the hammer with which climate change will hit the earth." One way this is visible is with regard to environmental refugees who have left their homes in response to drought, especially in agricultural regions. Given the church's advocacy for displaced persons, it is well-poised to advocate for environmental immigrants to be granted the status of refugees, a status that confers special rights that are more conducive to well-being, especially in an era of migration prompted by water scarcity.

Third, water and sanitation. Scholars recognize that the right to water is deeply interwoven with the right to sanitation for all people, and especially significant for girls and women. How gender, water and sanitation intersect is a crucial topic, and one that the global Catholic church could rightly identify as an equity issue, since women and girls are more negatively impacted by lack of sanitation infrastructure. The church is already an outspoken critic of the fact that upward of 1,000 children die every day due to waterborne, and entirely preventable, deaths.

Fourth, rights of the environment. Human rights are focused on the human, as the name suggests. But Francis has suggested, since 2015, that there might be a "right of the environment." Is it possible that, given the intrinsic theological goodness of creation, as well as water's centrality to human flourishing, that waters could have rights in themselves, worthy of protection not only for human beings, but also for the life-giving qualities they embody?

Fifth, institutional proof of concept. The Catholic Church as a global institution has surely demonstrated the importance of conceptual leadership on the topic of fresh water and human rights. It also has the potential to demonstrate institutional commitments to best practices regarding fresh water. The Vatican's installation of showers for the homeless in Vatican City is one example of water and social justice.

Multiple orders of women religious worldwide have been at the vanguard of watershed practices and water justice efforts. The church and the world would do well to listen to these women and the truths that they proclaim in daily practice.

[Christina Zenner is an associate professor of theology, science and ethics at Fordham University, where she is affiliated faculty in environmental studies and American studies. She is the author of *Just Water: Theology, Ethics, and the Global Water Crisis*.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/access-clean-water-life-issue-church-must-defend>

April 23, 2018

Cardinal Turkson emphasizes importance of caring for creation at St. Louis Climate Summit

By Joseph Kenny
St. Louis Review

Cardinal Peter Turkson gave a bonus talk at the St. Louis Climate Summit, which is hosted by St. Louis University as a way to advance the Pope Francis' encyclical, "Laudato Si'." In both talks, the cardinal referred to the need to respect creation.

Cardinal Turkson, the prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, had a key role in the formulation of the encyclical, a document that reflects upon humankind's moral obligation to address the issue of climate change. He was delayed in Canada due to a visa issue, and gave an abbreviated talk April 22 at St. Francis Xavier (College) Church on the SLU campus after two others filled in for him. He then was added as a speaker at the start of the next day's program.

Cardinal Turkson stressed that creation is the loving work of God, something that doesn't have an ownership and exists to support human life. Because creation is "a fruit of God's decided action," everything in it has a purpose, the native of Ghana said.

Creation has order and beauty so human life can thrive, he said, comparing it on a small scale to a garden. It needs to be treated respectfully, he added.

Cardinal Turkson cited seven characteristics of the encyclical, the "magnificent seven" as he called it. They are:

- **Continuity** — Pope Francis was not the first pope to talk about ecology. Following up on his predecessors, "he's bringing it all together," Cardinal Turkson said, in an "integral ecology."
- **Collegiality** — The document is a teaching done with all the Catholic bishops from around the world.
- **Conversation** — It calls for dialogue, listening to all points of views and the need for everyone to come together to solve a common problem.
- **Care** — With a couple exceptions, instead of using the word stewardship, Pope Francis refers to a more compassionate, loving and tender way of approaching our common home.

- **Conversion** — We need to change habits, behavior and lifestyles.
- **Citizenship** — Education is important to accept our responsibility toward the care of the earth.
- **Contemplation** — Prayer is a way to worship our creator and helps lead us to God.

While waiting for Cardinal Turkson to arrive, Peter Raven and Mary Evelyn Tucker filled in with talks and answered questions. Raven, a conference co-chair, is a botanist and advocate of conservation and biodiversity who headed the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis for four decades. "I don't want to see civilization being destroyed," he said, adding that it is threatened unless people pay attention and adjust their activities.

Raven, a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and contributor to the development of "Laudato Si'," pointed to the need to work together to "build a better, sustainable world instead of leaving a depleted" world.

Tucker, co-director of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, called the encyclical, especially its take on the Gospel of creation, a "hymn to the universe." It awakens people to the view that "hyper individualism won't get us to a common good for our common home," Tucker said.

While calling for alternative, renewable energy sources, she said "we are losing God's creation" and "the future of life lies in our hands."

Tucker also showed optimism for "not just a sustainable future, but a flourishing future."

<http://stlouisreview.com/article/2018-04-23/cardinal-turkson>

April 23, 2018

Church teaching leads Catholic entities to divest from fossil fuels

By Dennis Sadowski
Crux

A wind turbine turns in front of a fossil fuel power plant in Charlestown, Mass., in this 2013 file photo. Catholic institutions are planning to divest part of their financial portfolios from the fossil fuel industry because of its impact on climate change. (Credit: Brian Snyder/Reuters via CNS.)

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Caritas Internationalis, the Catholic Church's worldwide network of humanitarian aid agencies, three German banks and more than 30 other Catholic institutions are planning to divest at least part of their financial portfolios from the fossil fuel industry.

The divestment announcement by the Global Catholic Climate Movement April 22, Earth Day, is part of a continuing campaign to convince Catholic entities to move investments to renewable energy enterprises.

Divestment from the fossil fuel industry is crucial to addressing climate change and upholding the commitments to reduce carbon emissions set in the 2015 Paris climate accord, Tomas Insua, GCCM executive director, told *Catholic News Service*.

“This announcement is the result of many months of hard work. Our team has been working pretty hard raising awareness. I think there is so little understanding about the fossil fuel industry being at the core of the environmental crisis,” he said.

The divestment campaign also falls in line with the message of Pope Francis’s 2015 encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home*, Insua explained.

“It’s just unacceptable to treat the fossil fuel industry as just another industry,” he added. “The call of *Laudato Si’* to move away from fossil fuels is crystal clear.”

Desmond Wilson, chief financial officer at The Catherine Donnelly Foundation in Toronto, told *CNS* the divestment decision falls in line with the organization’s ties to the religious community.

“We came to understand that there were moral and ethical issues in play here,” Wilson said, explaining that the world’s poorest people are most affected by a changing climate. “If climate change is caused by the action of humans, we have a responsibility to reflect on that and take some measures to keep that threat under control.”

While its fossil fuel investments totaled just \$1 million in a \$45 million portfolio, Wilson said the foundation felt it was important to adhere to its Catholic roots.

“Eventually we came to understand cigarettes, tobacco, was a harmful product. It’s the same sort of thing with fossil fuels. We see more and more that it is a harmful product in the way it affects climate,” he explained.

Three German Catholic banks, with more than \$9.2 billion in holdings, are among the divesting institutions: Pax-Bank, Bank im Bistum Essen and Steyler Ethik Bank. Pax-Bank said it was partially divesting while the others announced they were pulling investments from coal companies.

“In view of the progressing climate change and its social consequences, we consider the exploitation of fossil fuel for their incineration as a threat to the common good,” spokesman Alfred Krott wrote in an email to *CNS*. “We want to promote renewable energy and exclude companies that mine hard coal or lignite (soft coal), peat, oil and natural gas.”

In a statement, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila, Philippines and president of Caritas Internationalis, said poor people around the world suffer “greatly from the climate crisis and

fossil fuels are among the main drivers of this injustice. That is why Caritas Internationalis has decided not to invest in fossil fuels anymore.”

The cardinal encouraged members of the humanitarian aid network and other church organizations “to do the same.”

Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg, president of the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community, or COMECE, said bishops were joining other Catholic institutions in “making financial decisions that are in line with our moral values.”

“Divestment is an important way for the Church to show leadership in the context of a changing climate,” he said in a statement. “Praise be to all those who service ‘the least of these’ by protecting the environment.”

Other divesting institutions include the Jesuit European Social Center in Belgium; Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis and Ursulines of the Chatman Union in Canada; China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation; Caritas France; Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambery and Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province in Ireland; Archdiocese of Salerno, Italy; Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Kenya; International Association of World Peace Advocates in Nigeria; Jesuit-run Environmental Science for Social Change in Philippines; Justice and Peace National Commission of the Portuguese bishops’ conference; Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund; and Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Stockton, California.

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2018/04/23/church-teaching-leads-catholic-entities-to-divest-from-fossil-fuels/>

April 23, 2018

Pope Francis brings a new lens to poverty, peace and the planet

By Robert W. McElroy

America: The Jesuit Review

Five years ago, Jorge Bergoglio became [Francis](#), choosing at the moment of his election in March 2013 a name that no pope had taken before. His choice of the name served as a signpost for the direction in which he would lead the global church. In his embrace of the poor, his pursuit of nonviolence and his care for all of God’s creation, Pope Francis has brought the legacy of the great saint of Assisi to the very heart of the church’s proclamation to the modern world.

It is especially fruitful, then, in assessing the [first five years](#) of the Francis pontificate, to examine how the pope’s contributions to [Catholic social teaching](#) have reflected the three Franciscan priorities of poverty, peace and the planet. In what way has the leadership of the first

pope from the New World enriched or altered the body of Catholic social teaching? What is it about his papacy or perspective that has generated such substantial opposition to Pope Francis, particularly within the United States? How should we characterize the mission that the pope has taken on behalf of economic justice, building peace and caring for our common home?

A New Lens

The starting point to answering these questions lies in recognizing that the relationship between the social teachings of Pope Francis and his predecessors is not, fundamentally, one of continuity or discontinuity. Rather, the relationship that Pope Francis' teachings on poverty, peace and the environment have with the tradition he inherited is one of fundamental continuity but refracted through a strikingly new lens.

This new lens reflects in a fundamental way the experience of the church in [Latin America](#). Critics of Pope Francis point to this as a limitation, a bias that prevents the pope from seeing the central issues of [economic justice](#), [war and peace](#) and the [environment](#) in the context of the universal church. But St. John Paul II certainly enriched key aspects of Catholic social teaching from a perspective profoundly rooted in the experience of the Eastern European church under communism. Contemporary critics of Pope Francis voice no objection to that regional and historical perspective.

Furthermore, the church in Latin America constitutes more than [40 percent of the Catholics](#) in the world. When combined with the Catholic populations of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, which face similar economic and environmental challenges, the church of the global south constitutes more than two-thirds of the universal church. The Argentine pope's perspective on Catholic social teaching is, then, one shared by the majority of Catholics.

There are four major elements that shape how Pope Francis understands the Catholic tradition on the issues of poverty, peace and the planet.

See-judge-act. The first and most important element is the recognition that Catholic social teaching must be comprehensively inductive. Specifically, Pope Francis employs the see-judge-act methodology, which roots Catholic teaching and action in the world as it is, rather than the world as one imagines or wishes it to be. This is the central methodology used by the church in Latin America to discern how the church is being called to respond in areas ranging from evangelization to spiritual formation to social justice.

The see-judge-act method begins theological reflection by seeing the world as it truly is, then pondering the implications in light of our faith and the Gospel and, finally, promoting action in concert with those implications. As [the pivotal final document](#) of the Latin American and Caribbean bishops' meeting at [Aparecida](#), Brazil, in 2007 stated, "This method enables us to combine successfully a faithful perspective for viewing reality; incorporating criteria from faith and reason for discerning and appraising it critically; and accordingly acting as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ."

Throwaway culture. Next, Pope Francis approaches the tradition of Catholic social thought through the theme of exclusion. Marginalization, viewed as a denial of the right to participate meaningfully in political, economic, social and cultural life, has long been a major focus of Catholic social teaching. The concept of exclusion that Pope Francis deploys is broader than marginalization; it is reflective of the interwoven deprivations that do not merely banish entire populations to the margins of society but exclude them entirely. In Pope Francis' memorable terminology, such people are victims of a "[throwaway culture](#)," discarded from any meaningful participation in society.

The colonial history of Latin America and the neocolonialism that endures on many levels today has attuned this pope to the manner in which grave inequalities of wealth and power inevitably result in the patterns of exclusion that pulverize the human spirit.

In light of this history, the Latin American church is suspicious of globalization. The bishops' [Aparecida document](#) explicitly states: "In globalization, market forces easily absolutize efficacy and productivity as values regulating all human relations.... In its current form, globalization is incapable of interpreting and reacting in response to objective values that transcend the market and that constitute what is most important in human life: truth, justice, love and most especially, the dignity and rights of all, even those not included in the market."

Our common home. The third element of the pope's new lens on Catholic social thought is the recognition that integral human development includes the protection of the earth, our common home. Latin America is the home of Amazonia, a region so rich in its biodiversity that it is literally vital for the preservation of life on earth. Francis has seen firsthand the destruction of the Amazon; there is an environmental catastrophe underway that can suffocate the earth even while it destroys ancient cultures and impoverishes vast populations.

Latin America is a prime example of how economic systems that internalize profits while externalizing costs and risks must be reformed or replaced. It is also a prime example of how deep engagement with the environment informed by the scientific consensus of the world can begin to reclaim the health of our common home. The see-judge-act method reveals an ongoing abuse of the creation that God has entrusted to us, and none of the alternative realities painted by the extractive industries of our nation can obscure that simple fact.

Pacifist roots. The final element of the new lens that Pope Francis brings to Catholic teaching on poverty, peace and the planet is the reintegration of nonviolence into the heart of Catholic teaching on war and peace. In the early church, pacifism was the dominant theme of Christian theology. For most of the church's history, however, nonviolence has been seen as a heroic though unrealistic choice, an eccentric part of our patrimony that was displaced by St. Augustine's powerful logic of war as last resort.

In his "World Day of Peace Message" in 2017, Pope Francis reclaimed the tradition of pacifism as a major theological current in the life of the church. He reiterated the contention of the early Christian community that Christ's call to love of neighbor and enemy alike is, in an unrelenting way, incompatible with recourse to war. Francis teaches that the time in which Jesus lived was one of great violence, and yet he preached nonresistance. Can the church do anything less than

seek to construct a powerful and realistic politics of nonviolence rooted both in reality and in the words of the Lord himself?

A Threefold Mission

[The first five years of Francis' pontificate](#) suggest that the pope, through this new lens, has undertaken a different mission within each of the three major priorities of the Franciscan legacy.

Poverty. On the question of poverty, Pope Francis has undertaken a mission of application and renewal. Specifically, the pope has sought to enact Catholic moral teaching in the light of the forces of globalization that are transforming our economies, cultures and societies. In a very real way, Pope Francis approaches globalization with the same perspective that characterized Pope Leo XIII's critique of industrialization in "[Rerum Novarum](#)" in 1891. Francis is under no illusion that globalization can be reversed. Rather, it is his conviction that the tremendous upheaval in economic, familial and cultural life caused by globalization requires the creation of major new structures of social justice designed to mitigate the consequences and claims of globalization that have devastated so many sectors of the human family.

The great theme of the preferential option for the poor, which has resonated in Catholic teaching since the time of Paul VI, lies at the heart of this renewal. The methodology of see-judge-act, so consonant with the Second Vatican Council's [exhortation](#) to look carefully at the "signs of the times," provides the pathway for meaningful reform. And the questions of participation and marginalization, so central to the social thought of St. John Paul II and [Pope Benedict XVI](#), have been amplified by the prism of exclusion that ultimately is determinative in Pope Francis' judgments about the morality of globalization. Even refracted through the distinctive lens that Pope Francis brings to Catholic social teaching on the issue of poverty, his project is fundamentally one of continuing the long trajectory of the church's commitment to the defense of the poor, using the rich doctrinal resources that have been forged over the past 125 years.

Peace. If the relationship between the initiatives of Pope Francis and the tradition he inherited can be seen as one of continuity and renewal in the area of economic justice and poverty, Pope Francis' mission in the area of peace is best seen as one of recovery. On one level, Francis has continued the trajectory of the modern popes in tightening the moral requirements under just war theory for recourse to war and the formulation of nuclear policy. The pope's bold decision last November to proclaim the very possession of nuclear weapons morally unacceptable is a sign of that continuing trajectory.

But on a more fundamental level, the initiatives of Pope Francis in the area of nonviolence and peace-building constitute a major shift in orientation in Catholic social teaching designed to truly empower the church's ancient pacifist traditions. This shift is rooted in the see-judge-act methodology that looks to the demonstrated successes of nonviolence in civil conflicts around the globe in which violence had been tried and failed. By pointing to the viability and moral superiority of nonviolence, this recovery of the pacifist tradition provides a necessary complement to a just war tradition that must become ever more restrictive if it hopes to preserve a claim as an authentic Christian ethic.

Planet. Pope Francis' teachings on the environment constitute a mission of neither renewal nor recovery but rather of wholesale transformation. For most of the church's history, Catholic social teaching on the environment has reflected a theme of mastery and domination. St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict both sounded a piercing alarm about the well-being of the planet in their writings about the pillaging of the earth. But it has fallen to Pope Francis, in "[Laudato Si'](#)," to construct a breathtaking theology of creation for an age in which the earth itself is imperiled.

Francis is a pope uniquely equipped to carry out this transformation. The first son of Latin America to be pope, he instinctively appreciates the richness of biodiversity as the lifeblood of the planet and has witnessed the degradation of the earth and destruction of peoples brought by rampant exploitation.

"[Laudato Si'](#)" is a prayer; it is a warning; it is an affirmation of the power and beneficence of God; it is an analysis of the contending forces and bad decisions that have brought our planet to a point of deepest peril. Most of all, it is the re-creation of Catholic teaching about the nature of the human person in relation to the earth that is our common home.

The renewal, recovery and transformation that Pope Francis has launched in Catholic teachings on poverty, peace and the planet are firmly rooted in the doctrinal tradition of the church. Yet they bring the enriching perspective of the Southern church—the majority of Catholics in the world today—to bear on the themes of exclusion, pacifism, the preservation of our common home and the massive threats that globalization poses for humanity. St. Francis of Assisi must be very pleased.

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2018/04/23/pope-francis-brings-new-lens-poverty-peace-and-planet>

April 23, 2018

Divestment from fossil fuels is a witness to our faith

By John O'Shaughnessy and Erin Lothes
National Catholic Reporter

This week, an international coalition of Catholic institutions announced its divestment from fossil fuels. These include Caritas Internationalis (a Vatican-affiliated institution), Catholic banks with combined balance sheets of approximately €7.5 billion and Catholic bishops, among others.

All of us who share life on Earth should applaud this decision. After all, it will protect us from the respiratory diseases, extreme weather, and hunger we see with climate change, which is driven largely by use of fossil fuels. Less fossil fuel use means a better chance of building a healthy, safe world for our children and the most vulnerable of our sisters and brothers. Because we ourselves are Catholics who have struggled with decisions about how to manage our reliance

on oil, coal and natural gas, we especially applaud the courage and conviction of these Catholic institutions.

The truth is that Catholics are, at long last, among those leading the charge to make the tough but fundamentally moral decisions about fossil fuel use and climate change. As the CEO of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary and an energy ethics theologian, we have witnessed firsthand the moral reckoning of divestment.

In 2014, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary, a congregation of women religious, removed all public companies that extract, hold and sell fossil fuel reserves from their investment portfolios. For these followers of St. Francis of Assisi, change couldn't wait. They view compassionate care of creation as the focus of their mission. In weighing the comfort of sticking with status quo investments with the greater good of a fossil fuel-free world, they made the tough but courageous decision to divest.

With help from professional advisors, the sisters shifted assets from fossil fuels to enterprises that grow the energy systems we need and preserve the lands and waters we were given. This prayerful, sustainable investment strategy has not only provided the sisters greater joy and satisfaction, it has also produced better financial returns and created social and environmental benefits they can measure.

The sisters help lead a growing movement that seeks justice in investments. With their firsthand experience and success, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary helped form the Catholic Impact Investing Collaborative, whose participants today collectively manage over \$50 billion in assets. From women and men religious to health systems and humanitarian organizations, the movement toward better stewardship of our resources is thriving.

We are at a turning point in history. For much of the twentieth century, fossil fuels were the backbone of technologies that created prosperity and security. Without a doubt, we're grateful to the miners, oilmen and engineers who have worked so hard to provide the energy we've relied on.

Now, however, we know that an economy built on dirty energy will not serve us in the long term. And institutional investors have the long-term interest of their congregations, unions and retirement systems at heart. We believe that the tide of investment is turning.

In seeking a transition from investments of the past to investments of the future, a strategy of "investor engagement," or creating dialogue about change from the position of shareholders, has arisen. We applaud the spirit of dialogue. Unfortunately, in this case, it has not kept pace with the scaled-up transition to renewable energy that science tells us we urgently need.

For those who see dialogue as essential to their moral witness, we suggest a "both-and" strategy. A portfolio that maintains the minimum shares needed to support shareholder engagement and reinvests any divested shares in clean energy keeps the lines of dialogue open, while also making a clear commitment to the future our children will inherit.

We believe that given the depths and urgency of this crisis, we no longer have the luxury of only talking about change. We must now actively pursue it by funding clean energy.

As our brothers and sisters around the world face increasing hunger, sickness and conflict related to climate change, Catholic investors are finding continued reliance on fossil fuels will lead to harm for the human family, the young and most vulnerable above all. For many of us, divestment is a way of expressing the faith values that we hold most dear.

[John O'Shaughnessy is the CEO and CFO of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary and the founder of the Catholic Impact Investing Collaborative. Dr. Erin Lothes is an associate professor and theologian at the College of Saint Elizabeth in Morristown, NJ.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/divestment-fossil-fuels-witness-our-faith>

April 24, 2018

Water unites us, so make it available to all

By Alex Mikulich
National Catholic Reporter

Water literally is both the gift of life and a threat of death. In my home of New Orleans and many places like it throughout the world, we know too well the death-dealing power of water. While we have spent billions to build a levee system to protect people and buildings, the failure to rebuild aging sewerage pipeline infrastructure exacerbates larger fiscal crises. We can't live with too much of it, and we can't live without its life-giving and cleansing powers.

In Genesis, water is both the source of life-giving creation and the chaos of the flood. In Exodus, water becomes a weapon against the oppressive Egyptians. Physical thirst is a symbol of the deepest human desires for eternal life and love in God.

The prophet Isaiah calls "all who are thirsty" and "have no money" to drink and eat until they are filled. And just as the heavens pour rain and snow on the earth to make it fruitful, so Isaiah reminds us that God is "generous and forgiving" (Isaiah 55:1, 7, 10).

Jesus is the living water of salvation (John 7:38). During the Easter liturgy, the Easter candle is lowered into water three times, depicting how Christ was lowered into, and rose from, the tomb. There is no more integral religious symbol of the possibility of the transformation of death into life.

Although 71 percent of Earth is covered with water and the adult human body is at least 60 percent water, there is no law that guarantees access to clean water. The Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church states that "the right to safe drinking water is a universal and inalienable right."

Yet this Earth Day we may not realize how a water crisis impacts at least one in every three people globally and nearly 10 million people in the United States. The people of Flint, Michigan, are not alone in their struggle for clean, accessible and affordable water. If infrastructure and costs are not addressed immediately, more than 40 million American households will likely face a crisis in cost and/or access.

Imagine a life without water. Privileged Americans take for granted our access to, and use of, clean water. Yet nearly 850 million globally — about one in every nine people — lack access to safe water. And 2.3 billion people have no access to a toilet. We Americans have not given this national and global crisis the attention it deserves.

According to a 2017 study, Michigan State University researchers found that water prices need to increase by 41 percent in the United States over the next five years to cover the costs of replacing aging water infrastructure and adapting to climate change. That means that more than one-third of all Americans may not be able to afford water by 2020.

In states like Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana and Mississippi, as many as 83 percent of residents are at high risk of becoming unable to pay their water bills. These include people who live in rural and urban areas.

The American Society of Civil Engineers' 2017 infrastructure report card issued U.S. drinking and wastewater grades of D and D+, respectively. According to the American Water Works Association, an estimated \$1 trillion is necessary to maintain and expand service to meet demand over the next 25 years.

Nevertheless, the Trump administration and many libertarians believe water is merely an economic good to be privatized for monetary gain regardless of its impact on the poor. Privatization and deregulation threaten both access to, and affordability of, clean water.

The advocacy group Food and Water Watch reports that the Trump administration is gutting federal clean water standards and its infrastructure plan favors privatization over existing public systems. Privately owned systems charge 59 percent more than publicly owned systems. Moreover, by cutting the relative tax benefit of tax-exempt municipal bonds, the Trump tax changes mean that local and state governments are going to pay higher interest rates on those bonds to attract buyers.

This Earth Day, people of faith must address this fundamental pro-life issue. Catholic Climate Covenant and Eco-Jesuit, among others, regularly offer action tips to implement the environmental encyclical of Pope Francis, "*Laudato Si'*", on Care for Our Common Home."

Water.org provides an outstanding example of the kind of creative social innovations necessary to care for both the Earth and our most vulnerable brothers and sisters. Water.org utilizes micro-financing as a way to build local infrastructure, increase water access, and reduce water costs to millions of people throughout the world.

Perhaps there is no more apt symbol for our time than water. Many march and cry out to God for justice and the need to be cleansed of the moral and political scandals that wreak havoc upon the most vulnerable in our society. May we find in water our shared vulnerability and humanity. May we recognize how water unites all people to the Earth, to one another and to God. It is time we extend its affordability and accessibility to all.

[Alex Mikulich is a Catholic social ethicist.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/water-unites-us-so-make-it-available-all>

April 26, 2018

Native Knowledge: What Ecologists Are Learning from Indigenous People

By Jim Robbins

Yale Environment 360

From Alaska to Australia, scientists are turning to the knowledge of traditional people for a deeper understanding of the natural world. What they are learning is helping them discover more about everything from melting Arctic ice, to protecting fish stocks, to controlling wildfires.

While he was interviewing Inuit elders in Alaska to find out more about their knowledge of beluga whales and how the mammals might respond to the changing Arctic, researcher Henry Huntington lost track of the conversation as the hunters suddenly switched from the subject of belugas to beavers.

It turned out though, that the hunters were still really talking about whales. There had been an increase in beaver populations, they explained, which had reduced spawning habitat for salmon and other fish, which meant less prey for the belugas and so fewer whales.

“It was a more holistic view of the ecosystem,” said Huntington. And an important tip for whale researchers. “It would be pretty rare for someone studying belugas to be thinking about freshwater ecology.”

Around the globe, researchers are turning to what is known as [Traditional Ecological Knowledge](#) (TEK) to fill out an understanding of the natural world. TEK is deep knowledge of a place that has been painstakingly discovered by those who have adapted to it over thousands of years. “People have relied on this detailed knowledge for their survival,” Huntington and a colleague wrote in [an article on the subject](#). “They have literally staked their lives on its accuracy and repeatability.”

This realm has long been studied by disciplines under headings such as ethno-biology, ethno-ornithology, and biocultural diversity. But it has gotten more attention from mainstream scientists lately because of efforts to better understand the world in the face of climate change and the accelerating loss of biodiversity.

Anthropologist Wade Davis, now at the University of British Columbia, refers to the constellation of the world's cultures as the "[ethnosphere](#)," or "the sum total of all thoughts and dreams, myths, ideas, inspirations, intuitions, brought into being by human imagination since the dawn of consciousness. It's a symbol of all that we are, and all that we can be, as an astonishingly inquisitive species."

One estimate says that while native peoples only comprise some 4 or 5 percent of the world's population, they use almost a quarter of the world's land surface and manage [11 percent of its forests](#). "In doing so, they maintain 80 percent of the planet's biodiversity in, or adjacent to, 85 percent of the world's protected areas," writes Gleb Raygorodetsky, a researcher with the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance at the University of Victoria and the author of [The Archipelago of Hope: Wisdom and Resilience from the Edge of Climate Change](#).

Tapping into this wisdom is playing an outsized role in sparsely settled places such as the Arctic, where change is happening rapidly – warming is occurring twice as fast as other parts of the world. Tero Mustonen, a Finnish researcher and chief of his village of Selkie, is pioneering the blending of TEK and mainstream science as the director of a project called the [Snowchange Cooperative](#). "Remote sensing can detect changes," he says. "But what happens as a result, what does it mean?" That's where traditional knowledge can come into play as native people who make a living on the landscape as hunters and fishers note the dramatic changes taking place in remote locales – everything from thawing permafrost to change in reindeer migration and other types of biodiversity redistribution.

The Skolt Sami people of Finland, for example, [participated in a study](#) that was published in the journal *Science* last year, which adopted indicators of environmental changes based on TEK. The Sami have seen and documented a decline in salmon in the Näätämö River, for instance. Now, based on their knowledge, they are adapting – reducing the number of seine nets they use to catch fish, restoring spawning sites, and also taking more pike, which prey on young salmon, as part of their catch. The project is part of a co-management process between the Sami and the government of Finland.

The project has also gathered information from the Sami about insects, which are temperature dependent and provide an important indicator of a changing Arctic. The Sami have witnessed dramatic changes in the range of insects that are making their way north. The scarbaeid beetle, for example, was documented by Sami people as the invader arrived in the forests of Finland and Norway, far north of its customary range. It has also become part of the Sami oral history.

It's not only in the Arctic. Around the world there are efforts to make use of traditional wisdom to gain a better and deeper understanding of the planet – and there is sometimes a lot at stake.

Record brush fires burned across Australia in 2009, killing 173 people and injuring more than 400. The day the number of fires peaked – February 7 – is known as Black Saturday. It led to a great deal of soul searching in Australia, especially as climate warming has exacerbated fire seasons there.

Bill Gammage is an academic historian and fellow at the Humanities Research Center of the Australian National University, and his book, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How the Aborigines Made Australia*, looks at the complex and adept way that aborigines, prior to colonization in 1789, managed the landscape with “fire and no fire” – something called “fire stick farming.”

They used “cool” fires to control everything from biodiversity to water supply to the abundance of wildlife and edible plants. Gammage noted five stages of the indigenous use of fire – first was to control wildfire fuel; second, to maintain diversity; third, to balance species; fourth, to ensure abundance; and five, to locate resources conveniently and predictably. The current regime, he says, is still struggling with number one.

“Controlled fire averted uncontrolled fire,” Gammage says, “and fire or no-fire distributed plants with the precision of a flame edge. In turn, this attracted or deterred grazing animals and located them in habitats each preferred, making them abundant, convenient, and predictable. All was where fire or no-fire put it. Australia was not natural in 1788, but made.”

While the skill of aborigines with fire had been noted before the giant brushfires – early settlers remarked on the “park-like” nature of the landscape – and studied before, it’s taken on new urgency. That’s why Australian land managers have adopted many of the ideas and partnered with native people as co-managers. The fire practices of the aborigines are also being taught and used in other countries.

Scientists have looked to Australian natives for other insights into the natural world. A team of researchers collaborated with natives based on their observations of kites and falcons that fly with flaming branches from a forest fire to start other fires. It’s well known that birds will hunt mice and lizards as they flee the flames of a wildfire. But stories among indigenous people in northern Australia held that some birds actually started fires by dropping a burning branch in unburned places. Based on this TEK, researchers watched and documented this behavior.

“It’s a feeding frenzy, because out of these grasslands comes small birds, lizards, insects, everything fleeing in front of the fire,” said Bob Gosford, an indigenous rights lawyer and ornithologist, who worked on the [research](#), in an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in 2016.

Another [recent study](#) down under found that an ancient practice of using fire to clear land to improve hunting also creates a more diverse mosaic of re-growth that increases the number of the primate prey species: monitor lizards and kangaroos.

“Westerners have done little but isolate ourselves from nature,” said Mark Bonta, an assistant professor at Penn State Altoona who was on a co-author on the paper on fire and raptors. “Yet those who make a point of connecting with our earth in some form have enormous knowledge because they interact with a species. When you get into conservation, [that knowledge] is even more important.” Aboriginal people “don’t see themselves as superior to or separated from animals. They are walking storehouses of knowledge,” he said.

The Maya people of Mesoamerica have much to teach us about farming, experts say. Researchers have found that they preserve an astonishing amount of biodiversity in their forest gardens, in harmony with the surrounding forest. “The active gardens found around Maya forest villagers’ houses shows that it’s the most diverse domestic system in the world,” integrated into the forest ecosystem, writes Anabel Ford, who is head of the MesoAmerican Research Center at the University of California at Santa Barbara. “These forest gardeners are heroes, yet their skill and sophistication have too long been set aside and devalued.”

Valuing these life ways is an important part of the process. For the Skolt Sami, [writes Mustonen](#), “seeing their language and culture valued led to an increase in self-esteem and power over their resources.”

It may not just be facts about the natural world that are important in these exchanges, but different ways of being and perceiving. In fact, there are researchers looking into the relationship between some indigenous people and the very different ways they see the world.

Felice Wyndham is an ecological anthropologist and ethnobiologist who has noted that people she has worked with can intimately sense the world beyond their body. “It’s a form of enhanced mindfulness,” she says. “It’s quite common, you see it in most hunter-gatherer groups. It’s an extremely developed skill base of cognitive agility, of being able to put yourself into a viewpoint and perspective of many creatures or objects – rocks, water, clouds.

“We, as humans, have a remarkable sensitivity, imagination, and ability to be cognitively agile,” Wyndham says. “If we are open to it and train ourselves to learn how to drop all of the distractions to our sensory capacity, we’re able to do so much more biologically than we use in contemporary industrial society.”

Among the most important messages from traditional people is their equanimity and optimism. There “is no sense of doom and gloom,” says Raygorodetsky. “Despite dire circumstances, they maintain hope for the future.”

<https://e360.yale.edu/features/native-knowledge-what-ecologists-are-learning-from-indigenous-people>

April 27, 2018

Forum on ecological civilization mulls China's role in way forward

Xinhua Net

CLAREMONT, the United States -- The 12th International Forum on Ecological Civilization, an initiative to create and promote new modes of development in China and the West, kicked off in Claremont, Southern California, Friday.

Themed "Ecological Civilization and Symbiotic Development", the two-day conference is hosted by the Institute for Postmodern Development of China, a non-profit organization.

Over 160 scholars from China, the United States and other countries are exchanging views on the latest developments in ecological civilization.

John B. Cobb Jr., a 93-year-old member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, called to improve the quality of community life in a way that would leave everyone better off while reducing the pressure on the natural environment, suggesting that China could lead the way.

"We need to describe the need in a different way, such as freeing everyone from degrading poverty while reducing the overall pressures on our natural environment," he said. "This would require changes in our lifestyle that are not now seriously discussed in any nation. Perhaps China can lead the way."

David Korten, co-founder and president of the Living Economies Forum, a non-profit that promotes positive living principles and a new economy grounded in them, said we have arrived at a defining moment in the human experience.

"Either we find our common path to an ecological civilization that meets the essential material needs of Earth's human population in a balanced relationship with (Earth's) natural systems, or we risk being the first Earth species knowingly to choose self-extinction," he said.

Korten, the author of influential books including "When Corporations Rule the World," and "The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community", said this poses a distinctive challenge to China, which must now choose between leading the world on one of two paths.

The mayor of Claremont, Opanyi Nasiali, welcomed scholars from around the world, saying, "I hope this conference stresses the importance of collaboration and strengthens the respect we must have for each other in this global village."

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/28/c_137144045.htm

April 28, 2018

7 arrested as faith leaders protest Trans Mountain pipeline expansion in Burnaby

By Chad Pawson
CBC News

Leaders from a broad spectrum of religious faiths stood with Indigenous people at a Kinder Morgan work site in Burnaby, B.C., on Saturday to protest the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Unitarians, two choirs, members of 10 Christian denominations, and interfaith groups all participated by singing and chanting but also fixing prayers, rosaries and flags to the gates of Kinder Morgan's site at [Shellmont Street and Underhill Avenue](#).

Amal Rana placed a quote from the Prophet Mohammad on the gates.

"Environmental justice is a huge part of the Islamic faith, actually all our faiths," she said. "We are here to stand with Indigenous people and also for the earth ... that is part of our spirituality."

[Seven people were arrested by Burnaby RCMP officers](#) for breaching a court-ordered injunction that prevents people from obstructing or impeding access to Kinder Morgan facilities in Burnaby.

The groups said they were against the expansion because of concerns it could cause environmental damage, and that there was [not enough meaningful consultation done with Indigenous stakeholders](#).

Bat-Ami Hensen, a member of Metro Vancouver's Jewish Community said it was important to stand with people from other faiths in opposition to the project.

"We have common values," she said of all the groups gathered on Saturday.

Others like independent Christian Reverend Dr. Vivian Marie says the event was also to show a commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous people.

"Our faith demands that as well as care of the earth," she also said.

Laurel Dykstra, a priest with the Anglican Church of Canada, says religious leaders are putting prayers into action by being willing to be arrested.

"People of faith are standing in solidarity with Indigenous people to say this pipeline will not be built," she said.

Meanwhile, parts of a protest camp set up in Burnaby appeared to have been vandalized with spray paint saying, "protesters not welcome," and "go home."

Burnaby RCMP have not yet confirmed if it received complaints about the spray paint or if they are investigating.

The Trans Mountain project received federal approval in November of 2016. The National Energy Board (NEB) concluded that the project is in Canada's public interest and it could [proceed with 157 conditions](#).

Since then, legal challenges and political wrangling have stalled the expansion, which would increase the amount of oil or products being transported from Edmonton to Burnaby from 300,000 barrels per day to 890,000 barrels per day.

On Friday, the B.C. government asked the B.C. Court of Appeal if it has [the jurisdiction to bring in stricter rules for companies to ferry more heavy oil](#) — like diluted bitumen — through the province.

This week Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna wrote an open letter to B.C.'s environment minister proposing [the creation of a joint scientific panel to study oil spills and response measures](#).

Trans Mountain says it has prepared extensive plans to help emergency responders react faster, and more effectively, in limiting potential impacts of a spill.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/faith-leaders-trans-mountain-protest-burnaby-1.4640502>

April 30, 2018

Mormon environmentalist conveys ecological message through fiction

By Jana Riess

Religion News Service

The phrase “Mormon environmentalist” is not one you hear every day, given that Mormons in the United States are often politically conservative. But Utah resident George Handley is exactly that – committed to both the Mormon faith and to rescuing the environment.

As a professor of interdisciplinary humanities at Mormonism’s flagship school, Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, Handley has long penned nonfiction that has addressed the impact that human beings are having on the planet. But now he’s channeling his creative energies in a new direction, through fiction. [His debut novel *American Fork*](#) has just been released from indie press [Roundfire Books](#).

Set in 2001, *American Fork* tells the story of a reclusive botanist, Zacharias Harker, who enlists the help of a young artist, Alba, in chronicling the damage climate change is wreaking in Utah’s Wasatch Mountains.

“Alba is someone, as an artist, who is just discovering her love of the natural environment,” says Handley. “And Mr. Harker has a deep connection to the natural world that’s not a function of an academic or political interest, but something deeper. He’s wrestling with deep existential questions that emerge from the suffering he’s had in his own life, which unfolds as the novel moves forward.”

Alba’s interest in the environment is strongly influenced by her Mormon faith, which is also true of the author, who says his approach is “strongly influenced by literature and art and spirituality.

I certainly am interested in the politics surrounding environmentalism, but I tend to think of those issues as less of an activist and more of a humanist and a believing Mormon.”

Not all Mormons would agree. In the Next Mormons Survey, a nationally representative sample of Latter-day Saints conducted in 2016, only 41% of Mormons agreed with a statement that “the earth’s climate is getting warmer because of human activity.”

The results were even lower among Mormons in Utah, the setting of Handley’s novel: just over a third of Utah Latter-day Saints say the climate is changing because of human activity.

Handley says he’s not surprised by this resistance to scientists’ findings about climate change and the environment, though it saddens him. “I live it and experience it all the time,” he says, noting that in two decades of teaching at BYU, he has worked to bring people with different ideas into dialogue with each other.

“I spend a lot of time trying to help people identify the common ground they already have. Obviously, I’m interested in helping people understand the science and be informed with the best information, but you can’t go into discussions seeing climate change as some kind of culture war. It’s such a non-starter.”

At BYU, he has co-taught a course with biology professor (and novelist and friend) [Steven Peck](#), focusing on religion and the environment. Because of the success of that course, Peck offered a related spinoff elective in the biology department, and Handley wound up designing an environmental humanities program.

Now through fiction, he is able to weave environmental themes into the lives of his characters. “There is increasing interest in the ways in which fiction can help us think about the environmental crisis in productive ways that are harder to come by in other forms of writing,” he says. He cites the nature writing of [Barbara Kingsolver](#) and [Amitav Ghosh](#) as formative in the burgeoning field of environmental fiction.

“The compelling case to be made for narrative is that it allows you to step into a world that can shape your moral imagination in vital ways. If the fiction writer is doing his or her job well, the novel can retrofit your imagination.”

Handley will promote the novel with readings and book signings in Utah, including an appearance at [the King’s English Bookstore in Salt Lake City on the evening of Tuesday, May 29](#).

So far, he says, the early response has been quite positive, though he would not be surprised to have some pushback from a few conservative Latter-day Saints. Handley says he wishes religious people would “put down the sword of political ideology” where climate change is concerned and “just think about and celebrate the principles and values of stewardship, which are so beautifully articulated in Mormon doctrine. And really get serious about living up to the responsibilities that are spelled out in our scriptures.”

Mormonism, he says, is actually a treasure trove of concern for the environment, which is something he hopes more Latter-day Saints will take seriously. “We either neglect a lot of those teachings or we actually dismiss them. In the name of a political set of loyalties we think that environmental concerns are things we should be dismissive or distrustful of.”

<https://religionnews.com/2018/04/30/mormon-environmentalist-conveys-ecological-message-through-fiction/>

April 30, 2018

'Catholics Are Still In' campaign recommits support for Paris climate pact

By Brian Roewe
National Catholic Reporter

As federal steps to curb climate change wane in the United States, a new campaign looks to add a loud and broad Catholic voice to a nationwide reassertion of American commitment to the international pact to address a warming world.

The Catholic Climate Covenant officially launched on April 25 the "[Catholics Are Still In](#)" [campaign](#) to assemble church institutions behind a united Catholic Climate Declaration advocating for U.S. action on climate change and support for the Paris Agreement despite the Trump administration's plans to exit the deal.

"As Catholic communities, organizations, and institutions in the United States, we join with state, tribal, and local governments, as well as businesses, financial institutions, and other faith organizations, to declare that we are still in on actions that meet the climate goals outlined in the Paris Agreement," the declaration reads.

It continues: "Climate change is an urgent moral issue because it compromises the future of our common home, threatens human life and human dignity, and adds to the hardships already experienced by the poorest and most vulnerable people both at home and abroad. We teach that governments exist to protect and promote the common good, and that 'the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all,' " referencing a passage from Pope Francis' 2015 environmental encyclical "[Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home](#)."

The Paris Agreement, [adopted in the French capital in December 2015 at the COP21 United Nations climate summit](#), committed all nations to take steps to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions — the primary driver of climate change — toward the goal of holding average global temperature rise "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) or as low as 1.5 C (2.7 F).

That threshold is the point scientists predict the effects of climate change, among them increased droughts, wildfires, intense flooding and extreme weather events, will become most extreme and

likely irreversible. A study released April 25 [funded by the U.S. military](#) concluded that more than 1,000 low-lying islands could become "inhabitable" by midcentury or sooner due to rising sea levels.

The Catholics Are Still In campaign is coordinated by Catholic Climate Covenant and its partner members, which include the [U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops](#). The campaign seeks to gather through June 11 thousands of signatures from the nation's dioceses, parishes, congregations and offices of Catholic organizations. The Catholic Climate Covenant will then announce the final count around June 18, the third anniversary the release of [Laudato Si'](#).

"We are strongly calling for nonpartisan dialogue and approaches to climate change. To really ending the partisanship about this, because it is about care for creation, care for our future, care for our common home, care for the most vulnerable," Jose Aguto, Catholic Climate Covenant associate director, told NCR.

The Catholics Are Still In campaign aligns with the broader "We Are Still In" coalition that formed among cities, states and a multitude of organizations and businesses in the wake of President Donald Trump's announcement last June that he would [withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Agreement](#) at the earliest opportunity.

Under the terms of the Paris Agreement, a nation cannot formally announce its intention to leave the agreement until three years after its ratification date, Nov. 4, 2016, with the withdrawal process taking effect a year later. That timeline places the earliest date for a U.S. exit at Nov. 4, 2020 — the day after the 2020 presidential election.

Should the U.S. formally leave the Paris Agreement, it would stand as the only nation outside the deal, originally signed by 195 nations and so far ratified by 175.

Since the launch of We Are Still In, more than 2,700 governors, mayors, university presidents, and business and faith leaders, representing 158.8 million Americans, have signed onto that declaration. As part of Earth Day celebrations, the We Are Still In coalition launched a ["We Are Taking Action" campaign](#) to drive efforts to address climate change ahead of the [Global Climate Action Summit](#) in San Francisco in September.

Plans are underway for a Catholic and faith-based event during the summit to highlight steps taken by religious communities.

After the June announcement, Catholic Climate Covenant will turn attention to asking the signatories to pledge steps toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions in their own institutions. Its [Catholic Energies](#) program has already begun working with dioceses and parishes in exploring ways to reduce their energy use and reliance of emissions-producing fossil fuels.

"We hope that the Catholic community will also make those tangible commitments as part of this effort," Aguto said.

For now, though, the focus is on gathering Catholic groups in solidarity.

In mid-April, three bishops — Archbishop Timothy Broglio, chair of bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace; Bishop Frank Dewane, chair of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; and Bishop Richard Pates, episcopal liaison to the Catholic Climate Covenant — wrote a letter to all bishops asking them to sign their dioceses to the declaration, and to promote the campaign among Catholic organizations and ministries in their dioceses.

Already, numerous bishops have taken up the invite, including the archdioceses of Atlanta, Indianapolis, Miami and Newark, New Jersey, along with the dioceses of Duluth, Minnesota, and Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana.

In addition, Pates wrote a separate letter mailed to each of the 28,000-plus Catholic organizations listed in the Official Catholic Directory asking for their support.

"This declaration is a distinct Catholic expression in support of the We Are Still In campaign. The Catholic Climate Declaration expresses the moral imperative to protect and promote human life and human dignity, the poorest and most vulnerable peoples, and our common home," wrote Pates, retired bishop of Des Moines, Iowa.

He also cited the U.S. bishops' 2001 document "[Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good](#)," where they stated, "At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both 'the human environment' and the natural environment. It is about our human stewardship of God's creation and our responsibility to those who come after us."

The launch of the Catholics Are Still In campaign came the same day that French President Emmanuel Macron in an address to a joint session of Congress expressed his belief that, "one day, the United States will come back and join the Paris Agreement."

"By polluting the oceans, not mitigating CO2 emissions and destroying our biodiversity, we are killing our planet. Let us face it: There is no Planet B," he said. "On this issue, it may happen we have a disagreement between the United States and France. It may happen, like in all families. But that is, for me, a short-term disagreement. In the long run, we will have to face the same realities. We are citizens of the same planet.

"We have to face it. Beyond some short-term disagreements, we have to work together," Macron said.

On April 30, climate talks are set to open in Bonn, Germany, in preparation for [COP24](#), the annual United Nations climate summit, to be held this year in Katowice, Poland. There, nations will conduct the first global stock-take to gauge progress in meeting their voluntary, self-established climate action plans set in Paris — which, if fully implemented, would [hold warming only to 3 C](#) by century's end — and then ratchet up their commitments.

While still holding climate change is a global problem requiring a global solution, the parallel purposes of the We Are Still In and Catholics Are Still In campaigns intend to show that the non-state community isn't willing to wait.

"Our future rests not upon our politics or economics but the degree to which all of us meet the moral call to our neighbors, children, God's creation and our common future," Aguto said.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/catholics-are-still-campaign-recommits-support-paris-climate-pact>

May 1, 2018

Reading the Quran Connects Me to Nature

By Jai Hamid Bashir
Sierra Club

Before I take the sacred text out of my backpack, I dip my hands in the cool rush of the creek that runs into the city below. Doing so, I connect myself to the inhabitants of the valley and all beings on this planet that this water may have cycled through. I'm in Big Cottonwood Canyon, a watershed that supplies drinking water to Utah's Wasatch Front. Two hydroelectric plants are nestled among the conifers. I push my hands into the water to feel the slipperiness of rocks soft as the underbellies of fish. I am connected to the sea by the perfume of algae and brought closer to the scent of whales.

I've brought the Quran with me. Precious care is given to the Quran as the most sacred of texts. Tradition forbids the book to touch the ground, and it must always be held with clean hands. I unfurl the book from my mother's scarf, in which I'd wrapped it for safekeeping, and take a seat amid a landscape brushed by dark greens and the gray of oncoming winter.

I carry my traditions with me in a backpack, into wide-open spaces, to tie the threads of sacred goodness and common divinity. My family is Muslim but culturally connected to Hinduism, and through the landscapes of Utah, I am blazing my own spiritual trails. Being an American who is part of the Indian and Pakistani diaspora, I often feel that I do not belong to either human-designated pole, so the more-than-human world is my refuge. Among these spaces—the wide, black-eyed communities of aspen and the cool seats in amphitheaters of redrock—my identity is planetary citizen. I am a citizen of Earth in the silence and soil of the canyon, in the shadow of oblong hoodoos. I am an earthling today, sitting, trying to read the Quran in English, to cast my net further into the waters of past and present.

After the Prophet was born, he was sent to live with a Bedouin family, because culture and custom held that the desert landscape, away from the noise and pollution of civilization, nourished growing bodies and minds. The young Prophet spent his childhood in a land of rippling and coiling sand, similar to this redrock country. He talked to camels in markets, holding

their oblong faces that dip down due to the gravity of their heavy necks, soothing them and instructing people not to idle on their backs.

Once, when I was in Big Cottonwood Canyon, I saw a moose. Her stance paralleled mine, and our eyes met in a shared moment of mammalian intimacy. I realized that our eyes were the same color. In that moment, in my distance and respect, I considered how both our bodies and our lands are mistreated. We held each other in one another's gaze, the same color as the soil and sand that has shaped the world.

The sun sets, and I curl up with a blanket stitched by my grandmother, my Nani, and sleep for an hour under the Dog Star. I dream not of Utah's January smog but of clean air wafting through my lungs like a long, cold drink of water, rivers without end that transform into vibrant oceans. I hold my ear to the shell of the past and present and listen to the voices that come through. In my galaxy of private epiphanies in Utah's mountains and deserts, I have found a way to create an interconnected mesh of my heritage and my fierce love of this planet, grounding and consolidating all my various identities into one based in empathy, kindness, and connectedness—teachings I have found time and time again in the Quran. I tuck away the book and find sleep under a gnarled lattice of pines that goes on and on among the unknown reefs of eternity.

This article appeared in the May/June 2018 edition with the headline "The Quran in My Backpack."

<https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/2018-3-may-june/reading-quran-connects-me-nature>

May 2, 2018

Religious leaders mobilize to protect indigenous people and forests

By Willie Shubert
Mongabay

- *Religious leaders joined forces with indigenous peoples from Brazil, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Meso-America and Peru at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo in 2017 to launch the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI).*
- *The IRI plans to mobilize high profile religious leaders to intervene in policy forums and advocate for forests and indigenous people with support from UN Environment.*
- *It has been estimated that one third of climate change mitigation is from tropical rainforests and securing land rights for indigenous peoples is an effective and low-cost method of reducing carbon emissions.*

What if the moral and spiritual influence of the world's religious communities and their leaders were directed towards protecting rainforests and their indigenous guardians? Is this an appropriate role for religious and faith-based communities to take on? The coalition of religious and indigenous leaders behind the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative believe it is.

Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Taoist religious leaders joined forces with indigenous peoples from Brazil, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Meso-America and Peru at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo in 2017 to launch the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) and are committed to mobilizing billions of people of faith to stand up for rainforests and their protectors. The IRI global steering committee reconvened at the UN Headquarters in New York on April 19, 2018 to give a briefing on this initiative and to receive consultation.

“We are here tonight at this stage to listen,” said Reverend Fletcher Harper a writer, preacher and executive director of Green Faith as he addressed the diverse group of indigenous leaders and other attendees in New York. “There is a great deal of historical inertia from which we must overcome and much blindness from which we must repent and for which we will need your help,” said Rev. Harper. “We are here to listen. We are in your debt. We hope to be worthy of your partnership.”

Faith leaders as eminent as Pope Francis and faith communities have made [contributions to environmental efforts](#) in the past. The creation of [The Paris Agreement](#) was aided by people of faith who organized, engaged in civil disobedience, and mobilized millions to sign petitions. Harper says faith communities and organizations including The Parliament of the World’s Religions, Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, The World Council of Churches, Religions for Peace, the Real Network and Green Faith are committed to bringing that same level of commitment to protecting forests and indigenous peoples.

This protection cannot come soon enough. In 2016, nearly 4 people were murdered per week defending land from industries like mining, logging, and agribusiness — [40% of these deaths](#) were indigenous people. For most indigenous people, land serves as the center of their spirituality, livelihood, and survival. And in the case of tropical forests much more is at stake—the health of the entire planet.

It has been estimated that [one third of climate change mitigation](#) is from tropical rainforests and securing land rights for indigenous peoples is an effective and low-cost method of reducing carbon emissions. According to the World Resource Institute, securing these rights in Brazil, Colombia, and Bolivia, for example, would be the equivalent of removing between 9 and 12 million cars from the road for one year. In areas of the Amazon where indigenous people have land rights, deforestation is [2 to 3 times lower](#). However, [less than 10%](#) of indigenous people hold formal land rights to the forests they protect and inhabit, making it difficult to take any legal actions against those who would illegally or unethically exploit resources.

Worldwide, IRI plans to mobilize high profile religious leaders to intervene in policy forums and advocate for forests and indigenous people with implementation support by UN Environment. IRI will also launch early programs in five high risk, high priority countries: Brazil, Colombia, Peru, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Indonesia. These programs will support the development of faith-based networks with diverse advisory councils which include local indigenous people.

“Protecting tropical forests is not only a matter of the protection of nature but also about the protection of the cultures, languages, livelihoods and human diversity that thrive within these ecosystems,” said Reverend Harper. “The protection of forests is only done well when it is integrally connected to the protection of indigenous peoples and we wish to reaffirm our recognition of this as fundamental to what this initiative is about.”

IRI steering committee member and Ambassador of Norway Mae Ellen Steiner acknowledged that governmental partners have a long way to go and have lots of inconsistencies, but, at least in the case of Norway, they are trying. Norway has invested heavily in IRI and has devoted almost US\$3 billion over the past decade to support developing countries to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, and has committed to continuing substantial investments.

During the question and comment portion of the New York briefing, indigenous leaders in the room echoed a shared ethos surrounding the sanctity of the forests, their centrality to their lives and expressed enthusiasm about working with IRI and its mission. However, concerns were raised about dealing with unsupportive governments, local industries and businesses.

Leaders and representative of NGOs and advocacy groups (such as the Water Culture Institute and Rainforest Alliance) were eager to learn how they, as secular organizations, could help. The steering committee members were clear that atheists, humanists, and any person of ethical convictions had a place in dialogue and coalition building. The IRI members were also reminded and encouraged to include the voices of youth and women in the process.

“I have heard from many indigenous people that our religions need to re-indigenize,” said Dr. Kusumita Pedersen, IRI steering committee member and Professor Emerita of Religious Studies at St. Francis College, New York, who has been part of the global interfaith movement for over thirty years.

“What does this mean?” Dr. Pederson asked. “Within the philosophies, worldviews, and ethics – the deepest values and visions of the world’s religions – there are those elements that correspond to the indigenous spiritual traditions. The Pope’s encyclical *Laudato Si* states that all living beings have dignity, not merely human beings. Father Thomas Berry famously said the universe is not a collection of objects but a communion of subjects. All beings have a spirit, personhood and are worthy of respect. So, our traditions need to draw out from within themselves these elements, hold them up, and make them as strong as possible to help us to be effective in the work we are doing, in solidarity. This is the task before us in order to move hearts and minds. It is not always easy, but we must never give up.”

A recording of the IRI Briefing and Consultation in its entirety is [available here](#).

View more features in Mongabay’s ongoing series on conservation and religion [here](#).

<https://news.mongabay.com/2018/05/religious-leaders-mobilize-to-protect-indigenous-people-and-forests/>

May 9, 2018

Deal on Murray Darling Basin Plan could make history for Indigenous water rights

By Sue Jackson
The Conversation

On Monday night the Labor Party agreed to a federal government policy package intended to ensure the survival of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

The proposed amendments to the plan, and the complex technical details of water allocation, have been heavily scrutinised as a politically intriguing development in the long-standing contest between allocating water for the environment or for irrigation.

What is less appreciated is that, if implemented, the bipartisan commitment may do more to advance the water rights of Aboriginal peoples in the Murray-Darling Basin than any other government initiative in the history of the region.

Long-overdue measures

Traditional owners of the Murray-Darling Basin have been told for too long that there is [no water left](#) for their needs. Our research estimated that Indigenous-specific water entitlements comprise much [less than 1%](#) of Australian water allocations.

The agreed measures include A\$40 million for Aboriginal communities to invest in water entitlements for both economic and cultural purposes, a A\$20 million economic development fund to benefit Aboriginal groups most affected by the basin plan, and A\$1.5 million to support Aboriginal waterway assessments.

State water resource plans in the northern basin will be expected to provide water entitlements for Aboriginal groups. Environmental water programs will be open to Aboriginal participation, address Aboriginal values, and offer job opportunities in restoration projects.

Additionally, more support will be provided for the two representative Aboriginal water alliances, the [Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations](#) and the [Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations](#). They have been struggling to have their claims for water rights heard amid the more influential concerns of the irrigation, environmental and scientific sectors.

These social justice measures are long overdue. Aboriginal rights are a blind spot in the country's water governance arrangements and in its broader relationship with Indigenous peoples.

A history of dispossession

Australia's pattern of inequitable distribution has been entrenched at [each juncture of water law reform](#): when rights to the use and control of water were vested in the Crown in the late 1800s, and again in the 1990s when Australian governments moved to establish a water market, without considering the implications for Indigenous peoples.

National water policy didn't recognise Indigenous water rights until 2004 – a full decade after the Mabo High Court decision and the Native Title Act 1993.

The [National Water Initiative](#) requires that Indigenous water needs are addressed, but the reality falls short. Until now little serious attention has been given to securing Indigenous access to commercially valuable water entitlements.

As a result, Indigenous people have been largely excluded from the benefits of government agreements that have created tradable entitlements and environmental allocations. A combination of narrow interpretations of customary rights to water, long delays around native title claims, discretionary terminology in the national policy, and the contentious nature of allocating water to “new” water users in the stressed Murray Darling Basin has precluded Indigenous access.

With many parts of the basin fully allocated to water users with a history of access and entitlement, Indigenous communities in these regions remain greatly constrained in their ability to shape the use and management of water.

Since 2004, numerous government reviews and reports have noted that water plans, among other shortcomings, are failing to achieve Indigenous objectives. A 2017 Productivity Commission review referred to the needs of Indigenous peoples as the “[unfinished business](#)” of water reform. It shied away from recommending strong reallocation measures, however, on the premise that water for Indigenous commercial purposes “is separate from the provision of water for cultural purposes and is not addressed in the NWI”.

Indigenous Australians see clear connections between the past and present in accounting for the skewed distribution of entitlements and for the lack of control they are able to assert over water management.

Throughout the recent reform era Indigenous organisations and academics have recommended reallocation measures, such as a water trust facility, buy-backs or special purpose licences, but these have not occurred on any meaningful scale.

For example, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council put forward a proposal for a water trust when NSW reformed its water law in 2000. This would have allowed Aboriginal people to participate in the water market and allocate water to meet self-determined objectives. The proposal included a small levy on water trades to support costs, but it was not supported.

According to Indigenous lawyer Tony McAvooy, the government considered expenditure of this magnitude to be “[reckless](#)”. The water market was still developing and thought to be too volatile.

Environmental degradation has also eroded the capacity of the basin's river systems to meet the needs of Indigenous people. Although many, including [traditional owner groups](#), are gravely concerned about the environmental consequences of the bipartisan agreement, if implemented in full, it will represent a significant step towards water rights restitution in the Murray-Darling Basin.

It is hoped that the experience of restoring some measure of water justice to the many Aboriginal nations of the basin will inspire Australian parliaments to pursue similar reforms for the benefit of Indigenous communities in the rest of the country.

<https://theconversation.com/deal-on-murray-darling-basin-plan-could-make-history-for-indigenous-water-rights-96264>

May 10, 2018

Indigenous and Child Environmental Activists Receive WWF Award

Telesur

"We depend on a healthy environment and a surrounding that is alive," Nina Gualinga said during the award ceremony.

Two Latin American **women** received the **World Wildlife Fund** (WWF) International President's Youth award, given to people under 30 who have made significant contributions to **nature conservation**.

Nina Gualinga, a 24-year-old woman leader of the Indigenous Kichwa community of Sarayaku in the Ecuadorean Amazon, received the award Tuesday for her active participation in Indigenous resistance to defend their territory from the state and transnational extractive companies.

In 2012, **Gualinga** participated in the international hearing at the Inter-American Court on Human Rights in Costa Rica, where the Sarayaku community won a landmark case against the Ecuadorean government. In 1998 the government granted Sarayaku territory to an oil company without consulting the community.

Today she works with other communities across the Ecuadorean Amazon on international campaigns to protect and defend the territories and to advocate for a fossil fuel free economy.

The other recipient, 12-year-old **Madison Pearl Edwards** of Belize effectively advocated for the protection of the Belize Barrier Reef by mobilizing public support against offshore oil exploration in Belize. Her campaign led to the adoption of a permanent moratorium on all extractive activities in Belize waters in December 2017.

Edwards issued a call to children around the world to protect the planet. “I feel proud that Belize has taken such an important step forward and that we helped make it happen but there is so much more we all can—and need to—do. Destroying our natural resources with selfish and short-sighted interests is not OK. I’d like to encourage children around the world to stand up for our planet,” Edwards said.

Meanwhile Gualinga highlighted the importance of Indigenous people as protectors of nature. “As indigenous people we depend on a healthy environment and a surrounding that is alive. We call it The Living Forest. We need clean rivers, because we drink the water directly from them, we need healthy soil, because we grow our own food, we need the animals, the birds and the fish and they need the forest. Our whole survival as a people depends on the future of the Amazon,” Nina said during the award ceremony.

<https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Indigenous-and-Child-Environmental-Activists-Receive-WWF-Award-20180510-0009.html>

May 10, 2018

World Vision launches sermon guide on WASH

By Gifty Amofa
Ghana News Agency

Accra - The World Vision International, Ghana, a Christian humanitarian organization, has launched a sermon guide on Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) with a call on Christians to rise-up to promote human transformation.

The guide is to ensure that Christian leaders understand WASH issues to help cause attitudinal and behavioural change through the engagement of other Christians.

Mr Dickens Thunde, the Director of the Organisation, who made the call, said, Christians in Africa were not living up to expectation and it was high time they lived their lives holistically by making lives better for the needy.

This was during the opening session of a two-day National Partnership Forum on Transformational Development being held in Accra.

It is a collaborative effort with faith-based organisations to help identify the most vulnerable and how to meet their needs.

Mr Thunde explained that World Vision’s mission was to follow Jesus in working with the poor and oppressed, and to promote human transformation, seek justice and be witnesses to God’s Kingdom, all to put smiles on the faces of children and their families.

Mr Thunde mentioned five new strategies adopted by the group in line with the SDGs to effectively carry out their mandate as; deepening their commitment to the most vulnerable, focus on Ministry for greater results, collaborating and advocating for broader impact, delivering high quality service and living out faith and calling with boldness.

The Sermon guide developed by World Vision was as a result of the fact that Ghana achieved eight percent in sanitation, 15 percent living without toilet facilities, 19 percent defecate openly, about 60 percent share latrines while 58 per cent indiscriminately disposing waste, as released by Water Resource Commission.

Also, more than 3.5 million people have no access to safe water.

He said in term of religion, Christians were the majority with 71.2 percent out of the total population, so the Organisation decided to bring in faith leaders to help engage Christians on the challenges of the menace and for change behaviour.

Its themes were developed by experts, backed by the Scriptures, reviewed by the Ghana Integrated WASH Programme for Technology, among various Christian leaders.

The Sermon guide, he revealed included importance of WASH, personal hygiene, hand washing at critical times, food hygiene, water safety at point of use, and child health.

Sanitation; human excreta disposal, care for the environment, sustainability; community ownership and management were the other topics treated in the guide and are all backed with Biblical quotations.

The Reverend Godwin Ahlijah, the Executive Director of Meaningful Life International, an NGO, said, the Gospel was holistic, therefore Christians should not only be Heavenly minded, but of “a little earthly use,” thus, the guide should be made to work.

He advised that the Sermon guide would not be theoretically launched but be infused in the course outline of Bible schools, used as Sunday school study material and added to morning devotional manuals.

Rev Ahlijah suggested that the book be introduced in the educational curriculum as it would change and save the country.

The media should also promote it by provoking discussions, among other programmes to make the content known to all and sundry, he appealed.

Rev Nii Armah Ashitey, the Chairman for the occasion, called on all Christian leaders, to commit to the promotion of WASH ideals.

<http://www.ghananewsagency.org/social/world-vision-launches-sermon-guide-on-wash-132454>

May 11, 2018

Cemetery's green project aims to 'protect God's magnificent creation'

By Richard Szczepanowski, Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Washington — Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington blessed a newly completed green infrastructure project at a Catholic cemetery May 7, saying it "is part of our effort to keep God's creation as beautiful as when he created it."

The Archdiocese of Washington teamed with the Nature Conservancy, a national organization working on land and water conservation, to create the natural infrastructure that will reduce pollutants from water runoff in Mount Olivet Cemetery in Northeast Washington.

The bioretention rain garden, Wuerl said, "would protect God's magnificent creation ... so that future generations can enjoy it."

Mount Olivet's new garden project replaces or retrofits impervious surfaces with waterretaining green infrastructures such as, grass, flowerbeds, shrubs and trees.

An impervious surface is one through which rainfall or surface water cannot flow. Such surfaces include asphalt, concrete, buildings and other covered areas, patios, tennis courts, driveways, swimming pools, parking lots and the like.

When storm water hits impervious surfaces, it collects pollutants such as oil, sediment or trash before flowing into sewers and eventually waterways. The storm water flowing off Mount Olivet Cemetery drains directly into Hickey Run, one of the Anacostia River's tributaries. The cemetery's new water-retaining green infrastructure already has significantly reduced its impervious surface area, cemetery officials said.

Mark Tercek, president and CEO of the Nature Conservancy, praised the cemetery's rain garden bioretention effort, saying "it will reduce storm water pollution and increase the quality of life for D.C. residents."

"This (rain garden) stands to prevent billions of gallons of urban storm water from reaching the Anacostia River and eventually the Chesapeake Bay. It is a big deal," he added.

Tommy Wells, a former member of the District of Columbia's City Council who is now director of the district's Department of Energy and Environment, noted that the Anacostia River "is one of the 10 most environmentally compromised rivers in the United States."

John Spalding, president and chief executive officer of Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Washington, called the project one that would "improve our environmental footprint" as part of Catholic cemeteries "being fully committed to serving families" of those buried there.

Wuerl said that it was appropriate that this unique rain garden should be installed at Mount Olivet because "our cemeteries serve a significant and real purpose."

"This is sacred ground where we bury our dead," he said, adding that the cemeteries are also maintained "for family members to come and visit, reflect and remember."

Cheryl Tyiska, manager of Mount Olivet Cemetery, called the bioretention effort "a work that directly benefits people and nature."

Tercek, who noted that he was raised Catholic, praised the church "for its history of caring for people and the earth." He also praised Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical on the environment, "Laudato Si'."

"The pope has pushed Catholics and others to remember their responsibility to care for the environment," Tercek said. "We need to bring people together to get things done. It is what the pope has called us to do, and we are doing it here today."

Wuerl also referred to the papal document and noted that the pope is calling everyone to have a renewed commitment to care for the environment.

"We are called not only to care for our common home, this beautiful creation, but we must sustain it and pass it on to future generations, the cardinal said.

Prior to blessing the storm water retention gardens, Wuerl reminded those at the gathering that God is "the source and origin of every blessing and He has placed His children on the earth to be good stewards of these tremendous gifts ... so that in all things we might honor the demands of charity."

In addition to reducing rainwater runoff, the project is generating storm water retention credits. This allows private developers to meet a portion of their requirements for storm water retention through projects that retain storm water elsewhere in the city. Referring to the storm water retention credit, Wells said this "is the first place in America where this is being done."

The project was financed through a joint venture called District Stormwater LLC, founded by the Nature Conservancy's NatureVest conservation investing unit and Encourage Capital, an asset management firm based in New York, and impact capital from Prudential Financial.

Mount Olivet Cemetery, which this year marks its 160th anniversary, also will be the site of two future collaborations between the archdiocese and the Nature Conservancy. More than 150 new trees are being planted at the cemetery and works are underway for a native pollinator garden that will provide habitat for wildlife, and water filtration benefits.

- - -

Szczepanowski is on the staff of the Catholic Standard, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Washington.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/cemeterys-green-project-aims-protect-gods-magnificent-creation>

May 14, 2018

Amid Haiti's challenges, congregation continues serving those living in poverty

By Chris Herlinger
Global Sisters Report

"Come, let's cheer the Word of God. It is a word of life. It is a word of love and peace."

At once joyous, inspiring and hopeful, the acclamation, sung in French at a service of perpetual profession, came on a sunny, mild day with no clouds, no winds and no seeming threats.

It was a day that belonged to God.

But it was also a day that belonged to Haiti's Little Sisters of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, a [Haiti-based congregation](#) that has faced and withstood numerous challenges in its seven-decade history but is looking toward the future with optimism, hope and a distinct sense of mission.

"We believe in God, and we put our faith in God, in the providence of God; God never leaves us," said Sr. Denise Desil, 66, the congregation's mother general, said in an interview in September before three Haitian novitiates took their perpetual vows.

Founded by Fr. Louis Farnese and the Rev. Mother Carmella Lohler in 1948, the congregation had the specific mission, according to a congregational history, of "giving relief to people in the poorest and most remote areas."

"This was a revolutionary concept at the time, akin to liberation theology," the history notes.

Today, a small portrait of the martyred Salvadoran bishop Óscar Romero hangs in the congregation's mission house in the southern community of Baradères, and Desil's face brightens at the mention of Romero.

"Somebody gave us that portrait. We liked the way Óscar Romero talked and took the position for the poor people," she said. He was martyred for his advocacy of those living in poverty, she added. "He talked about justice."

Romero also talked about the hope in faith, something that resonates deeply with Desil. One reason for that is that the congregation has nearly 175 members, and younger women continue to join the congregation. In addition to the three women who recently took vows, there are currently three postulants and two novices, and more half of the congregation's sisters are under 50 years old, she said.

The three women taking their vows in September, Carmelle Desrosiers, 44, Joselène Mahotiere, 37, and Céline Dalmacy, 37, all came to the congregation from earlier careers: nursing for Desrosiers and teaching for Mahotiere and Dalmacy.

The three are from regions of rural Haiti where the congregation works in the areas of health, agriculture and education. All said the work of the congregation as advocates for Haitians living in poverty made a deep impression on them.

"I appreciated the work of the sisters among the peasant people," said Mahotiere, who is from Baudin, the locale of the first congregational mission.

"We pay special attention to the peasant people. This is our mission," said Dalmacy, who is from the Artibonite department, or province, in northwestern Haiti.

Desrosiers, who is also from Artibonite, said she knew sisters from other congregations before she met sisters from the Little Sisters of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus. She said their work proved to be a motivation and the congregation's charism was "what I had been looking for," melding both service and spiritual grounding.

The women say they have had good models and mentors among the older sisters, including Sr. Zulmy Leon, 83, who is from a rural family in southern Haiti and whose accomplishments include organizing 24 farmers groups into a federation for farmer advocacy and education, and helping train 2,000 rural Haitians in agronomy.

Haiti, with a population of about 10 million, is becoming increasingly urban: About 2 out of 10 Haitians now live in the capital metropolis of Port-au-Prince. But a majority of Haitians still live in rural areas, [according to the World Bank](#), and many of those now living in cities come from rural family backgrounds.

Many of the challenges Haitians face are the challenges of rural areas: drought or other climate extremes, like hurricanes; the effects of climate change; and the continued need for finding new water sources and access to wells for safe drinking water.

"There is a constant problem with water in Haiti," Leon said.

Leon and the three younger women spoke to Global Sisters Report in a large common area of the congregation's motherhouse in Rivière-Froide, a suburb of Port-au-Prince, a place that promotes a "feeling of family," Desil said.

It is here the congregation has consolidated work in recent years following several tragedies stemming from Haiti's 2010 7.0-magnitude earthquake. Three sisters and a driver working for the congregation died when the congregation's small house in Port-au-Prince collapsed; a fourth sister died elsewhere. And 122 students perished when a congregation-run school in the western city of Carrefour collapsed during the quake.

It has taken years for the congregation to emerge from those events, and Desil acknowledges that they still sting.

"I was near the school the day of the earthquake, and it was terrible," she said. "I thought it was the end of the world."

But the tragedies also showed the need for the congregation to continue its work, and in places that are hard to access.

"We do something unique. We go to places where the others don't go," she said. "We have a very poor country, the poorest in the western hemisphere, and we have a lot of challenges in order to survive. We need to support people who count on us."

One locale that counts on the Little Sisters of St. Thérèse is Baradères, located in the Haitian department of Nippes, 130 miles west of Port-au-Prince.

Getting to Baradères requires an all-day drive along poorly paved mountain roads and switchbacks. But during the autumn rainy season, Baradères is heavily affected by rain, something all too evident in October 2016, when Hurricane Matthew hit large areas of southern Haiti, including Nippes.

"This may look like paradise, but after the hurricane, it was like hell," said Little Sisters of St. Thérèse Sr. Marie Judith Prophete, who works as a nurse in a sister-run clinic in Baradères.

Matthew dumped 3 feet of water on some areas, and it took the sisters based at the clinic about a week to clean up from flooding. Almost two dozen volunteers helped the sisters with cleanup, a tribute to the sisters' work but also an example of the sisters' need to rely on the community's goodwill.

In the past, the sisters' mission received regular assistance from a prominent humanitarian group, but the shipments of medical supplies that helped stock the clinic stopped because of poor road conditions, Prophete said, and the sisters are looking for other groups to fill the gaps. However, partnerships with other groups continue, including the Rockland, Massachusetts-based Medicines for Humanity, which named Little Sisters of St. Thérèse Sr. Jeanne Martha Pantal [its 2017 Humanitarian of the Year](#) for her training of other sisters in the areas of maternal and child health.

In Baradères, the clinic personnel, which includes Prophete and Dr. Rene Wyson, see about 100 patients a week in the 12-bed clinic and hospital. Among the constants in the area are malaria

and typhoid; immediately after the hurricane, they also included cholera, diarrhea and water-borne diseases.

Those threats have not fully abated, Wyson said: "We are still facing a lot of sickness."

Those are not the only challenges facing the sisters. A small congregational house in Port-au-Prince used for mission work in the capital was lost in the earthquake, and the sisters would like to rebuild the structure. Meanwhile, repairs to 10 mission sites affected by Hurricane Matthew continue, Desil said, with the congregation still trying to raise funds for repairs and rehabilitation.

"We're not finished with Matthew yet," she said.

Also needed are repairs and expansion to the motherhouse, which was originally built to accommodate a far smaller group of sisters. And in an April email, Desil said the congregation is hobbled by a lack of vehicles for their ministry.

"We have a big problem with transportation," she said. "We need a car for the [mother] house and an ambulance for the sisters" and their mission work.

Desil rattles off the challenges with concern but also with a sense of enduring hope.

"We face the challenges because this is our country; we were born and raised in it, and we have great faith and hope in God. We enjoy our life here. It's hard, but we enjoy it." She paused, contemplating the gift of a quiet moment and a gentle breeze on a fall afternoon.

"God shows us a way to survive," she said. "We are Haitian."

At the Sept. 14 service of perpetual vows, the spirit of those words came alive when, at the end of the ceremony, families, friends and fellow sisters sang out in Haitian Creole and with firm affirmation and deep feeling a celebratory closing hymn:

"God has sent us to go on his mission. God asked us to announce his word. God has sent us to all his children. Our brothers, sisters, give us the good news."

[Chris Herlinger is GSR international correspondent. His email address is cherlinger@ncronline.org.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/news/spirituality-trends/amid-haitis-challenges-congregation-continues-serving-those-living-poverty>

May 15, 2018

Huda Alkaff on Wisconsin Green Muslims' Quest for Environmental Justice

By Anna M. Gade
Edge Effects

On May 7, in the days before the beginning of the Islamic month of Ramadan, I spoke with Huda Alkaff, a trained ecologist and environmental educator. Alkaff is founder and director of [Wisconsin Green Muslims](#), a state-wide environmental justice group based in Milwaukee that has received national recognition for its leadership, from Wisconsin to the White House.

We discussed two featured projects of Wisconsin Green Muslims: promoting access to solar energy with the [“Faith & Solar”](#) initiative, and water resource conservation and management with [“Faithful Rainwater Harvesting.”](#) Alkaff also explained the popularity of the current Greening Ramadan initiative, which extends to communities across the country. Alkaff reflected on engagement with various mosques, diverse non-Muslim faith-based organizations as well as the process of building bridges with non-religious environmental groups overall. Religious commitments such as to “stand for justice” ([Q. 4:135](#)) energize Wisconsin Green Muslims to “stand up for environmental and climate justice,” as Alkaff explained, with activism that strives for inclusion and equity for marginalized communities.

Stream or download our conversation [here](#).

Interview highlights:

This transcript has been edited for length and clarity.

Anna Gade: Islam and environmental justice are both very broad fields. How did you choose the areas to put your energy into?

Huda Alkaff: We started in 2005 and we wanted to work on everything. We still do. We divide the year into themes and each month is a different theme. But water and solar energy have touched our hearts. We’re leading the [Wisconsin Faith & Solar Initiative](#), which brings people of faith and spirituality together to care for Earth while reinvesting their saved money into their missions and building stronger communities. We also have the [Faithful Rainwater Harvesting Initiative](#). The abbreviation is FaRaH, which means “joy” in Arabic.

Both initiatives have three components. First, a social and educational component, where we’re building a peer learning circle of those who have built solar or green infrastructure and those aspiring to do so. Secondly, we have the financial component, where we provide free and discounted remote and on-site solar assessments and consultations. We love spreading the good news, telling people “Your site is a solar-promising site.” Thirdly is the spiritual component. We see sunlight and water as the commons. No one owns them, and everyone should have access to them. Both sunlight and water are sacred gifts and sacred trusts. We need to appreciate them and welcome them responsibly into our homes, congregations, and lives.

We believe that people of faith have a great responsibility to stand up for environmental and climate justice.

In our work, we are tapping into the unifying power of solar energy and water. We found through several polls in 2016 and 2017 that solar energy has high approval ratings among people from diverse political, social, geographical, and educational backgrounds—nationally and in Wisconsin.

AG: You recently gave a webinar for a multiyear initiative with the Islamic Society of North America about Greening Ramadan. Can you speak a little bit about that program?

HA: Our Greening Ramadan campaign was one of our first initiatives. It's not only continuing strong, but it has also spread to many Muslim communities nationally. During Ramadan, the Islamic holy month which begins in a few days, we encourage daily acts, such as carpooling, walking, biking, or using public transit to the mosque; using reusable water bottles, washable dishes, cups, and utensils; eating less meat; planting a tree; performing eco-ablution, as Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, did by using two handfuls of water for ablution before prayer; reading the 1,500 verses in the Qur'an that have environmental or nature-oriented messages; power down, pray outside, grow food, waste less, purchase gifts responsibly, etc. They are all [posted on our website](#).

In 2015, the Islamic Society of North America established a green *masjid*, now called Green Initiative Taskforce, which I'm a member of. We ask mosques to do food and water conservation, energy efficiency, reusable/biodegradable items, recycling and waste reduction, and giving a green *khutbah* (or lecture) during the month of Ramadan.

AG: What has the response been in communities and different masjids in North America?

HA: It's a process. That's why we call it Greening Ramadan. There are Greening Ramadan campaigns in over 20 states now and more than 90 mosques.

AG: How does being faith-based affect the message, outreach, and activism of your organization?

HA: We believe that people of faith have a great responsibility to stand up for environmental and climate justice, and to address the concerns and calamities of the poor and marginalized communities. They have the lowest ecological footprints, yet they are most impacted by natural and unnatural disasters. It is a moral issue. The Muslim voice and the interfaith voice standing united for environmental justice and care of Earth is instrumental for mobilizing the faithful for the common good.

AG: You are an ecologist and you have degrees in conservation ecology, sustainable development, and environmental education. How did you come to this work?

HA: Believe it or not, I have been an environmentalist since I was a child. I remember being asked the famous question "What do you want to be when you grow up?" To everyone's surprise, my answer was: an ecologist, an environmentalist. I was and still am fascinated by nature and all its inhabitants, and I wanted to learn more about them and the connections between them. I earned degrees in chemistry and biology but was yearning for a more

interdisciplinary field of study. Ecology is the study of interconnections and interdependence among everything, in space and time.

The continuous attempt at establishing connections and gaining holistic network insights is the driving force for my ongoing work to build strong and sustainable bridges between the environmental teachings in Islam (and other faiths and spiritualities) and my university environmental training.

AG: Is there anything else that you wish that listeners of this podcast would know?

HA: I want to uplift the basic principles of environmental justice that guide our work, which are to ensure public involvement of low-income and minority groups in decision-making, preventing disproportionately high adverse impacts of decisions on low-income and minority groups, and ensuring low-income and minority groups receive a proportionate share of benefits.

Featured image: Huda Alkaff (left) and members of Wisconsin Green Muslims participate in the Milwaukee Riverkeeper's 22nd Annual Spring River Cleanup, April 22, 2017. Photo by Burhan Clark.

Podcast music: "Gloves" by [Julian Lynch](#). Used with permission.

Huda Alkaff is the founder and director of [Wisconsin Green Muslims](#), an environmental justice organization formed in 2005, connecting faith, environmental justice, and sustainability through education and service. She also serves as a co-chair of the U.S. Climate Action Network 100% Renewable Energy user group. She holds degrees in conservation ecology, sustainable development, and environmental education from the University of Georgia, and has taught environmental studies courses at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh. In 2015, Wisconsin Green Muslims received national awards and recognition for their water and climate change-related work from both GreenFaith and the Interfaith Power and Light. Alkaff received the 2015 White House Champions of Change for Faith Climate Justice Leaders recognition, was named the 2016 Sierra Club Great Waters group Environmental Hero of the Year, and was recognized nationally last year by Environment America as one of the Voices for 100% Renewable Energy. She has just received the 2018 Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education Eco-Justice Award. [Contact](#).

Anna M. Gade is a Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor of Environmental Studies in the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where she teaches core courses in environmental humanities. She has been a faculty affiliate of the Center for Culture, History and Environment (CHE) for many years. With a Ph.D. in the History of Religions specializing in Islam from the University of Chicago and a long list of publications on the Qur'an, Gade researches global Muslim responses to environmental change. Her forthcoming book from Columbia University Press is titled Muslim Environmentalisms. Her most recent contribution to Edge Effects was "[Praying for Forgiveness: Religious Ethics of Sustainability in Muslim Indonesia](#)" (April 2015). [Website](#). [Contact](#).

<http://edgeeffects.net/huda-alkaff-environmental-justice/>

May 19, 2018

'Gardens of Al-Andalus' expo, a lesson in coexistence and ecology

Gulf Times

Doha - The 'Gardens of Al-Andalus' exhibition, brought to Doha by Qatar Foundation (QF) through the Qur'anic Botanic Garden together with Islamic Culture Foundation (Funci) of Madrid and held under the patronage of QF vice-chairperson and CEO HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani, takes visitors during the month of Ramadan on a journey of peace and ecological awareness inspired by the values of Islam.

The exhibition can be visited until May 31 at Hamad Bin Khalifa University's College of Islamic Studies. It is open every day from 9am until the evening, accompanying the Isha and Tarawih prayers.

The Islamic Culture Foundation, creator of the exhibition, chose the Hispano-Arabic garden as a symbol of understanding and a place for peace and dialogue. During the exhibition's inauguration in April, Funci president Dr Cherif Abderrahman Jah said: "The message of peace, which is intrinsic to this exhibition, is the same message spread by Islam from the Arabian Peninsula, uniting hearts without prejudice or borders, and to which today the Islamic Culture Foundation wishes to appeal here in Doha."

A visit to the 'Gardens of Al-Andalus' during Ramadan can be seen as a "trip back in time", thanks to the objects on display and the accompanying texts. The quadripartite Islamic garden and, therefore, the gardens of Al-Andalus, are a metaphor for the garden to which every good Muslim aspires, Jannah. Its flowerbeds, separated by four channels, representing the four rivers of Paradise, are planted with some of the species mentioned in the Qur'an: pomegranates, fig trees, olive trees, palm trees, jujube and so on.

The sound of water, the refreshing shade and the fragrances of the flowers invite reflection and recollection. Following its journey through various countries in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, this emblematic exhibition shows a civilisation that loved and respected nature.

According to Dr Jah, the 'Gardens of Al-Andalus' "records one of the brightest periods in the history of humanity and a civilisation that can provide answers to the environmental challenges that future generations will have to face".

The QBG is a member of the Funci conservation platform, 'Med-O-Med, Cultural Landscapes of the Mediterranean and the Middle East', which covers 23 countries in the region.

The botanical and scientific development of Muslim Spain from the eighth to the 15th century led to what specialists have called an authentic 'green revolution' that would eventually transform the fields of medicine, pharmacopoeia, gastronomy and economics.

"Thus, the green spaces of the time, besides being places of rest and spiritual calm, would become gardens of botanical acclimatisation, in which hundreds of new plant species were introduced," a press statement noted. "As a result, for Funci, the 'Gardens of Al-Andalus' reminds us of the values that Islam teaches us in relation to nature, as an example of divine generosity and the development of civilisations."

<http://www.gulf-times.com/story/593278/Gardens-of-Al-Andalus-expo-a-lesson-in-coexistence>

May 19, 2018

Wuerl brings 'Laudato Si' to life with unique cemetery project

By Christopher White
Crux

Washington Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl tours the completed green infrastructure project at Mount Olivet Cemetery May 7 with Kahlil Kettering, urban program director for the Nature Conservancy, John Spalding, president and CEO of Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Washington and Mark Tercek, president and CEO of the Nature Conservancy. (Credit: CNS.)

Three years after the release of Pope Francis's encyclical calling for greater concern for the environment, one archdiocese has teamed up with civic officials to give practical application of the pope's challenge in what some may view as the most unlikely of places: a cemetery.

Yet, according to Cardinal Donald Wuerl of the archdiocese of Washington, cemeteries are for both the dead and the living - which is why he's chosen to partner with the Nature Conservancy and the D.C. Department of Energy and the Environment in installation of a green infrastructure project to address the problem of urban stormwater pollution.

Through a new installation which has replaced unused roads with a green garden, the initiative captures stormwater and prevents it from flowing off cemetery roads into one of the tributaries of the Anacostia River.

The effort is meant to lead to a substantial reduction of the more than 3-billion gallons of run-off and sewage that flows into the surrounding rivers and bodies of water - making it one of the fastest-growing sources of water pollution in the world.

And, in that way, the grounds of the cemetery have become a physical means of both honoring the dead and also giving new life.

"Our cemeteries are considered sacred ground because it is here that we bury our dead in the hope of the resurrection," said Wuerl, after touring the installation earlier this month at the Mount Olivet Cemetery in the nation's capital.

“But cemeteries also serve the living,” he said. “We take particular care of the grounds, so that those who come to visit, to remember and to pray for their dead do so in beautiful, peaceful, serene surroundings.”

The Nature Conservancy, a national water and land conservation organization, has been one of the key partners with the archdiocese, and at the unveiling of the initiative its President and CEO, Mark Tercek, said it would improve the quality of life for D.C. area residents.

Wuerl used the occasion to cite Francis’s 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’* and the responsibility of Catholics to work together on the “care of our common home.”

The encyclical, Wuerl said, “includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development.”

In addition to reducing pollution, the site will generate Stormwater Retention Credits (SRCs) that are being sold on the District of Columbia’s SRC credit market, which was established, by the D.C. Department of Energy and the Environment.

Tommy Wells, director of the D.C. Department of Energy and the Environment, told *Crux* that he hopes this project marks the first of many future partnerships between religious institutions and the city for the sake of sustainability.

“Some of the largest parcels of land in the District are owned by faith-based institutions, and this project is just the first of what I hope is many - not just in terms of meeting stormwater management goals, but also for generating solar energy.”

He also cited *Laudato si’* and noted that it requires “a commitment by faithful members of the community to work toward solutions.”

The innovative project at the 85-acre cemetery is thought to be the first collaboration between an environmental conservation organization and the Catholic Church to address urban stormwater pollution and related challenges.

In an interview with *Crux*, Wuerl said that the initiative is yet another example of the Church’s engagement with the community that likely goes unnoticed by the majority of Catholics in the pews.

“Many, many good and practicing Catholics have no idea of the extent of the Church’s involvement in the community,” he said, adding that once they find out, they’re often pleasantly surprised.

Wuerl said that *Laudato si’* is an important moment in the life of the Church, because it lets the world know that “we want a place at the table” and to “be a part of the discussion” when it comes to caring for creation.

“As bishops, we are pastors of souls, and overseers of local churches, but we’re not just responsible for repeating the Church’s teaching but finding ways of implementing it locally,” he said.

Hence, for Wuerl, this cemetery project was a practical means of giving lived expression to the pope’s challenge for Catholics to engage in environmental leadership - and in a way that has real life consequences.

“We have to be key witnesses,” said Wuerl, “with the words that we proclaim, and with our actions.”

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2018/05/19/wuerl-brings-laudato-si-to-life-with-unique-cemetery-project/>

May 21, 2018

A five-village forest journey to water wells in Africa

By Joyce Meyer
Global Sisters Report

"Water is life!" It was exciting to experience the truth of these words in the families dancing for joy at having water for the first time in the forests of Cameroon.

After attending the [Confederation of Major Superiors of Africa and Madagascar](#) (COMSAM) meeting in Yaoundé in January, I began an adventure I had dreamed of for many years: visiting remote Baka villages in eastern Cameroon. I traveled with Kenneth Muko, program director of Medicines for Humanity, and two photographers to five Baka villages that are recipients of clean water for the first time. Two donors generously provided funding for drilling water wells in these villages.

The native Baka peoples of Central and Western Africa are commonly referred to as "Pygmies," a name that had some negative connotations but that some people have reclaimed. I was surprised to learn that they are found not only in Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as I had thought, but also in Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. According to [Survival International](#), Baka groups in these various countries are similar in lifestyle but speak different languages, often related to their non-Baka neighbors. All Baka tribes may share a few words, suggesting they shared a language in the past.

Living in the forest may be "simple," but it's not easy. Families forage for food, gathering honey, wild yams, berries and other plants; hunt antelopes, pigs and monkeys for meat; and fish. Although migratory, most groups have developed close ties to local settled villagers.

They sometimes work for them or barter their forest treasures for things like oil, sugar and Western-style clothing. One woman told us she sells wild fruit every Thursday at the local village market. We also met a hunter with several dogs who was hesitant to speak with us. He was probably suspicious that we might report his activities, as selling bush meat (wild game) is usually illegal.

Although the Baka people have some positive relationships with other locals, they are also exploited. We saw huge logging trucks taking beautiful ancient trees out to sell abroad, destroying the forest life that provides sustenance for the Baka. It seemed a clear sign that this forest life was ending. Governments do not always treat the Baka as equal citizens and routinely denies them their rights. They evict families and tribes from what they consider "their land" and then designate the land as national parks or new logging areas.

Missionaries try to help the Baka transition to a settled life so their children can receive an education and have access to regular health care, but it is challenging. A Sister of the Sacred Heart at the first mission we visited has spent 40 years evangelizing and supporting the Baka. She accompanied us to the village where a well was to be drilled.

The chief proudly showed us the kindergarten class whose teacher had once been a student himself. The small classroom overflowed with excited children who later enchanted us with a delightful dance I watched from a privileged seat in a small hut constructed of branches and leaves, similar to those used by families in migration.

The chief told us they had waited 20 years for water, anticipating its drilling and pump installation in the next week — a dream come true. An added benefit, he noted, was the safety of the children who must collect water for their families. The forest is dangerous as well as beautiful, which we experienced after the dance, following the villagers single-file through the dense forest to the place where children go to collect water. The forest resounded with calling birds and insects, and there were gorgeous butterflies.

We eventually came to an embankment with steps carved out of the earth and secured with rock. At the bottom was a pipe pouring out muddy water into a low cement trough. Children were bathing, women were washing clothes, and others were filling buckets to carry home.

After climbing back to the top, we made our way to the village and continued to four other sites over the next three days. The roads are not easy for travel. We crossed wooden bridges built over numerous dirty-looking rivers and streams. I found this a scary experience, as the bridges were often missing boards, so I decided instead to give attention to people bathing, animals drinking, women washing clothes and children filling buckets to carry back home.

The roads are mostly tracks of dusty soil with huge dips gouged out by humongous logging trucks. We came across several of these turned over and blocking our way as we traveled. It was disconcerting, but not surprising, that our car broke down twice. The first time, we had a flat tire. The second time, we waited on the road in hopes that someone would offer help, which a motorcyclist did eventually. He took one of photographers to get help. In the meantime, a "taxi" came by, and the three of us climbed in, leaving our car behind. At a road-worthy inspection

police stop, a common practice in African countries to make sure vehicles are functioning properly, our taxi passed the inspection, but when it would not start again, the police gave us the push we needed to get going. So much for reliable inspections.

In spite of the delay, we arrived at our destination in time to meet village water managers finishing a training session. I was impressed to learn that a diocese trains and monitors community water development. Father Serge, the diocesan coordinator, does an outstanding job of community development that he attributes to the former bishop's ability to delegate and trust in him. We stayed the night and went to Mass for two hours at 6:30 the next morning.

We then visited the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, managers of a well-respected rehab center for people with disabilities. Sr. Marianna Ngugu noted that many of the disabilities are unfortunately and frequently caused by malnutrition. The patients live at the center and attend sessions during the week and return home on weekends.

She excitedly showed us the new well and water tower that will furnish water for the numerous hostels and classrooms. Our little group reorganized and continued deeper into the forest to meet three Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres, who have a clinic and a school. Not surprisingly, few Baka children who enroll persevere in school; they miss their families and free forest life. We stayed the night and early the next morning visited the school and the clinic with its new water pumps shared with the villages.

Electricity was limited in this week of adventure to generators providing a few hours each night. We retired to our rooms early to plug in our electronics.

Leaving those sisters, we continued on to missions staffed by Vincentian priests and Presentation of Mary Sisters. At the Vincentian mission, we found a three-room school built of corrugated metal from shipping containers. Grade 1 had many girls, but as we went on, the number of students decreased by grade. Older Baka girls must stop school to care for smaller siblings and prepare for marriage, often at 13, 14 or 15 years old.

At another site, water drillers were working surrounded by excited villagers. We met with the leaders; one woman sat among the men. Surprisingly, she was the treasurer. I asked the chief later why a woman was chosen as treasurer for water maintenance. He said without guile that only women are trusted with money: Men cannot resist spending the community money for alcoholic drinks. I asked how men feel about not being trusted; they shrugged, laughed and replied: "It is just this way!"

I was also curious about the crowd of women sitting far back from the leaders. When asked to speak, I emphasized the importance of women to water projects to teach hygiene and care for the water. The chief then invited the women to join us, which they did, laughing. As a parting gift, they tied the legs of a female goat and put her in our truck.

Our last stop was the Presentation Sisters, a French foundation. Near the sisters' school is a beautiful clinic close to the new water pump. I was happy to meet these sisters, having heard

about them from their sisters in North Dakota, only a few miles from Aberdeen, where I am from.

We returned to the diocesan center for night. And now, without a car, we got a lift to a town a couple of hours away to catch a bus back to Yaoundé.

Visiting all of these forest places was a joyful and awesome experience. The joy that these communities feel having water is indescribable. Water is life, but I want to add, water spawns new life, too, and not just for gardens. Every one of the new water points is a seed for new ventures, whether it is sanitation, jobs, more time with family, entrepreneurial ventures, or better nutrition and health. The list is endless.

I know [the sustainable development goal for water](#) is that every household in the world will have easy access to clean water by 2030. These wells are a start, but cleanliness is not a given because of containers used and how it is transported to homes. There is still much to do to reach these goals.

[Joyce Meyer is a member of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and GSR's liaison to women religious outside of the United States.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/blog/gsr-today/equality/five-village-forest-journey-water-wells-africa-53896>

May 23, 2018

Ecuador's indigenous Waorani launch petition to save the Amazon | Ecuador News

By Kimberley Brown
Al Jazeera

Nemonpare, Ecuador - The Amazon rainforest is not an oil block and it is not for sale, says Ecuador's Waorani community in a new petition.

The indigenous community has been living in and fighting for their jungle territory for thousands of years, but they could soon see the entire region auctioned off to the highest bidders in the oil industry.

Responding to the potential auction, 18 Waorani communities launched [an international petition](#) on Wednesday, asking the world to sign to demand oil drilling stays out of their territory in the southeast Amazon, one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet.

"We want to teach people why we live here, and all that we have here," Nemonte Nenquimo told Al Jazeera from her home of Nemonpare, a remote Waorani community in the heart of the rainforest.

Nenquimo added that then maybe they would understand what the oil industry is taking away from her community and the area.

Earlier this year, President Lenin Moreno opened the southeast Amazon up for bidding to the oil and natural gas industry in an initiative called the South-East Oil Round (Ronda Petrolera SurOriente).

The aim, according to the government, is to boost [Ecuador's](#) floundering oil economy, which has seen major divestment since 2014 when the international price of oil plummeted.

The southeast Amazon region has been divided into 13 blocks in which one area, referred to as block 22, overlaps almost entirely with Waorani territory.

So far, the government has collected dozens of interested signatures from both national and international oil companies, including ExxonMobile and Shell, according to Carlos Perez Garcia, the minister of hydrocarbons.

Contracts will not be finalised until later this year, but the government is expecting to generate up to \$800m, according to local media.

The Waorani community, operating with the help Amazon Frontlines, a non-governmental organisation, aims to gather as many signatures on its petition as possible to stop the sale of land in block 22 before it is finalised.

Mapping the area

A major part of the international petition includes an interactive map that was researched and designed by the community themselves using GPS systems, wildlife camera traps, and drones supplied by Amazon Frontlines.

They also used an offline mapping programme designed by Digital Democracy, an NGO that helps marginalised communities access technology.

Each of the 18 communities mapped their regions independently, a total of 180,000 hectares. They trudged hours through the thick forest, finding and marking points that are important to them, such as, sacred sites, medicinal plants, rare animal habitats, and areas of ancestral importance. They also included personal stories recounted by the elders of the communities of particular places.

"The only maps that exist of our territory only show communities, rivers and a school, nothing else," Oswando Nenquimo, another resident of Nemopare, told Al Jazeera. "They never really show the territory, what it really contains. So, from the outside it only looks empty," he said, adding that previous maps have been made by people with political or economic interests in the land.

Oil extraction has long been a controversial issue in Ecuador. It has always been an important part of Ecuador's economy, contributing to much of its growth from 2006 to 2014, according to the [World Bank](#).

The income from oil also contributed to lowering the poverty rate in the country by 15 percent during the same time period, due to the socialist policies of then-President Rafael Correa, and investments in [education](#) and social programmes.

But it has also generated a lot of anger and resentment among many indigenous communities who have been displaced by oil extraction near their territories.

'It's a lie'

Today, people in Nemonpare say they look at their Waorani neighbours who live in the Yasuni National Park as an example of how the oil industry can destroy the environment and local communities.

Yasuni became famous in 2007, when Correa asked the international community to donate money to Ecuador in order to avoid drilling in the park, famous for its biodiversity. By 2013, the plan had failed and drilling had already begun.

"'There will be change and you're going to live better,' [the oil companies] say. But it's a lie," Nenquimo said. "I see the people in Yasuni, and they are more poor," she said, adding that many Waorani communities there live near open pools of oil, and are subjected to constant smog and increased rates of cancer.

According to the government's own research in 2012, it estimated that the country had fewer than 20 years left of crude oil reserves, and that includes the unexplored southeast blocks. With such low reserves, many have questioned whether Ecuador's continued dependence on oil extraction is a good investment, let alone worth destroying the environment.

Angel Aviles, undersecretary of political and social management in the Ministry of Hydrocarbons, told Al Jazeera on Tuesday that nothing has been decided about block 22 and "it is still in discussion among authorities."

Aviles meeting representatives of the Waorani community who were in Quito.

He did not respond to Al Jazeera's request for additional comment on the Waorani's concerns.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/ecuador-indigenous-waorani-launch-petition-save-amazon-180523102935421.html>

May 24, 2018

Cardinal O'Malley leads group of religious leaders, scientists calling for climate action

By Danny McDonald
Boston Globe

Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Boston, led a group of hundreds of local religious leaders and scientists appealing for action on climate change on Wednesday.

O'Malley was among the 500-plus signatories to endorse an appeal that was released Wednesday calling for the climate crisis to be addressed "with the boldness and urgency it requires, with substantive and immediate action."

"Climate change is an ecological and moral emergency that impacts all other aspects of our shared lives and requires us to work together to protect our common home," read the appeal.

The release of the appeal marked the third anniversary of the papal encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, according to a statement from the archdiocese of Boston. [In that letter to the worldwide church](#), Pope Francis framed the issue of climate change in terms of its effect on the poor, those most vulnerable to the storms, destruction of ecosystems, and mass migration that could be a consequence.

On Wednesday, O'Malley, speaking at a press conference in Braintree, said the pope's encyclical drove home the idea that "while the state of the environment is . . . a challenge affecting all of, those most in the greatest of danger are the poor, the vulnerable, those throughout the international community who lack the basic necessities of life."

"In our local communities we hope that we can make a difference by advocating for responsible policies, educating people of all ages about the importance of environmental awareness and each day making choices that respect and support the sustainability of the world around us," said O'Malley.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond, the associate minister for ecological justice at Bethel AME Church, echoed O'Malley's sentiments, saying, "Those of us in power have a moral responsibility to our most vulnerable citizens."

"Yes it is scientifically clear that we are facing a crisis of gargantuan proportions," she said at Wednesday's press conference.

Philip Duffy, the president of Woods Hole Research Center, said the earth's warming is "having consequences now." The challenge of climate change, he said, has economic, political, and moral dimensions. Climate change consequences include increases in extreme weather, sea-level rise, and water and food scarcity, he said.

"Those impacts . . . will certainly get worse in the future as climate change progresses," he said.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2018/05/23/cardinal-malley-leads-group-religious-leaders-scientists-calling-for-climate-action/NS2KTVE7txSgokjDbIEDvO/story.html>

May 25, 2018

How faith, reason and environmental protection go hand in hand

By Veerabhadran Ramanathan
The Hill

This spring, glaciologists released new data which suggested that the massive ice sheets in the Antarctic can melt faster than expected with climate change. We learned that the gulf stream and associated large-scale oceanic circulation which influences weather in the east coast and Europe is slowing down. These data were preceded by a report published by 30 leading scientists, which concluded that unchecked climate change poses existential threat.

As a co-chair of this report I can state that it was excruciating to arrive at the existential threat conclusion. But the massive data we reviewed left us with no other option. The very conditions on which human civilization has depended for the last 12,000 years are threatened by human ideologies, actions and systems that perpetuate climate change.

Unchecked climate change can expose 70 percent of the population to lethal heat stress in addition to record-breaking storms, floods, extreme droughts and fires, exacerbating socioeconomic inequalities, and marginalizing the vulnerable from participation in society.

But, the report left out something crucial that here I would like to address.

It is not that nothing can be done to avert such a global catastrophe; far from it. As shown by numerous reports there are many scalable solutions to reduce the warming almost by half within 30 years and stabilize the warming below dangerous levels. We have about 10 years to deploy these solutions.

If such solutions are available, why are they not already being implemented? Because knowing is never enough! Something beyond knowledge must move the will to take actions. What is that something?

Today, untruth competes with truth to muddy the issue of climate change. The faith community can transcend divisions and bring together people of different perspectives to seek the truth and work for a moral revolution urgently needed for a sustainable relationship with nature: One where humankind challenges notions of domination over nature and sees itself as part of nature.

Science uses rational methodology backed by massive amounts of data to pursue physical truth about the world. Faith, on the other hand, uses experience and belief to pursue metaphysical, existential truth about the meaning of life and how humans should act in the world. Both are

important, but each needs the other to understand the truth of reality; in the words of Saint John Paul II, “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”

The world’s major religious traditions, even if they interpret God differently, share a commitment to human life and dignity, the poor, and the protection of creation. I witnessed this personally at a meeting convened by Pope Francis with leaders of major faiths including evangelism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

The Catholic Church recognizes that human-forced climate change compromises its faith-based commitments to protect human life and dignity, exercise special concern for the poor, and care for creation.

As a result, the Vatican used the Pontifical Academy of Science (PAS) of which I am a member to convene experts from many other fields thus assisting the pope in writing his [2015 encyclical on ecology, Laudato Si’. Laudato Si’](#) — consistent with previous papal teachings — identified human-made climate change as “one of the principal challenges facing humanity,” recognized the grave implications for human health and global equity.

The PAS continues to convene political and faith leaders and scientists to discuss climate change and human health, and to search for scalable solutions like an energy system based solely on renewables, financial support to the poor for climate adaptation, and the secession of deforestation.

Climate change is an existential threat that will require unprecedented cooperation between divergent sectors and members of society. As a climate scientist, I know that the faith community is critical to the process. I therefore urge persons of all faiths to prophetically help lead the nation towards a world of climate stability that safeguards the common home we all share.

Veerabhadran Ramanathan is a climate scientist at the University of California San Diego and council member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at the Vatican.

<http://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/389401-how-faith-reason-and-environmental-protection-go-hand-in-hand>

May 30, 2018

New Program to Connect Judaism, Agriculture

By Marni Folkman
Jewish Exponent

Jewish families in the Philadelphia-area passionate about gardening and sustainability now have an opportunity to participate in agricultural activities that strengthen religious engagement and foster spiritual growth.

The Jewish Farm School, a nonprofit that offers children an alternative, environmental education, launched Side Yard Seedlings, a garden-based early childhood program in West Philadelphia, on May 31.

The program, which is open to children ages 2-6 and runs with support from jkidphilly, was made possible by a \$16,000 PJ Library Alliance Spark Engagement Grant. PJ Library, the flagship program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, supports initiatives that strive to create opportunities for families with young, Jewish children to get involved with Jewish programming.

The grant awarded to the Jewish Farm School encourages the further development of educational, Jewish farming programs and shines a light on the importance of using farms as platforms for learning. The spring pilot run will take place at the Jewish Farm School's garden at 50th Street and Cedar Avenue.

Lori Rubin, the chief program officer at Jewish Learning Ventures, a nonprofit that oversees jkidphilly, explained why jkidphilly wanted to collaborate with the Jewish Farm School and PJ Library on Side Yard Seedlings, noting that geography played a large role in the decision.

“Geographically, jkidphilly knows and has created programs in the greater Philadelphia area. We got involved with Side Yard Seedlings because we believe families in West Philadelphia will be interested in the experiences the program offers,” she said, adding that the program could be a new way to engage Jewish families in an often-underserved area.

Nati Passow, the co-founder and executive director of the Jewish Farm School, is a parent of two young children and believes that in a rapidly developing, highly technological world, “children are increasingly spending less and less time outside in unstructured ways.”

For him, Side Yard Seedlings will “give children the chance to experience the garden with all of their senses and connect with nature in an urban environment.” When children play outside and examine their surroundings in a creative way, they learn how to respect the world around them, he said.

Passow hopes that Side Yard Seedlings makes exploring the agricultural aspects of Judaism through food and farming enjoyable for local Philadelphia families.

The program is comprised of four sessions, two on Sundays and two on Thursdays, that last 90 minutes each. Activities include nature-based crafts, story sessions, songs and games centered around the themes of the Hebrew calendar. The Jewish

Farm School's garden can accommodate approximately 15 children in each session.

Rowan Machalow, who previously ran an in-home preschool, was hired to run the program.

Although this is the first time Jewish Farm School will be working with Philadelphia-area children, it did run a farm-based, Jewish homeschool program for three years at Eden Village Camp in New York's Hudson Valley.

For more information about the program, visit jewishfarmschool.org/seedlings.

<http://jewishexponent.com/2018/05/30/new-program-to-connect-judaism-agriculture/>

May/June 2018

A Radical Alliance of Black and Green Could Save the World

But first the two movements will have to rediscover their shared roots in a fundamental critique of an economy and a society that value things more than lives

By James Gustave Speth and J. Phillip Thompson III

The Environmental Forum
Environmental Law Institute

Reprinted from *The Nation*, April 14, 2016, with the kind permission of the publisher

James Gustave Speth, a former dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, is co-chair of the Democracy Collaborative's Next System Project.

J. Phillip Thompson III is associate professor of urban planning and politics at MIT.

[Read the article online here.](#)

June 1, 2018

When facts are not enough

By Katharine Hayhoe
Science

Science is based on a shared respect for the scientific method—the principle that, by gathering and analyzing data and information, scientists and others can draw conclusions that are robust and generalizable across cultures and ideologies. Scientists furthermore assume that disagreements can be resolved by more facts. So when people object to the reality of climate change with science-y sounding arguments—“the data is wrong,” or “it’s just a natural cycle,” or even, “we need to study it longer”—the natural response of scientists is simple and direct: People need more data. But this approach often doesn’t work and can even backfire. Why? Because

when it comes to climate change, science-y sounding objections are a mere smokescreen to hide the real reasons, which have much more to do with identity and ideology than data and facts.

For years, climate change has been one of the most politically polarized issues in the United States. Today, the best predictor of whether the public agrees with the reality of anthropogenic climate change is not how much scientific information there is. It's where each person falls on the political spectrum. That's why the approach of bombarding the unconvinced with more data doesn't work—people see it as an attack on their identity and an attempt to change their way of life.

I am a climate scientist who has spent a lot of time trying to make climate science more accessible. I've authored National Climate Assessments and numerous outreach reports; I host a YouTube show called Global Weirding; I tweet; I've even promoted knitting patterns that display rising temperatures. Yet the most important step I've taken to make my science communication more effective has nothing to do with the science. As uncomfortable as this is for a scientist in today's world, the most effective thing I've done is to let people know that I am a Christian. Why? Because it's essential to connect the impacts of a changing climate directly to what's already meaningful in one's life, and for many people, faith is central to who they are.

Scientists can be effective communicators by bonding over a value that they genuinely share with the people with whom they're speaking. It doesn't have to be a shared faith. It could be that both are parents, or live in the same place, or are concerned about water resources or national security, or enjoy the same outdoor activities. Instead of beginning with what most divides scientists from others, start the conversation from a place of agreement and mutual respect. Then, scientists can connect the dots: share from their head and heart why they care.

Talking about impacts isn't enough, though. Sadly, the most dangerous myth that many people have bought into is, "it doesn't matter to me," and the second most dangerous myth is, "there's nothing I can do about it." If scientists describe the daunting challenge of climate change but can't offer an engaging solution, then people's natural defense mechanism is to disassociate from the reality of the problem. That's why changing minds also requires providing practical, viable, and attractive solutions that someone can get excited about. Concerned homeowner? Mention the amazing benefits of energy conservation. Worried parent? Bring up the practical steps to take to make outdoor play spaces safer for kids, even in the hot summer. Business executive? Talk about the economic benefits of renewables.

We all live on the same planet, and we all want the same things. By connecting our heads to our hearts, we all can talk about—and tackle—the problem of climate change together.

Katharine Hayhoe is a professor and director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX, USA. www.katharinehayhoe.com

https://www.sciencemagazinedigital.org/sciencemagazine/01_june_2018_Main/MobilePagedArticle.action?articleId=1398024&app=false#articleId1398024

June 5, 2018

Religious Leaders Speak Out Against Enbridge Line 3 as Vote Looms this Month

Healing Minnesota Stories (blog)

Curtiss DeYoung, CEO of the Minnesota Council of Churches, stood before a crowd of hundreds of people Monday afternoon at Leif Erickson Park to state the shared belief of many religious leaders that the state should reject the Enbridge Line 3 crude oil pipeline on moral grounds.

“Oftentimes the faith community historically has been on the wrong side, particularly as it relates to indigenous communities and sovereign nations who we are in relationship with.” DeYoung said. “Today we decided to be on the right side.”

The event was organized by the [Minnesota Poor People’s Campaign](#), and [Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light](#) (MN IPL), and had the support of the [Minnesota Council of Churches](#). ([Star Tribune article here.](#))

The event, held just west of the state Capitol, included civil rights songs, a Jewish cantor, a brass band, chants, and a Buddhist moment of silence. It included indigenous prayer and truth-telling. It included a number of brief speeches from religious leaders from different traditions. But the event’s main goal was to Stop Line 3. To that end, the group delivered an [interfaith letter](#) opposing Line 3 to both Governor Dayton and the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC). Some 540 faith leaders signed.

The interfaith Line 3 [letter](#) reads in part:

At its core, this is a moral issue. Many of us signing this letter come from Christian and other traditions that in recent years have taken formal positions acknowledging the role of our faith institutions in the mistreatment and deep trauma done to Indigenous peoples. . . . We have committed ourselves to seeking ways forward for healing and repair. Our signatures here represent an effort to live out that commitment.

The list of signers from mainline Protestant churches included: Rev. Brian Prior, Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota; Rev. Bruce Ough, Bishop of Dakotas-Minnesota Episcopal Area of the United Methodist Church; Elona Street-Stewart, a Ruling Elder and Executive of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies for the Presbyterian Church USA (a multi-state Synod that includes Minnesota); Rev. Sharon Prestamon, Conference Minister and CEO of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ; and Rev. Ann Svennungsen, Bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Leaders from other traditions signed the letter, too, including Rabbi Alexander Davis, Beth El Synagogue and co-chair of the Minnesota Rabbinical Association; Imam Asad Zaman of the Muslim American Society in Minnesota, Sosan Flynn, guiding teacher at Clouds in Water Zen

Center in St. Paul; and Nancy Cramblit, president of the board of directors for the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Mankato.

The event started with ceremonies at Leif Erickson Park. A delegation of letter signers then walked to the Capitol to deliver a copy of the letter to Dayton's office. (Dayton doesn't have a decision-making role in the pipeline, but pipeline opponents have been urging him to use his bully pulpit to speak out against it.)

Rev. Emily Goldthwaite Fries, associate minister at Mayflower United Church of Christ and a representative of Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, presented the letter to Cathy Polasky, a senior policy advisor to Dayton.

"We stand before you representing a great cloud of witnesses as the Public Utilities Commission consider this month its decision on Line 3," Goldthwaite Fries said. "We pray that all who serve the State of Minnesota will remember their sacred responsibility to protect the land and water and air for seven generations to come."

The larger group then walked to downtown St. Paul to the Metro Square building's third floor, cramming in front of the PUC offices. Prior to delivering a copy of the letter there, Rabbi Arielle Rosenberg of Shir Tikva spoke (and sang):

It is not easy to keep walking when what we do is collide against oppression. It is not easy to find each other and to look in each other's eyes and say "Hello," when we have been trained, day after day, to normalize oppression. We have been trained, day by day, by this society, to passively accept looking past each other.

Today we have a challenge. We are in the middle of this walk together. We have the challenge of how it is that we will continue to show up and continue to find each other and to continue to make our work a blessing for each other, in the midst of this long road.

How do we carry the humility to know that we are not the first people to have been walking this road? We walk this road because of, and thanks to, and in honor of our elders and our ancestors who have walked this road and showed us [the way].

The PUC is expected to vote on Line 3 in late June.

Native leaders spoke, too, including Tara Houska, the National Campaigns Director for [Honor the Earth](#), Jim Bear Jacobs, founder of [Healing Minnesota Stories](#), and Rose Whipple, one of the [Youth Climate Interveners](#).

Houska criticized Enbridge's recent newspaper ad campaign. The ad talked about how Line 3 would help lower prices at the gas pump. That's not true, she said, the oil is for foreign markets. The ad says Enbridge cares about tribal sovereignty. That's not true, either, Houska said. "All five impacted nations have said 'no' to this pipeline. Consultation is not consent."

The ad also said that Enbridge cares about wild rice, Houska said. In fact, the pipeline would carry 900,000 barrels a day of dirty tar sands oil through 4,000 acres of sacred wild rice. Wild rice “is at the heart of my people, of Anishinaabe people,” she said. “It is who we are. It is a sacred, sacred grain to us. To destroy that is to destroy our culture.”

Jacobs, who is Mohican and an associate pastor at Church of All Nations in Columbia Heights, said centuries ago, Christian clergy encountered native communities and were motivated by the sole purpose of civilizing the savages. “Today we stand on the dawn of new interactions between clergy and indigenous communities,” he said. Today, clergy are coming to indigenous communities and saying: “Please, show us how to be civilized.”

Whipple (Isanti Dakota and Ho-Chunk) talked about her recent trip to the Vatican with the Indigenous Youth Ceremony and Mentor Society. They met with Papal emissaries to ask them to repudiate the [Doctrine of Discovery](#). Whipple explained:

The Doctrine of Discovery was created by the Vatican in the 15th Century and it gave Christian explorers the right to claim any land it ‘discovered’ for the Christian monarchs,” she explained. “Any land that was not inhabited by Christians was available to be stolen, claimed, and exploited. . . . Millions of my people died because of this Doctrine. My people are now less than 1 percent of the country when we used to be 100 percent of it.

Whipple made the following connection:

We are still affected by this Doctrine to this day. And Enbridge building Line 3 directly through our treaty territories and wild rice beds, and putting their man camps right next to our communities is a fine example of that.

<https://healingmnstories.wordpress.com/2018/06/05/religious-leaders-speak-out-against-enbridge-line-3-as-vote-looms-this-month/>

June 5, 2018

Swimming in the Great Lakes is a Sacred Spiritual Experience

By Mat McDermott
Patheos - Samudra

This is the second part of an interview I did with Christopher Fici — a former ISKCON monk finishing his doctorate at Union Theological Seminary and board member at [Sadhana: Coalition of Progressive Hindus](#). [Read part one here](#). Here, Chris talks about the connections between the Gaudiya Vaishnav tradition and ecology, ecological initiatives at the [Bhakti Center](#) in New York City, and more.

Did you always have a strong connection with nature, growing up in Detroit?

The best thing about living in Michigan is the Great Lakes. Every summer my family and I — we're starting to do this again in the past couple of years — we would go to one of our friend's cottages on the tip of the thumb in Michigan. Being back there last year reminded me of how important those lakes are. They speak to you on a spiritual level. It may take you a few decades to understand what you're hearing on a spiritual level.

Although I grew up in this nondescript suburb of Detroit, we had a freeway running through the middle of our town and that's pretty much it. It was a nice suburban life but when you go to the lakes that's when you really step into an experience of nature that's really unique. There's nothing like those lakes in the world. I would love to retire to a hermitage up there at some point.

Understanding the theology behind worshipping Ganga and Yamuna, it resonates so much with me when I come back and see these lakes. I would say these are still places of recreation for me and my family, but I see them in a much more sacred sense now. Even just taking a swim out there, I'm swimming in a much more spiritual consciousness than I did before. That comes directly from these different Hindu traditions of seeing sacred water worship.

What's unique in the Hindu perspective on ecology and the environment?

What's unique, both in studying scriptures and the personal experience as a Hindu relating to ecology, is this sense of understanding about how interconnected we all are.

You can understand the theory of karma by trying to understand looking at the flowers, looking at the birds, and at some point in your journey through reality, you have been these creatures. That should manifest within yourself a sense of understanding, respect, and honoring other living beings.

In a couple verses of the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says a wise sage sees every living being on the spiritual platform of equality; someone who's a brahmin, a dog, an elephant, and a dog-eater (an outcast). One element of that teaching is to say within each living being is the soul, is the atman. That's very different than some elements of traditional Christian theology.

There's a famous video of Prabhupada having a conversation, an argument, with a famous French Cardinal from the 1960-70s, about whether the soul existed in animal bodies. This Cardinal, who was a very progressive Christian thinker, just couldn't grasp that a dog or a chicken had a soul like a human being. Prabhupada was very firm on that point [that they do].

This sense, from the Bhagavad Gita where Krishna says I am the taste of water, of animals I am the lion, I'm the shark, he's the thread of all existing reality. Of all these different manifestations of material reality, of spiritual reality, he is the connecting thread.

Something that I discovered at the Hinduism and Ecology conference at the [Govardhan Eco Village](#) in December, talking to [David Haberman](#) and reading his book, [River of Love in an Age of Pollution](#), was a beautiful tradition of worshipping the sacred river of the Ganga. At the Eco

Village every evening there's a beautiful Yamuna Arati. There's a rhythm of the community where it's designed in such a way to stop what you're doing and come to this arati and worship this version of the Yamuna River. Reading his book, there's this beautiful bhakti theology of how Yamuna is a Goddess. She is the liberator of all of her dearest disciples. She protects and benefits everyone who offers her bhakti.

It's very Jesus-like references sometimes. There's a lot of resonances with that too with what I've seen in Native American traditions, this sense that this tree is not just some collection of chemicals and biology, it's a living being.

Of course, David's book goes into very great detail about how Ganga and Yamuna are almost polluted to death at this point. It asks a lot of challenging questions about how you look at certain elements of advaita Vedanta where it's very world denying. It's very much about getting out of here and merging with Brahman, basically devaluing the world — how that also hooks up with devaluing the feminine too. But at the same time the reason these rivers are so polluted is because, after independence you have Nehru coming in and saying things like “the dams are our temples now”. The sort of thing Gandhi was completely against. For Gandhi, independence was not becoming the turbo capitalist West.

Particularly through the Gandhian lens, this idea of ecological community, anticipatory community, was something that very much inspired Swami Prabhupada for his ISKCON community, creating these farm communities. He could understand, both by just viewing the world but also on a deeper level of what it means to be attached/detached and live a proper life, this very consumerist lifestyle is not sustainable, not healthy, or sane.

So, what's the alternative? I'm inspired to say we desperately need an alternative. Gandhi often called it plain living, high thinking. Prabhupada used simple living, high thinking. This sense of living a dharmic life: simplicity, devotion, living as the Eco Village describes it as a symbiotic consciousness, live within your ecosystem, knowing you're a human being, knowing you're going to make an impact, but try to minimize the destructive impacts as much as possible. Be a good neighbor to your ecosystem. Live in harmony and that rhythm. That very much jives with a lot of teachings about what it means to be properly devoted.

There's a teaching in the Isha Upanishad, one of the primary Upanishadic texts that Vaishnavs study, in the first verse it says ‘Everything belongs to God.’ That can change your consciousness, because we're so conditioned and attached to living in this world saying ‘this belongs to me’. It helps you raise your consciousness to a level that says no all of this is of God and belongs to God.

Then the second part of the teaching is that God then gives you everything you need to live. Prabhupada uses the term quota—he has some anachronistic ways of describing things in English. In the same quote it says Krishna gives you everything you need to flourish.

And you should understand what that means in terms of looking at the components of your daily life. Looking at this with an ecological lens, saying this helps me to flourish spiritually and to also be a good citizen of the planet, this doesn't and therefore this is something that's not

necessary. Trying to develop a consciousness of simplicity. Both Prabhupada and Gandhi, it's part of what it means to live dharmically, by living in harmony and simplicity then all kinds of horizons for expanding your consciousness open in your daily life.

How does Gaudiya Vaishnav theology support a more ecologically aware worldview?

To be a devotee, it means Krishna is at the center of everything you try to do, the center of every conscious thought. To be a devotee of Krishna means you're trying to stop being so attached to this *ahamkara*, your false ego, these compulsions in yourself that make you greedy, that make you hateful, that make you want take undue ownership over things. Within Vaishnav teachings it's this sense that if we are so attached to our *ahamkara*, we're naturally going to be destructive. That manifests both in our own consciousness, but also in the way we interact with each other and with the environment.

When you look at the kind of environmental movement there are a lot of very scientific explanations of why what's happening is what's happening, there's a lot of cultural and sociological components of that. I think what religious folks can provide is a sense of what it actually means to desire, what it means to consider what success is, what is progress.

What Prabhupada was saying is go start farm communities even before there was an Earth Day. It was very close together. Part of his mission in coming here and spreading Vaishnav culture, he didn't just tack on the environmental part because he saw that was becoming a thing in the late 60s and early 70s. It's already part of our tradition. You can practice bhakti anywhere. But he would very much encourage anyone who wanted to to go start a farm community. He would say if you have a simple life revolved around Krishna and you try to live simply, eat simply, live in a sustainable ecological way, that is most conducive to practicing devotional consciousness, practicing bhakti.

What are the environmental initiatives now being undertaken at the Bhakti Center?

Radhanathswami asked us last year to start an ecology initiative at the Bhakti Center, wanting to bring some of that consciousness of the Eco Village there. People's ecological consciousness is deepening. People are really beginning to acknowledge what's happening in a way that didn't really exist even ten years ago. We have a pretty hip community at the Bhakti Center. We want people who come to the Bhakti Center to see that we're making an attempt to be a green temple.

When you come to the Bhakti Center now you see clearly labeled recycling, composting. People are happy to participate — although it is always a challenge to try to get people to buy in at first, trying to get people to understand the importance of it, how it fits into being devotional. We're also trying to be more conscious about where we get our produce. We have an idea of eventually getting some sort of LEED type of certification for the temple too, so, when you walk in, you see the certification. That makes a big impact.

What we've also developed is a Sacred Ecology Forum. We're doing eco-sanghas once a month. We talk about different elements of the bhakti tradition. This Sunday we're going to do food. What it means to have a sacred food ethic. We offer food to deity of Krishna, it comes back as

prasadam and actually the eating of the prasadam is itself is its own kind of yoga practice or devotional act. But then when you also bring in perspectives from the environmental world, what does it mean to have a food ethic? What the whole point of the eco-sanghas is to say we practice bhakti, but ask what does it mean to practice eco-bhakti?

Then we're also developing retreats, at [Supersoul Farm](#) with our friend Raghunath Cappelletti as his farm in upstate New York. We're trying to develop some sacred ecology retreats there. Also Gopal Patel, from the [Bhumi Project](#), and Vineet Chander, the [Hindu Life Director at Princeton University](#), are developing a green Gita workshop, how do you look at the Bhagavad Gita through an ecological lens.

The idea is all of these different components of the Bhakti Center programming is to have a sacred ecology component so that people come, whether they are practicing devotees or new to the tradition, and it's a community for them to practice their bhakti and encourage the ecology side of it.

To be a devotee means you have to be ecologically conscious, too.

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/samudra/2018/06/swimming-in-the-great-lakes-is-a-sacred-spiritual-experience/>

June 5, 2018

Big oil to meet with Vatican officials, Pope Francis

By Brian Roewe and Joshua J. McElwee
National Catholic Reporter

World's leading oil industry executives attending 'energy transition' conference

Rome — Pope Francis and Vatican officials plan to meet with some of the world's leading oil executives this week, in what appears as an effort to lobby the industry to take the dangers of climate change more seriously.

While most details about the encounter are being kept secret in hopes of facilitating frank dialogue among the participants, a weekly Vatican media planning calendar indicates the discussion will likely center on the need to transition the global energy market away from dependence on fossil fuels.

According to the calendar, the conference is being titled "Energy transition and care of our common home," referencing the subtitle for Francis' 2015 environmental encyclical *Laudato Si'*. It is to be held at the Vatican June 8-9, and is being co-hosted by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the University of Notre Dame.

Vatican officials with knowledge about the planning of the event said it was organized with the idea of persuading the executives that their companies have a role to play in addressing climate change. They also said Francis is expected to take part only briefly in the encounter.

The [Associated Press reported](#) that Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the Vatican dicastery on integral human development, is expected to address the meeting at some point.

Leo Burke, director of the Climate Investing Initiative at Notre Dame who is among the organizers, told NCR: "With regard to any energy-related meeting involving the Vatican and Notre Dame, we have consistently stated that it would be a private dialogue among the attendees. Regrettably, I am not free to comment at this time."

The meeting will start 10 days before the third anniversary of the publication of *Laudato Si'*, in which Francis described climate change as "a global problem with grave implications" and "one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day."

Francis has frequently stressed that developing nations and the world's poor and marginalized communities are the ones who stand to suffer the worst impacts of climate change, including more frequent droughts, floods and extreme weather events, while contributing the least to the problem.

Although scientists express caution about blaming individual climatic events on a warming climate, a [Harvard University report](#) last week estimated that more than 4,600 Puerto Ricans died after Hurricane Maria, the 10th-most intense cyclone on record, hit the U.S. island territory in September.

At the annual United Nations climate summit this year, called COP24, the international community [will conduct a stocktaking](#) of each nation's self-determined commitments under the Paris Agreement, reached three years ago in France. The summit is being held in December in Katowice, a Polish city situated in the country's coal mining region.

In the Paris Agreement, world leaders agreed to take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions — the primary driver of climate change and largely released by humans burning fossil fuels — toward the goal of holding average global temperature rise between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius (2.7 to 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit).

In *Laudato Si'*, Francis was frank in his assessment of the planet's continued reliance of fossil fuels as its primary source of energy: "We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels — especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas — needs to be progressively replaced without delay."

He added that, "Until greater progress is made in developing widely accessible sources of renewable energy, it is legitimate to choose the less harmful alternative or to find short-term solutions," while going on to criticize the political and business arenas as "slow to react in a way commensurate with the urgency of the challenges facing our world."

News of the oil executives' Vatican meeting was [first reported June 1 by Axios](#). According to the news site, attendees will include the CEOs of ExxonMobil and BP, along with former U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz and Larry Fink, the chief executive of BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager.

Last year, shareholders of ExxonMobil, including a coalition of religious corporate responsibility advocates, [scored a major victory](#) when a nearly two-thirds vote passed a resolution that required the energy giant to provide an annual report on the long-term impacts of global climate policies on its oil and gas reserves.

In addition, nearly 100 Catholic institutions, congregations and dioceses, [including the church's humanitarian aid network Caritas Internationalis](#), have announced they would divest from fossil fuels in recent years as part of a campaign steered by the Global Catholic Climate Movement.

In his encyclical, Francis praised consumer movements as having the ability to change "the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production. When social pressure affects their earnings, businesses clearly have to find ways to produce differently."

He criticized the "principle of the maximization of profits," as giving little concern to whether it comes "at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment."

"Although the post-industrial period may well be remembered as one of the most irresponsible in history, nonetheless there is reason to hope that humanity at the dawn of the twenty-first century will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities," Francis said.

Over the weekend, [Reuters reported](#) that 2017 represented a banner year for renewable energy as it saw its largest annual increase to date in renewable power capacity generation and representing 70 percent of net global energy generating capacity. While that production outpaced new capacity from fossil fuels, carbon emissions still rose for the first time in four years.

<https://www.nronline.org/news/environment/big-oil-meet-vatican-officials-pope-francis>

June 8, 2018

Ecological crisis caused by 'human interference'

By Filipe Domingues

Crux

ROME - One of the greatest allies of Pope Francis in promoting international initiatives that defend the environment is the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I.

The spiritual leader of the Orthodox Church, Bartholomew has been promoting a Christian theology of the environment for decades.

“Our churches are called to offer alternative models of life based on an approach of the human being in his relationship with God, as a creature longing for eternal life, living in fraternity and love with the other,” Bartholomew said in an exclusive interview with Filipe Domingues for the Brazilian newspaper *O São Paulo*, which *Crux* shares with permission.

Francis has developed a close relationship with Bartholomew and acknowledged his influence on his 2015 ecological encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

Domingues conducted his interview with the patriarch shortly after his visit to Rome in May.

Here is *Crux's* exclusive English version of the exchange.

Domingues: Your Holiness, a few days ago, you visited Rome and met Pope Francis. Also you were a keynote speaker at a conference in which your speech was titled “A Common Christian Agenda for the Common Good.” What are the fruits of this visit?

Bartholomew: Every meeting with Pope Francis is another opportunity for us to re-register the good relations between our two churches and our will to continue the path towards unity. It is the encounter of two brothers, the successors of Peter and Andrew the First-Called, and every such event symbolizes our common heritage, but above all the common responsibility we share as pastors for the future of Christianity.

As you see in the title of our speech we come across the word “common” twice. Church itself is the place of the “common” - an event of sharing, of love and openness, a “communion of relations.”

Today humanity is facing a serious crisis, [including] its social outcomes, on a global scale. As we stated in our address, “this worldwide crisis is a ‘crisis of solidarity,’ an ongoing process of ‘desolidarization,’ which puts the very future of humanity at risk. It is our deep conviction, that the future of humanity is related to the resistance against this crisis and the establishment of a culture of solidarity.”

Our churches are called to offer alternative models of life based on an approach of a human being in his relation to God, as a creature longing for eternal life, living in fraternity and love with the other. God, as we mentioned, is present, wherever love and solidarity exist. Our churches resist injustice and all powers that undermine social cohesion by putting forth the social content of the Gospel.

It is Pope Francis’s and our common belief that present ecological problems have to be approached in connection with the contemporary social crisis. It is this spirit that our Common Message with Pope Francis on the ‘World Day of Creation’ (Sept 1st, 2018) expresses.

Concluding our answer, we would like to express our joy for the opportunity we had, once again, to meet with the Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, with whom we associate long-term acquaintance and mutual appreciation. It was a pleasure for us to share our thoughts on various spiritual issues.

Thinking of those who are not so familiar with the Orthodox Church, what are your main concerns today, as patriarch and pastor of such an important church?

Unquestionably, one of our main concerns is that humanity experiences the magnificence of Christianity and the transformation that our Lord Jesus Christ brought upon the universe. A common misconception among our brothers is to think that this magnificence of Christianity refers only to art or culture.

Our brethren often seek the aforementioned magnificence of the Christian faith in Hagia Sophia and in the Chora Monastery in Constantinople, in Ravenna, in Giotto's paintings, in the modern and marvelous Oscar Niemeyer Cathedral of Brazil and its hovering angels, and in Byzantine music or in Gregorian melodies. But the splendor of Christianity is not merely found here.

Christianity is represented by people's countless acts of love, kindness, compassion, forgiveness and sacrifice-acts that were motivated by their desire to live as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. A true Christian is someone who gives off his food to a hungry person; someone who offers water to a brother that is thirsty; someone who shelters a stranger; someone who dresses a naked human being; someone who visits an imprisoned person; someone who takes care of a sick man; someone who has a good thing to say about all people, even those who disagree with him; someone who helps those who hate him; someone who doesn't judge others; someone who loves his adversaries. Such acts of charity, though difficult to fulfill, are a natural part of the Christian's being.

Such disciples of Christ are "the salt of the Earth," as our Lord teaches in the Holy Gospel. The glory of Christianity is the amazing fruit of the faith in Christ, the heart of loving kindness, the love and solidarity for our fellow human beings and the certainty of the eternal destiny of all. If you want an answer about my concerns I would focus on the following fundamental issue, namely, how people can transform the world by becoming disciples of Christ.

What inspires the actions of Orthodox and Catholic Christians on the path to unity?

With the Western Christians we have shared a common path during the first millennium of Christianity's history. Our churches have tasted the bitter sorrow of separation for many centuries following the schism of 1054. The schism was a painful experience for both sides, regardless of who bears responsibility for it. Everything changed after the historic meeting between Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in Jerusalem in 1964, which led to the common lifting of the anathemas between the two churches.

Fifty years after that historic meeting, following our predecessors' example and commemorating that unique moment for our two churches, we gathered again in 2014 with our brother Pope Francis in Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land. During that meeting we confirmed our firm belief that we need each other's love and support. The first meeting between the pope and

the ecumenical patriarch in 1964 initiated a theological dialogue of truth and love between our two churches; the fiftieth anniversary of this meeting confirmed that our desire for unity requires further acts of charity and love.

Together, you and Pope Francis ask for more respect for Creation, for the environment. Is that a major concern that unites the two of you?

It is an undeniable fact that our planet faces serious problems, largely due to unprecedented human abuse of God's creation. Such human interference has brought about an ecological crisis.

The atmosphere is being polluted more and more with each passing day; clean water is becoming scarcer since we are polluting our oceans, rivers and lakes. We are destroying thousands of acres of forests each year; meadows grow smaller. Changes in the planet's climate have led to the loss of many species of our flora and fauna.

We believe that these things have occurred because of our gradual separation and alienation from God. Even we Christians, who often pride ourselves over our faith, have distanced ourselves from God. It is easy to blame others for the destruction of the planet, but we must also ask ourselves whether or not creation is actually safer in the hands of Christians.

The ecological crisis is an issue that affects the natural world, but it stems from a crisis in our hearts. As we seek to advance concrete and fact-based solutions to the problem, we must also focus on the need for personal repentance, which would bring about a "change of thought" and a change in our ways of life. And as we change our lives, we ought to realize that as members of creation we are not the center of the world. We depend on God; God does not depend on us.

Could Catholics and Orthodox dream that one day we will celebrate Easter on the same date? Are you optimistic about this?

The subject of a common celebration of Easter is important and complicated. Therefore, the matter needs to be handled delicately in order to avoid scandal among the faithful. Nonetheless, this issue is of great concern to the Orthodox Church.

The idea of a common date of Easter for Orthodox and Catholics was raised in the regular work of the Pan-Orthodox Conference of 1923 in Constantinople and later during the 1930 Preparatory Committee Meeting on Mount Athos. Since then it has been discussed during many inter-Orthodox meetings.

This shows our sincere desire and hope that, as Orthodox Christians, we will celebrate Easter on the same day as other Christian brethren. A common Easter date between Eastern and Western Christians will, among other things, deliver us from many practical difficulties, especially important for the faithful of both churches who reside in lands where Orthodoxy or Catholicism is not the predominant religion.

The truth is, the Orthodox Church will have a difficult time accepting any decision that overlooks what has already been determined on this subject matter by the First Ecumenical

Council in Nicaea (325 AD). We pray, however, and hope that almighty God will guide our steps.

You were in Egypt with Pope Francis (in April 2017), visiting the Grand Imam of Al Azhar. How would you describe Christian-Muslim dialogue today?

Our meeting highlighted the role of religion in achieving and maintaining peace in the world. We stressed humanity's need to embrace faith and to acknowledge the presence of God. We also emphasized the need to respect pluralism and diversity.

To this end, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has initiated a dialogue with Judaism and Islam. It is our responsibility to work with people of diverse backgrounds. We hope that our cooperation with other religious traditions, especially on social issues, will bear great fruit for the entire world. For the Orthodox Church, religious freedom and freedom of conscience is an imperative part of the process; we cannot accept, under any circumstance, the fostering of fanatic sentiments against other religions.

We firmly believe that religious dialogue and, from time to time, meetings between religious leaders, will help people overcome their fears of each other, and move from conflict to rapprochement and peaceful coexistence.

Lastly, neither war nor indifference to the plight of people are consistent with religious teaching. As we have pointed out time and again, war in the name of religion is, in fact, a war against that religion itself.

How would you express your concern for persecuted Christians in the Middle East, where some of the original Christian communities risk disappearing?

The persecution of Christians immensely concerns and is the source of great sorrow for us.

Unfortunately, such persecution is not confined to the Middle East. Christians are persecuted also in other corners of the world where exists a so-called "Christianophobia."

In Europe and in many Western societies, policies of secularization and de-Christianization pose a grave challenge to Christianity. But, unknown to Christianity's persecutors, it is a fact that faith in Jesus Christ is governed by the spirit of peace, love, forgiveness, and service; we do not seek to exploit and dominate others. The present reality in Europe and in other parts of the world proves that every cultural accomplishment and, most importantly, social achievement, springs from Christian principles.

Thus, the persecution of Christianity actually leads to the persecution of culture and of unique values that beautify our world.

Undoubtedly the situation occurring in the Middle East is alarming. Many Christians are persecuted, while others are forced to flee from their ancient homelands. We have voiced our serious concerns countless times to world leaders; we have reminded them that we have yet to

discover the whereabouts of the two abducted Hierarchs, Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Paul and Syriac Bishop John Ibrahim, both of Aleppo. We anxiously wait to receive news from the regional and global authorities and pray for their safe return.

The Orthodox Church, as it has been stated in the Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council, convened on the island of Crete, Greece, in June 2016, *“is particularly concerned about the situation facing Christians, and other persecuted ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East. In particular, she addresses an appeal to governments in that region to protect the Christian populations - Orthodox, Ancient Eastern and other Christians - who have survived in the cradle of Christianity. The indigenous Christian and other populations enjoy the inalienable right to remain in their countries as citizens with equal rights.”*

<https://cruxnow.com/interviews/2018/06/08/patriarch-bartholomew-ecological-crisis-caused-by-human-interference/>

June 9, 2018

Pope Tells Oil Executives to Act on Climate: ‘There Is No Time to Lose’

By Elisabetta Povoledo
New York Times

ROME — Three years ago, Pope Francis issued a sweeping letter that highlighted the global crisis posed by climate change and called for swift action to save the environment and the planet.

On Saturday, the pope gathered money managers and titans of the world’s biggest oil companies during a closed-door conference at the Vatican and asked them if they had gotten the message.

“There is no time to lose,” Francis told them on Saturday.

Pressure has been building on oil and gas companies to transition to less polluting forms of energy, with the threat of fossil-fuel divestment sometimes used as a stick.

The pope said oil and gas companies had made commendable progress and were “developing more careful approaches to the assessment of climate risk and adjusting their business practices accordingly.” But those actions were not enough.

“Will we turn the corner in time? No one can answer that with certainty,” the pope said. “But with each month that passes, the challenge of energy transition becomes more pressing.”

He called on the participants “to be the core of a group of leaders who envision the global energy transition in a way that will take into account all the peoples of the earth, as well as future generations and all species and ecosystems.”

In an era when the White House is viewed by many scientists as hostile to the very idea of climate change, with [President Trump announcing](#) the United States' withdrawal from the [Paris climate accord](#), Francis is seen as an influential voice to nudge oil executives to take action on the issue.

Among those summoned to a 16th-century villa in the Vatican gardens were the chairman of Exxon Mobil, the chief executive of the Italian energy giant Eni and the chief executive of BP.

Paul J. Browne, a Notre Dame spokesman, said the university's president, the Rev. John I. Jenkins, had been inspired by the pope's 2015 encyclical instructing "all schools and departments of the university to respond to Francis' evocative appeal on behalf of 'our sister,' the Earth."

Many had complied, he said, including by expediting plans to stop coal burning at the university power plant. Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business sponsored the conference.

In his 2015 encyclical, Francis, a vocal supporter of the Paris accord, warned that climate change represented "one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day." He called for a model of energy transition.

On Saturday, the pope reiterated his call for a transition from fossil fuels "to a greater use of energy sources that are highly efficient while producing low levels of pollution." It was a challenge "of epochal proportions," he acknowledged, but also one that presented an immense opportunity to "promote the sustainable development of renewable forms of energy."

He said that though the world is affected by climate change, it was the poor who would "suffer most from the ravages of global warming." Francis added that the transition "is a duty that we owe towards millions of our brothers and sisters around the world, poorer countries and generations yet to come."

Last month, a group of investors representing more than \$10.4 trillion in assets published [a letter](#) in The Financial Times urging the oil and gas industry to "be more transparent and take responsibility for its emissions," which account for 50 percent of global carbon emissions, according to the Carbon Disclosure Project, an organization based in London.

To date, according to [the Global Catholic Climate Movement](#), dozens of Catholic institutions have divested from fossil fuels, including Caritas Internationalis, a confederation of relief organizations; Catholic banks with more than 7 billion euros, or \$8.3 billion, on their balance sheets; archdioceses; religious orders; and lay movements.

On Thursday, Equinor, the Norwegian oil giant formerly called Statoil, [released a report](#) saying that the world needed to move faster in adopting renewable energy to achieve the goals of the Paris agreement.

"The climate debate is long on targets, but short on action," the company said. "We believe it's possible to achieve climate targets set out in the Paris agreement, but that requires swift, global

and coordinated political action to drive changes in consumer behavior and shift investments towards low carbon technologies.”

Other oil companies, including Exxon Mobil, have endorsed the Paris accord and have called for carbon taxes, but the Equinor report appeared to be more explicit in its endorsement of more vigorous climate action. Still, Equinor remains a major producer of oil and gas, and it continues to search for hydrocarbons.

The Rev. Seamus P. Finn, a participant at a conference in 2013 that brought mining companies to the Vatican, said that exercise had been useful for the industry and the Vatican “to better understand each other,” and that follow-up meetings had “deepened the quality of the conversation.”

The Vatican is a “safe place for discussion,” said Father Finn, a Catholic priest and the chairman of the [Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility](#).

“I think that all can agree that there needs to be a shift from fossil fuels to alternative forms of energy, but the debate is how long is that transition period going to be,” Father Finn said.

“For some, it’s tomorrow. For others who believe that climate change is not so serious, there is plenty of time,” he added.

The pope on Saturday said that the situation was dire. Despite the Paris agreement, carbon dioxide emissions and atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases remained high. He said the search for new fossil fuel reserves was “even more worrying.”

“We received the earth as a garden-home from the Creator,” Francis said. “Let us not pass it on to future generations as a wilderness.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/09/world/europe/pope-oil-executives-climate-change.html>

June 9, 2018

Pope Francis tells oil bosses world must reduce fossil fuel use

The Guardian

Pontiff says clean energy is needed as climate change risks destroying humanity

[Pope Francis](#) has told oil company chiefs that the world must switch to clean energy because climate change risks destroying humanity.

“Civilisation requires energy, but energy use must not destroy civilisation,” he said at the end of a two-day conference at the Vatican.

The pontiff said climate change was a challenge of epochal proportions, and that the world needed to come up with an energy mix that combatted pollution, eliminated poverty and promoted social justice.

The unprecedented conference, held behind closed doors at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, brought together oil executives, investors and Vatican experts. Like the pope, they back scientific opinion that climate change is caused by human activity and that global warming must be curbed.

“We know that the challenges facing us are interconnected. If we are to eliminate poverty and hunger ... the more than 1 billion people without electricity today need to gain access to it,” Francis told them.

“But that energy should also be clean, by a reduction in the systematic use of fossil fuels. Our desire to ensure energy for all must not lead to the undesired effect of a spiral of extreme climate changes due to a catastrophic rise in global temperatures, harsher environments and increased levels of poverty,” he said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/09/pope-francis-tells-oil-bosses-world-must-wean-itself-off-fossil-fuels>

June 11, 2018

Pope urges oil companies to lead clean energy transition in unprecedented Vatican Conference

By Olivia Rosane
NationofChange

"Civilization requires energy, but energy use must not destroy civilization."

[Pope Francis](#) urged the leaders of [big oil](#) companies to see the light on [climate change](#) at a first-of-its kind conference held at the Vatican with oil executives, investors and Vatican experts, [The Guardian reported Saturday](#).

“Civilization requires energy, but energy use must not destroy civilization,” the pope said during remarks at the end of the conference, according to The Guardian.

The current pope, who has emerged as a leader in the fight against climate change following his groundbreaking [2015 encyclical](#), urged the companies to lead the transition towards [renewable energy](#) and away from [fossil fuels](#).

He said they should strive “to be the core of a group of leaders who envision the global energy transition in a way that will take into account all the peoples of the earth, as well as future generations and all species and ecosystems,” [The New York Times reported](#).

The pope also spoke with a great sense of urgency about the coming crisis. “There is no time to lose,” he said, according to The New York Times.

“Will we turn the corner in time? No one can answer that with certainty,” the pope said. “But with each month that passes, the challenge of energy transition becomes more pressing.”

The meeting, held Saturday behind closed doors at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, included big names in the oil industry like the chairman of [Exxon Mobil](#), the chief executive of [BP](#), the chief executive of the Italian energy company Eni and representatives of [Royal Dutch Shell](#), Norway’s Equinor and Mexico’s Pemex, according to The New York Times and the [BBC](#).

In recent years, oil companies have switched from outright hostility to climate science to taking action on climate change. Exxon Mobil, for example, who [funded climate denial think tanks](#) between 1998 and 2005 to the tune of \$16 million, has since endorsed the [Paris agreement](#).

But while the pope commended companies for the efforts they are making, he also said those efforts did not go far enough.

Pope Francis also focused on the social justice aspects of climate change, saying it would harm the poor disproportionately, and that clean energy was essential to bringing people out of poverty without disrupting the climate they depend upon.

“Our desire to ensure energy for all must not lead to the undesired effect of a spiral of extreme climate changes due to a catastrophic rise in global temperatures, harsher environments and increased levels of poverty,” he said, according to The Guardian.

<https://www.nationofchange.org/2018/06/11/pope-urges-oil-companies-to-lead-clean-energy-transition-in-unprecedented-vatican-conference/>

June 11, 2018

Religious Leaders’ Symposium on Climate Crisis – A Few Takeaways

By Jim Antal

When the leader of one of the world’s major faith traditions convenes two hundred leaders who have given their lives to combat climate change, an endless flow of creative ideas, perspectives and projects emerges. I offer the following takeaways in the hope that they will be useful to all who share a commitment to restore God’s great gift of creation.

We have been Given the Opportunity to Amplify our Ambition, Determination and Will

One of the things that most struck me is that three of the featured presentations all concluded that there is a single factor that is needed to avoid climate catastrophe. We must have the will, the

ambition, the commitment to restore creation. Just as climate change is the greatest moral crisis humanity has ever faced, it presents us with the greatest opportunity we have ever been given.

One of those presenters is among the lead climatologists in the world, Hans Joachim Schellnhuber. Another has served for the past many years as the United Nations lead spokesperson on climate change, Christiana Figueres. The third is Figueres' successor, Patricia Espinosa.

Each of us can readily identify numerous examples that span history and cross cultures of how religion has inspired communities and countries to rise up, how religion has amplified ambition and strengthened both the will and determination of people to seek a more just and compassionate way. Nevertheless, as perhaps the most powerful force on earth, religion has not yet brought its full, transformative force to bear on humanity's disregard of God's creation.

A similar point was made by the greatest living Orthodox theologian, Metropolitan John of Pergamon. He reminded us that the heart – not the mind - is where our WILL resides. Thus, if we seek to amplify ambition, we must purify our hearts. He urged us to take a eucharistic approach to creation – to constantly give thanks for the gift of creation – noting that as our gratitude deepens, so will our capacity to recognize that we have jeopardized the gift, spoiled the blessing, and so will our commitment to do something about it.

We must reconnect with seeds and with the soil

Indian scientist and activist, Vandana Shiva, made it clear that unless we undertake a radical transformation, we will pass on to future generations a death sentence. Years ago she abandoned her academic specialty as a quantum physicist and immersed herself in the science of food production when she realized that every element of agriculture is about war. For example, insects are viewed as enemies to be exterminated, in spite of the fact that 1/3 of the food we consume comes from pollinators. Most people don't realize that virtually all fertilizers are created from fossil fuels, and that you can have at least a 300% increase in food productivity simply by caring properly for the land. In India, in the Punjab region, the rivers are gone and the farmers are committing suicide. Once she shared with us that only 5% of cancer has a genetic basis, and 95% of cancers are caused by toxic creations made by us, it made sense when she asserted that poisoning the world is sin. Nevertheless, 75% of diseases are linked to chemical/corporate farming, and she shared that 40-50% of CO₂ comes from chemically grown food and transportation. In addition to providing her people and the world with these motivational facts, through her activism, India has passed a law preventing Monsanto from patenting seeds.

We can do this!

This is the rally cry of Christiana Figueres, who served as Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) from 2010-2016 and was the central figure of the Paris Climate Accord. While no one knows more about the challenges of climate change, no one is more convincingly positive in articulating hope.

Her starting point is that if we add up all the things humanity really wants, not only can we fulfill

those wants but we can fulfill those wants by doing what we actually need to do build a sustainable world. For example, all people around the world want less pollution. We can accomplish that by closing down all coal plants and transitioning from internal combustion engines to electric vehicles. People want less congestion on the roads. We can accomplish that by having fewer cars and trucks. People want food security. By restoring degraded lands we will reduce the CO2 in the air and provide people with food where they live.

Without being Pollyannaish, she's quick to point out the achievements since the Paris Climate Accords. 23% of the global energy grid is already renewable. Volvo, BMW and Volkswagen have all committed to build only electric vehicles soon. As of 2030, all vehicles in India will be electric.

Nevertheless, she offers a short, uncompromising list of behavior changes each of us can embrace:

1. Eradicate meat from our diets.
2. Take care of how we transport ourselves. We don't need 4 wheels for all transport.
3. Those who live in a democracy must vote responsibly.
4. We must leverage the power of capital by divesting from fossil fuel companies and investing in clean, renewable forms of energy.

In her final comments, she charged the faith community to do two things. First, we need to strengthen the arch of faith. Amidst the many ups and downs, it's up to the faith community to inject confidence that humanity can stand up for our highest purpose. A 1.5-degree Celsius rise is our fundamental moral obligation. Second, we need to expand the art of love. While feeling solidarity with the most vulnerable is easy, it's also easy to exclude some from the arch of love. We must extend the arch of love to everyone.

What sort of ancestor do you want to be?

This question was raised by Raj Patel, Research Professor in the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, Austin. In many ways, it captures the challenging conversations that filled these three days, and provides a good end to this brief reflection.

<https://www.jimantal.com/news/religious-leaders-symposium-on-climate-crisis-a-few-takeaways>

June 11, 2018

World Religious Leaders Confront Climate Crisis

By Jim Antal

Last week, the religious leaders of a quarter of the world's population confronted the climate crisis – and I was honored to be part of the conversation.

At the invitation of the head of the Orthodox Church, His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, 200 leaders from the fields of science, government, public policy, business and religion came together for three days in Greece to examine the most up to date climate science, the threats already posed by climate change, and the most promising strategic responses. Every one of us had committed at least a significant part of our life to address the greatest moral challenge humanity has ever faced, and we were hoping for inspiration. We were not disappointed. ([click here for details on the Symposium and participants](#))

Among the religious leaders who addressed the group was His Eminence Peter Cardinal Turkson, a Ghanaian Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. It was Cardinal Turkson who worked very closely with Pope Francis in the development of *Laudato Si*.

Jeffrey Sachs, the world-renowned professor of economics, senior UN advisor, bestselling author and former Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia, used his keynote to identify the core components of a moral economy. He noted that for Jesus, justice is the core of a moral economy, and the essence of justice is a preferential option for the poor.

Sachs then stirred the gathering with a blistering critique of corporate capitalism, pointing out that in America, we have no government of the people. We have a government of business within which our Congress walks around acting like it has nothing to do because it's been paid to do nothing. By making the corporation the essence of the modern economy, we have unleashed the most powerful instinctual human drive: greed. By unleashing greed, we have also freed from moral constraint violence, plunder and a total disregard for the plight of future generations.

In the presence of His Eminence John Cardinal Olorunfemi Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Nigeria, Sachs offered the Nigerian delta as “exhibit one” of how corporations act with impunity and how national governments are now subordinate to corporations. The natural beauty and resources of Nigeria have been sacrificed on the altar of profit. Deforestation in service of the fast food industry is another notable illustration.

Sachs concluded by noting the obvious: humanity wants to survive, to be happy and to flourish. But the 500 year “trial run” of corporate capitalism has failed all three desires. He then called upon religion to show a way forward, to bring humanity together in order to confront the challenge of climate change, to offer humanity authentic meaning as we face the Anthropocene, and in God's name to demand accountability and accept the struggle.

Just as our gathering concluded, Pope Francis took the unprecedented step of [summoning](#) both the CEOs of the largest oil and gas companies in the world as well as the money managers of major financial institutions [for a meeting](#). Both Cardinal Turkson and Jeffrey Sachs left our symposium early so that they could join Pope Francis and bring their perspectives to the chairman of Exxon Mobil, the chief executive of BP and others. While the pope acknowledged that we are facing a challenge “of epochal proportions,” he urged the oil executives to embrace

this immense opportunity for a rapid transition to renewable forms of energy. He told them that we have a duty “towards millions of our brothers and sisters around the world, poorer countries and generations yet to come.”

The unambiguous message to the world in a week in which the leaders of the Eastern Church and the Western Church confronted the challenges of climate change was this: climate change is the greatest moral challenge the world has ever faced. And not only that: climate change is a religious issue. It now falls to the adherents of those faith traditions – together with all people of faith along with all people of good will – to accelerate the world’s transition to clean, renewable energy as we restore God’s great gift of creation.

<https://www.jimantal.com/news/world-religious-leaders-confront-climate-crisis>

June 11, 2018

ISKCON’s Govardhan Eco Village, Mumbai and Sacred Ecology Forum Hosts Global Conference on Sustainability in Manhattan

APN News

New Delhi : The Bhakti Centre (TBC), located in the heart of Manhattan, an educational and cultural centre centered on the Vedic values, recently hosted a unique confluence of academicians, diplomats, researchers, monks and in general enthusiasts concerned with the topic of sustainability according to a release issue here.

“Sustainability from the Inside Out”, as the conference was named, was hosted jointly by Govardhan Eco Village, Mumbai and the Sacred Ecology Forum at TBC yesterday, to explore the profound connection between the practice of yoga and the sustainability of the Earth and its resources ahead of the International Yoga Day.

The conference began with Gauranga Das, Director, GEV and Vice-President, ISKCON Chowpatty explaining the inspiration and history behind the conception of the event – as a follow up to the conference on “Hinduism and Ecology” which was held last year in GEV, as a unique way to commemorate International Yoga Day, and as an offering to His Holiness Radhanath Swami, who has remained the spiritual powerhouse behind both these projects, GEV and TBC, which started coincidentally around the same time, 2003.

The discussion was around the broad theme of the role of spirituality in providing a narrative to the question of sustainability. Mr. Sandeep Chakravorty, the current Consul General of India, stressed the human role and the need of inner change to address the question of climate change. He mentioned about the role of austerity and frugality in abating the blazing fires of consumerism – quoting Gandhi, “There is enough for everybody’s need and not for anybody’s greed.”

The academia was represented by Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker and Dr. John Grim who are the Co-Directors of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, and Dr. David Haberman who is the Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University. Mary and John stressed the need of shared future for a better future – where religious values can assist science and technology for a sustainable future. They quoted and lauded GEV as an example of a fine “engaged project” – which shows the confluence of spiritual values and a working ground model where the values have been duly applied.

Professor Haberman made his presentation on explaining how practically all aspects of nature, be it stones, trees and rivers are all considered sacred in Vedic fold – focusing much on the example of Govardhan worship. He stressed how Krishna, Himself taught by His example when he advocated the worship of the hill Govardhan.

HH Radhanath Swami explained that the crisis of environment is actually the crisis of human spirit – the state of environment is actually an external manifestation of the ecology of the heart. His Holiness quoted examples from the life of his spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada how he personally cared for Krishna creation – be it being upset on a severed tree in an ISKCON property, instructing disciples about a leaking faucet in a farm or shedding tears for a struggling insect on the floor – and these all amidst his busy schedule of translating Shrimad Bhagavatam and preaching worldwide.

Among other dignitaries, Anita Patiala, Agricultural Counselor, US Embassy Costa Rica and Dr. Peter Whitehouse, President, Intergenerational Schools International shared their personal journeys in the field of religion and sustainability. The program was also decorated with a beautiful musical rendition of Srila Rupa Gosvami’s Sri Yamunastakam by Jahnvi Jivana Devi Dasi.

<https://www.apnnews.com/iskcons-govardhan-eco-village-mumbai-and-sacred-ecology-forum-hosts-global-conference-on-sustainability-in-manhattan/>

June 13, 2018

Church leaders endorse Season of Creation in rare ecumenical joint letter

Anglican Communion News Service

The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby has joined leaders of other Christian churches in [a joint letter](#) encouraging participation in the Season of Creation. The annual celebration of prayer and action to protect the environment emerged from a proclamation by the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I in 1989. He called on Orthodox Christians to observe 1 September each year as a day of prayer for creation. Many churches across the world from different traditions began celebrating a Season of Creation between that date and 4 October 4 – the feast of St Francis of Assisi.

In 2009, the Anglican Consultative Council called on provinces to “celebrate a liturgical ‘Season of Creation’ as an integral part of the church’s yearly pattern of worship and teaching”; and repeated the call in 2012, when it asked provinces to “consider the inclusion of a season of Creation in the liturgical calendar.” In 2014 Pope Francis designated 1 September as an annual World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation; and in 2015 he called on Catholics to join “together with all Christians” in the Season of Creation.

Now, nine Church leaders have signed a letter encouraging Christians around the world from all traditions to mark the season of prayer.

“As the environmental crisis deepens, we Christians are urgently called to witness to our faith by taking bold action to preserve the gift we share,” they say in their letter. “As the psalmist sings, ‘The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein’ (Psalm 24:1-2).

“During the Season of Creation, we ask ourselves: Do our actions honour the Lord as Creator? Are there ways to deepen our faith by protecting ‘the least of these,’ who are most vulnerable to the consequences of environmental degradation?”

“We invite you to join us on a journey of faith that challenges and rewards us with fresh perspective and deeper bonds of love. United in our sincere wish to protect creation and all those who share it, we join hands across denominations as sisters and brothers in Christ. During this season, we walk together towards greater stewardship of our place in creation.”

The letter has been described as “the first joint statement of support for the season from leading authorities across denominations including the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, and the Anglican Communion” and as “a sign that Christian leaders increasingly see environmental protection as an essential expression of their faith.”

Commenting on the letter, Archbishop Justin Welby said: “‘In the beginning, God said. . .’ These words usher in the most extraordinary account of creation: an account of abundance, of multiplicity, of creativity.

“Creation is God’s intricate work of art, and human beings are privileged to be placed within it. In this Season of Creation, we celebrate God the Creator, we thank God for the extraordinary riches of his grace. But we also come in sorrow for the way we have defaced creation and misused it for our own ends. In this Season, let’s find again a true vision of what being made in the image of God, caring for creation can mean, and commit ourselves to action.”

Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, said “As Pope Francis tells us in *Laudato Si’*, ‘living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience’ (217).

“As caretakers of God’s creation, we must choose between tending to its richness and neglecting it to impoverishment. For the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters, our choices have

profound implications. Let us embrace the Season of Creation in all its joy and depth, and fully enter into our role as caretakers of the Earth, our common home.”

Environmentalists from a number of different denominations have created and collated a number of resources, which are available on the Season of Creation website: seasonofcreation.org.

Letter in support of the Season of Creation

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

“But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?” (Job 12:7-9, NRSV)

Once every year, from 1 September to 4 October, members of the Christian family set aside time to deepen our relationship with the Creator, each other, and all of creation. This is the Season of Creation, which began in 1989 with the first recognition of the day of prayer for creation by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church, and which is now embraced by the wider ecumenical family.

During the Season of Creation, we join together to rejoice in the good gift of creation and reflect on how we care for it. This season offers a precious opportunity to pause in the midst of our day-to-day lives and contemplate the fabric of life into which we are woven.

As the environmental crisis deepens, we Christians are urgently called to witness to our faith by taking bold action to preserve the gift we share. As the psalmist sings, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1-2). During the Season of Creation, we ask ourselves: Do our actions honour the Lord as Creator? Are there ways to deepen our faith by protecting “the least of these,” who are most vulnerable to the consequences of environmental degradation?

We invite you to join us on a journey of faith that challenges and rewards us with fresh perspective and deeper bonds of love. United in our sincere wish to protect creation and all those who share it, we join hands across denominations as sisters and brothers in Christ. During this season, we walk together towards greater stewardship of our place in creation.

“O Lord my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent” (Psalm 104:1-2).

With you, we give thanks for the community of believers around the world that is bringing love to creation this season, and we praise the Creator for the gifts we share.

In God’s grace,

Archbishop Job of Telmessos,
*Permanent Representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the WCC,
on behalf of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*

The Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby,
Archbishop of Canterbury

Cardinal Peter K A Turkson,
Prefect, Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

The Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit,
General Secretary of World Council of Churches

The Revd Dr Chris Ferguson,
General Secretary, World Communion of Reformed Churches

Bishop Efraim Tendero,
Secretary-General of the World Evangelical Alliance

The Revd Dr Martin Junge,
General Secretary, Lutheran World Federation

Rudelmar Bueno de Faria,
General Secretary, Act Alliance

Father Heikki Huttunen,
General Secretary, Conference of European Churches

-
- *There is a Season of Creation ecumenical steering committee which brings together the Act Alliance, Anglican Communion Environmental Network, ARocha, Christian Aid, Global Catholic Climate Movement, Lausanne/World Evangelical Alliance Creation Care Network, Lutheran World Federation, and the World Council of Churches. They have produced a number of resources which are available online at seasonofcreation.org.*

<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2018/06/church-leaders-endorse-season-of-creation-in-rare-ecumenical-joint-letter.aspx#letter>

June 13, 2018

Interfaith gathering celebrates water

By Diana Swift
Anglican Journal

The waves of Lake Ontario lapped a light *andante* to the prayers, chants and drumbeats of a powerful ceremony—Toronto’s second annual Niigaani-gichigami Gratitude Walk and Festival.

Held June 8 just before dusk in a downtown waterfront park, the interfaith spiritual gathering attracted First Nations and non-First Nations folk alike—some in Indigenous dress, others in African garb, the Muslim hijab or the bright blue habits of the Sisters of St. John the Divine.

Organized by the Niigaani-gichigami Collective, the Urban Native Ministry and the Cathedral Church of St. James, the event was designed to thank, celebrate and protect the life-sustaining integrity of Niigaani-gichigami (Lake Ontario) and its connecting waterways. Its aim is to promote community thinking and action on how we live on the water and build a right relationship with the life-sustaining waters in our region.

The cathedral’s the Rev. Leigh Kern, who helped organize the event along with Pastor Evan Smith of the United Church of Canada (both of Indigenous ancestry), introduced the main speaker, Mi’kmaq elder and educator Wanda Whitebird.

“Water teaches us humility. If we don’t drink water, we die,” Whitebird said, noting that water, an essential gift from the Creator, is central to Indigenous peoples’ spirituality. “Water is the most powerful entity on Earth. It is also our first protector,” she added, referencing the waters that surround the unborn child in the womb.

Whitebird stressed that this legacy of respect for and stewardship of water has been handed down to Indigenous people by their ancestors throughout the generations. “We are taught that everything you do or say has an echo, not only to you but your children and grandchildren and their children and grandchildren,” she said.

As a harbour police boat chugged by and the constables on board looked long and hard at the celebrants, Whitebird explained how if the year were 1950, this ceremonial gathering would be illegal. “If we were standing here, we’d all be arrested. It wasn’t until after 1951 that we were legally allowed to practise our ways, and it didn’t become legal in the United States until 1978. Our spirituality was outlawed,” she said.

Whitebird thanked the Creator and offered prayers for the “amazing, pure, precious lake,” asking for the blessing of its spirit.

Then a native of Quebec stepped up to the mic and recounted how her ancestors, who came to New France in 1650 to be *voyageurs* in the fur trade, relied on Indigenous people to teach them how to live off the daunting new land and especially how to navigate the waterways to the interior. She led the celebrants in five verses of a lively French song dating back to the days of the *coureurs des bois*.

A representative from the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network explained how Big Mining, with Canadian companies in the forefront, is polluting waters around the globe, producing environmentally disastrous tailing ponds whose heavy-metal toxicity takes the greatest toll on the poorest and most vulnerable people—the children and the women who wash their clothes in the river and fetch water for cooking.

A representative from the Ashkenazi Jewish community spoke of the importance of water in Jewish cleansing rituals and how water connects her to her ancestors, whose bones lie half a world away. Three members of the city's Islamic community sang a song of praise.

The event also featured the ancient Indigenous smudging ceremony, with the matchless aroma of burning sage rivalling that of the finest church incense. Attendees also held small pieces of cedar leaves and small cups of water, which they emptied back to the ground in a gesture of respect. The group sang “The Nibi Song,” a paean to water written in Ojibwemowin by Doreen Day and her grandson Mashkooice (Little Elk).

After the water ceremony, drummers led the celebrants in a walk several blocks north to the cathedral for a community barbecue with live music.

<https://www.anglicanjournal.com/articles/interfaith-gathering-celebrates-water/>

June 14, 2018

Indonesia combines Islam with environmental activism

By Rizki Nugraha and Ayu Purwaningsih
Deutsche Welle

The Indonesian government and Greenpeace have partnered with Islamic organizations to promote plastic waste reduction. Can including religion make environmental campaigns more effective?

Indonesia's top Muslim clerical body, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), together with Greenpeace and the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry and Environment are cooperating on an awareness campaign during Ramadan to solve the problem of plastic waste in Indonesia.

Together, they have a mission to promote the use of reusable bags to cut plastic bag use in Indonesia. The Indonesian government and clerics from the country's largest Muslim organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah are seeking to influence the consumer behavior of the groups' combined 100 million followers.

NU and Muhammadiyah, together with the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry and Environment, announced the Plastic Waste Reduction Movement in Jakarta on June 6.

According to Rosa Vivien Ratnawati, the waste management director at the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry, the amount of plastic garbage in Indonesia is continuing to increase significantly.

"We want to encourage citizens to start from small things like carrying a tumbler, instead of disposable plastic bottles, or using non-plastic shopping bags," she said.

A plastic-free Ramadan

During the 2018 Ramadan, the Indonesian ministry of environment and environmental organizations are busy inviting religious leaders to popularize breaking Ramadan fasts without plastic.

Greenpeace Indonesia said it wants to use the influence of religion through the MUI to spread the message of environmental conservation and invite Muslims to stop using disposable plastic.

Greenpeace launched its #PantangPlastik (#AntiPlastic) campaign by holding a gathering dubbed "eco-iftar" in South Jakarta, last week. Iftar is the evening meal with which Muslims end their daily Ramadan fast at sunset.

Muharram Atha Rasyadi, a Greenpeace urban campaigner said Indonesians tend to consume more during Ramadan. For example, many people gather to break fast at restaurants or order take-away food. As a result, the amount of trash increases.

"In mosques, for instance, at the end of the day during Ramadan, people break fast together by using many disposable plastic food containers," Rasyadi told DW, adding that Greenpeace recognized the need to include Islamic religious organizations to reach ordinary people.

He explained it is important to invite imams to campaign together for the environment.

"In contrast to urban popularions, people in rural areas tend to obey what clerics say."

Rasaydi expects that the "eco-iftar" event would inspire Muslims to consume less single-use plastic in their daily activities.

Indonesia is currently listed as one of the largest sources of waste pollutants in the world. Every year, the average Indonesian dumps 17 kilograms (37 pounds) of plastic waste in various forms. As a result, 187.2 million annual tons of plastic waste from Indonesia ends up in the ocean.

Is religion effective for activism?

Religion has previously been used as a vehicle for conservation in Indonesia. In 2014, MUI issued a fatwa (Islamic legal opinion) that forbid poaching of endangered species. And the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, also brought in Indonesian schools to campaign for the so-called School4Trees program.

According to Media Zainul Bahri, a professor of religious studies, at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta, Islam has many messages about environmental preservation.

"There are many threats in the Quran regarding environmental issues. God blames people if they cause environmental damage," he told DW.

According to Bahri, these messages tend to be forgotten because many think there were "no environmental problems" when compared with today.

"The teaching themes of the 1950s to the present are more about theologically centered issues of humanity," he said.

Religious conservation around the world

Religion has played a role in saving the environment in other countries. In 2008, the secular ideological conservation group The Alliance for Religions and Conservation (ARC) launched an environmental project by engaging local religious leaders to invite fishermen to stop using explosives for fishing on the island of Pemba, Tanzania.

"This conservation idea isn't from the West," said a fisherman who took part in a conservation program in an interview by *The Christian Science Monitor*. "It's from the Quran."

While religion can play an important role in raising awareness, the involvement of conservation organizations is necessary for religious leaders to deal with technical issues.

"Many imams do not have a sufficient understanding of how nature works and how to take care of the ecosystem," said Bahri.

"The point is we want to invite people to realize that this commitment is also something Islamic," the waste bank director of the NU's Disaster Mitigation and Climate Change Agency (LPBI NU), Fitria Ariyani, told Indonesian media.

<http://www.dw.com/en/indonesia-combines-islam-with-environmental-activism/a-44220277>

June 15, 2018

An enormous workshop experience and reflection on Living Laudato Si'

By Luke Henkel
Ecojesuit

After spending four days at the Living Laudato Si' spirituality for action workshop in Bendum, Bukidnon province in the Philippines, I am left with just one word that resonates across my lips, my heart, and my soul. That word is *enormous*.

Enormous can refer to much more than quantifiable size: it is a word that describes something immeasurable, beyond limit or the human ability to comprehend. Enormous goes much deeper, wider, and broader than what can be conceptualized with mere letters.

That is precisely what is happening under the tutelage of Fr. Pedro Walpole SJ, in the cluster of indigenous villages scattered among the steamy, verdant, and sacred mountains of Bukidnon. Everything about what is going on here is enormous: the scope of the devastation of the land, the enormity of the loss, the strength and resilience of the people, all the way to the grace and wonder of the reconciliation, healing and (re)growth that is currently happening. Confusion and uncertainty, agony and loss, despair, hope, peace, and regeneration: it's all simply *huge*. It was also simply an immense thrill to be able to be a part of it during the four-day workshop.

The Living Laudato Si' workshop, organized by the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP) was held from 29 May until 2 June. It is the second [workshop](#) since January, and this round drew in about 25 participants from across the Asia Pacific region, including Australia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and even the United States.

Convened for the purpose of successfully enabling the attendees to integrate the values in Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* and then take this knowledge back to their various faith communities, the workshop was set in the context of the indigenous communities in Upper Pulangi. As one of the local Pulangyen teachers explained, her people exist entirely to care for their land. This is the foundation and reason for us coming to Balay Laudato Si' for the workshop.

The focus of the workshop was centered around four goals: to discuss and collaborate with the youth of Generation 2030, to understand their ecological hopes and challenges; to deepen an understanding of "integral ecology" and how this can be applied in daily life, to form and strengthen cohesive faith communities devoted to a common goal of reconciliation with creation, and to discern and set forth concrete plans that can be carried out in our various communities of practice.

There was time to learn from the local community organizers and Indigenous Peoples in various ways. We had time to hike into the nearby forest, to take a prayerful ecology walk and learn about the history of the land. We also spent one morning of discussion with the local women weavers, who earn their [quite precarious] livelihood by weaving grass mats, purses and bags, and other art creations.

This was a morning of enormous emotional depth, as the women opened up about their difficulties and fears: not only in earning enough money to make their way, but also in passing on their knowledge to their children and young ones of the village. Many of the youth seem determined to leave the village. As the women weavers explained, they are allured by the promises of modernization and more secure wealth away from home. In fact, a total of five youths are currently learning to weave, a desperate number because of how complicated and time-consuming the weaving process is.

The women understand the difficulty, and ultimate impossibility, of forcing the younger generation to learn a difficult trade that they might not be interested in, or even fully understand. At the same time, the older generation fears that the knowledge and the traditions they follow are in danger of simply fading away due to this lack of interest and dedication.

It wasn't long into the workshop and our sharings before the true enormity of what's happening in Bendum came to light. Here, people do not have a sense of identity apart from the forest (what is referred to as their ancestral domain). As Mercy Pakiwag, one of the local teachers and peace and reconciliation coordinators, explained, the foundation of the way of life for the people of Bendum is care for the forest. The land is not just simply where they live, or how they use it to get by. The people are as rooted to the earth and its health as are the many different species of bamboo around them. In fact, their very identity, even the names of the different clans, come from the rivers that define their ancestral domains.

This sense of identity, and the feeling of strength that arises from having such a clear and unwavering sense of purpose and connection, is also enormous. These forces can literally be *felt* in the air, in the soil, in the rain that streams and pounds and courses through the land and gives it life. There is a sense of something deeper and more sacred than words could ever describe. This pervades the spirit of Balay Laudato Si'; it is in essence the very spirit of the people.

And so, it was not hard to imagine the immensity of things going wrong when loggers first came to the area in the 1970s and began to denude the forest. The devastation at this time was not just ecological. The loggers were literally tearing up and derooting the heart and soul of the people, denuding their sense of belonging. As the land suffered, so did the people: values, cohesion, and the indigenous way of life were all exposed to erosion and drought just as were the open hillsides.

It was this damage that Fr. Pedro Walpole (or *Amay* as he is respectfully called by the local people he works with) saw when he first arrived in the 1980s. The overwhelming sense of loss and confusion he first witnessed among the people is still readily apparent as he shares his first experiences of Bendum. Even decades later, his voice is charged with emotion as he explains that in his first years in Bukidnon, all the hillsides in the area were completely bare. Originally one of the densest and most diverse and abundant rainforest in Mindanao, his view from his house was at that time completely unobstructed.

Fr. Pedro has remained in Bukidnon for over 25 years now, and his work has been tireless. It has also been work of incalculable grace: not just to assist the forest in its own regeneration, but to guide the people to their own regrowth as well. *Amay* is meticulous in clarifying that his job is not to simply replant trees or fix the social issues of the indigenous people. He is not a mere medicine man for the people, or a healer or just "another" social justice worker. He is there to assist in helping people find their own reconciliation, to reclaim their own identity, and to walk their own journey of healing. It is ultimately their own work, because it is their land and their identity.

Of course, this is enormous. It is the work of a lifetime, and we as workshop attendees immediately intuited that. We spent time discussing our concerns that not all of us can engage in this *Laudato Si'* work in the same ways or with the same depth that Fr. Pedro has done. Yet the workshop was aimed at equipping us with what we need, where we are and in our own capacities. What we took from the conference, Fr. Pedro was consistent in reminding us, would be the beginnings, the seeds, of change, and they are meant to grow in each of our lands, wherever we're from and wherever we go back to.

The depth of our hope and the graces we received from the time in Bukidnon were also enormous. In reflecting on my days in Bukidnon, the change that I make doesn't have to be on the same scale as Fr. Pedro. It can't, because I don't have his background, experiences, or number of years in service.

Yet that shouldn't – can't, mustn't – stop me from doing what I can to integrate and faithfully live out the challenges of *Laudato Si'* in my own faith community, in my own community of practice.

I am exceedingly grateful I had this chance to worship, laugh, and cry with people who share the same hopes I have for this world. I am so humbled to have had the chance to meditate on the depth of the mysteries of creation, watching the sunrise over the sacred mountains of Bukidnon. I am filled with joy remembering my barefoot walk, immersing my feet in the mud and the soft rainforest coverage, sometimes stumbling but always connecting with the earth. I am thrilled to have been able to stay up late into the night talking, laughing, and dancing with others who believe in and work tirelessly for peace and reconciliation with creation.

The enormity of my hope, right now as I write this, defies description. I believe in the idea of peace and reconciliation with creation, and I see it happening in Bukidnon. I feel it spreading, now that 25 people have been empowered by this Living *Laudato Si'* experience. Above all, I am hopeful and eager to let the seeds of change grow into fruit for a whole new world, full of the sweet aroma of peace.

Luke Henkel is a yoga instructor and a seminarian at the Society of the Divine Word, Chicago Province, USA, and joined the JCAP Living Laudato Si' spirituality workshop for action held in Balay Laudato Si' in Bendum, Bukidnon, Philippines from 29 May to 2 June 2018, along with other participants from Asia Pacific. Luke came with the Ecology Ministry of the Archdiocese of Manila, where he spent some time as a volunteer.

<http://www.ecojesuit.com/an-enormous-workshop-experience-and-reflection-on-living-laudato-si/11591/>

June 18, 2018

Nearly 600 institutions back Catholic Climate Declaration

By Brian Roewe
National Catholic Reporter

Close to 600 Catholic institutions have signed the [Catholic Climate Declaration](#), which renews Catholic support for continuing U.S. actions to address climate change despite backpedaling by the Trump administration.

The announcement June 18 of the signing coincided with the third anniversary of the publication of Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment and human ecology, "[Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home](#)."

Dan Misleh, executive director of Catholic Climate Covenant, which organized the declaration, called it "an unprecedented effort by the U.S. Catholic community to step into the void left by President [Donald] Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement" in June 2017.

"The Catholic Climate Declaration is grounded in Catholic social teaching, and it is a significant step in consolidating and galvanizing the U.S. Catholic Church's effort to care for our common home and address climate change and to join other U.S. institutions in supporting the Paris Agreement," he told reporters during a call June 18.

Among the signers are 37 dioceses, close to 200 religious communities, more than 100 parishes, 61 Catholic universities, and more than a dozen Catholic health care organizations, including the Catholic Health Association.

"As Catholic communities, organizations, and institutions in the United States, we join with other institutions from across American society to ensure that the United States remains a global leader in reducing emissions. We call for the Administration to join the global community and return to the Paris Agreement," the declaration reads.

"God's creation is in peril by our own actions," [Sr. Sharlet Wagner](#), president-elect of the [Leadership Conference of Women Religious](#), said on the press call. "If we know creation is a gift for us to enjoy, to safeguard and to protect for future generations, climate change presents us with a moral crisis and a moral question. We must each ask ourselves what our response will be."

Bishop Richard Pates, episcopal liaison to Catholic Climate Covenant, said in a statement: "The immorality of inaction on climate change has been clear for a long time. With ever increasing temperatures fueling super hurricanes as well as extending and deepening droughts, we are seeing the tragedies of inaction up close and personal."

Rachelle Wenger, director of public policy and community advocacy for San Francisco-based [Dignity Health](#), told reporters that climate change isn't a political or partisan issue, but "a public health issue." She cited [a report from the World Health Organization](#) that estimated that between 2030 and 2050, climate change will cause 250,000 additional deaths annually through increases in malnutrition, malaria, heat stress and other preventable conditions.

The covenant said the declaration affirms the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change — reducing greenhouse gas emissions to hold average global temperature rise to no more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) and as low as 1.5 Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) compared to pre-industrial levels — and reiterates [the disappointment of the U.S. bishops](#) following Trump's announcement of the Paris exit, which can occur no sooner than November 2020.

"We found the decision of President Trump deeply troubling. And our hope would be that he would reverse that," said Pates, who is bishop of Des Moines, Iowa.

"Time is of the essence," Pates stressed, calling individuals to press for government action while taking steps to reduce emissions in their daily lives.

The influence of Pope Francis

In *Laudato Si'*, Francis affirmed the scientific consensus that climate change is occurring and is primarily the result of human activity. He called upon the global community to together take action to avert the harshest impacts of a warming planet that impact poor and marginalized communities often first and most severely.

"*Laudato Si'* was a high-water mark for the church's decadeslong engagement in the climate issue," Misleh said. "This declaration builds on a flurry of action this past year and helps to consolidate and expand on the numerous activities already happening in the U.S. Catholic community."

The actions by Catholic institutions have come as the Trump administration has taken steps to roll back environmental regulations and boost coal and other emissions-heavy fuel sources.

The covenant's Climate Energies program has lined up nearly \$10 million in projects to help dioceses, parishes and Catholic organizations install energy-efficient and renewable energy projects. Jesuit Fr. Daniel Hendrickson, president of [Creighton University](#), told reporters June 18 that the Omaha, Nebraska-based school has decreased its greenhouse gas emissions from electricity by nearly 25 percent, a savings of \$2 million, and remains committed to its goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

Wagner said she limited herself to highlighting on the June 18 call a few of the "hundreds of examples of concrete climate actions women religious have taken."

Those included separate [shareholder resolutions](#) by the [Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#) and the [School Sisters of Notre Dame](#) to commit two Midwest electricity firms to publish a climate risk assessment and continue dialoguing with investors on climate change. A third shareholder resolution, brought by [Mercy Investment Services](#), committed Continental Resources to end the polluting practice of flaring in the burning of natural gas.

In terms of lowering their own carbon footprints, Wagner said the [Sisters of Holy Cross](#) have established a fund where they offset their carbon footprints through activities like air travel by donating to projects that have planted trees in Uganda and installed solar panels at schools and

convents in Bangladesh and India. The [Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods](#), Indiana, have committed to lowering their collective carbon footprint by 2 million pounds of carbon dioxide emissions by June 2019, while the 130-acre campus of the [Adrian Dominican Sisters'](#) motherhouse in Adrian, Michigan, now runs on 100 percent renewable energy.

Other signers to the declaration include:

- The archdioceses of Atlanta; Chicago; Indianapolis; Los Angeles; Louisville, Kentucky; Miami; Newark, New Jersey; Santa Fe, New Mexico; and Washington, D.C.; as well as the entirety of Alaska: the Anchorage Archdiocese, Fairbanks Diocese and Juneau Diocese;
- The Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and the National Federation of Priests' Councils;
- The University of Notre Dame, Georgetown University, Santa Clara University, the University of Dayton and Villanova University, as well as the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities;
- Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Rural Life and Pax Christi USA.

In late April, Catholic Climate Covenant issued the declaration as part of the [Catholics Are Still In campaign](#). That effort aligns Catholics with a similar, broader push by the [We Are Still In coalition](#) of 2,800 governors, mayors, business and university leaders, and other organizations; the coalition aims to fortify U.S. commitment to the Paris Agreement no matter what steps the federal government takes.

The [Global Climate Action Summit](#) in San Francisco in September will showcase climate actions underway within those segments of society. It will also push for new, more ambitious commitments ahead of the next United Nations climate conference, COP24, to be held in early December in Poland.

Religious communities, including Catholics, are planning to take part in the summit. Catholic Climate Covenant said it plans to share its declaration at the event and will continue to gather signatures throughout the summer.

Bringing the US bishops on board

At the spring assembly of the U.S. bishops, Pates addressed his fellow bishops early in the proceedings to urge them to sign their individual dioceses to the declaration "in the exercise of our moral leadership" and for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as a whole to do the same.

On that end, he announced that Bishop Frank Dewane, chairman of the bishops' Committee for Domestic Justice and Human Development, said he would begin the process of having the bishops' conference sign the Catholic Climate Declaration. He said they hoped to bring it back to the bishops at their November meeting.

"Our episcopal leadership can exercise a significant positive impact across the board," Pates said at the Florida gathering last week.

In addition to providing each bishop in attendance with a declaration sign-up sheet, Pates also made sure to put in their hands [Francis' speech from days earlier](#) to a meeting of top oil executives and CEOs at the Vatican. Offering a summary of the talk, Pates told the bishops that Francis classified protecting the environment and helping the poor as "two great needs of the world."

He also quoted Francis: "Progress has indeed been made, but is it enough? Will we turn the corner in time? No one can answer that with certainty but with the passing of each month, the challenge of energy transition becomes more pressing."

Pates added that Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis have all spoken of the importance of addressing a warming planet, "illustrating the strong continuity on this question of climate change."

John Paul II and Benedict called for an ecological conversation, with Benedict writing about the beauty of creation, Pates told NCR after his speech. Francis has continued that call while strongly stating it's time to act.

"He's calling for action. And I think we have to hear him," Pates said. "He's not just wanting us to say, 'Well it's a good idea' or that sort of thing. He's calling for action."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/nearly-600-institutions-back-catholic-climate-declaration>

June 19, 2018

Pope Francis took the climate crisis to those who can fix it: oil and gas execs

By Veerabhadran Ramanathan, Daniel J. Misleh, and Daniel R. DiLeo
The Hill

Pope Francis recently convened oil and gas corporation executives and investors to share some hard truths about fossil fuels and catastrophic climate change. In doing so, the Holy Father extended the Christian tradition of witnessing challenging truths to the public and influential members of society.

Despite the difficulty of his message, the pope knows that these leaders can help — or obstruct — the world's collective efforts to shape a new energy future and hopes they will serve the common good.

Four days after the meeting, [an international scientific team announced](#) west Antarctica is melting three times as fast now compared to 15 years ago and has lost 2.7 trillion tons of ice during that period. Together, we echo Pope Francis's urgent plea that these leaders, as well as their colleagues and elected officials, rapidly embrace the changes that science indicates are necessary to avoid climate catastrophe.

Climate scientists agree climate change is mostly due to human activities and warn that humanity has a rapidly-closing window to avoid runaway and potentially irreversible climate impacts with dire humanitarian consequences. These include rising sea levels that are already displacing communities, as well as prolonged droughts, intense floods and extreme heat causing food and water stresses. With unchecked consumption of fossil fuels, such climate changes can worsen significantly within a few decades, exposing our children and grandchildren to unpredictable outcomes and an uncertain future.

Under such impending stresses, it is not hard to imagine violent conflict over scarce resources, especially food and water. However, the good news is we still have time to do something about climate change; but not much time to waste.

In response to climate change, Pope Francis — building on the teachings of Saint John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI that climate change is a moral issue — has encouraged and lived his commitment to personal encounter as a means of social transformation. [Academic researchers](#) identify social transformation as the second most important solution cluster for solving climate change.

Yet, while Pope Francis has met with physical and social scientists, theologians, and policy makers from city mayors to the United Nations Secretary-General, the [June 8 – 9 Vatican climate conference](#) was distinct because it facilitated an encounter with those uniquely able to support or prevent science-based solutions to climate change: fossil fuel corporation executives and financial investors.

During his [remarks](#), the Holy Father emphasized — quite sensibly — that “energy use must not destroy civilization!” He also repeated the theme from *Laudato Si'* that social, political, environmental and poverty-related challenges are all “interconnected” and will require integrated, holistic solutions.

In the face of climate change, the poor need greater access to energy — but as Pope Francis emphasized, “That energy should also be clean...Our desire to ensure energy for all must not lead to the undesired effect of a spiral of extreme climate changes due to a catastrophic rise in global temperatures, harsher environments and increased levels of poverty.”

The Holy Father lamented “the continued search for new fossil fuel reserves, whereas the Paris Agreement clearly urged keeping most fossil fuels underground.”

Pope Francis noted that “unlimited faith in markets and technology...will be [in]sufficient to remedy the current ecological and social imbalances.” Instead, Pope Francis stressed the need for wise “political decisions, social responsibility on the part of the business community and criteria

governing investments” all informed by commitments to “the long-term common good and concrete solidarity between generations.”

In the United States, many faith traditions — like countless secular groups — are taking advantage of extraordinary opportunities to reduce energy costs through efficiencies and renewables. For example, many Catholic institutions are using [Catholic Energies](#) from [Catholic Climate Covenant](#). These local efforts send important signals to energy providers and investors, and complement advocacy for crucial public policies like the Paris Agreement.

Without appropriate responses from fossil fuel corporation executives, financial investors and elected officials, however, these efforts will not adequately transform society in line with climate science.

For the sake of our common home, we urge the oil and gas executives and financial investors whom Pope Francis recently addressed — as well as their colleagues and elected officials — to use their economic power and political influence to help shape a sustainable, truly clean energy future. Climate change is indeed “a challenge of epochal proportions,” as the Holy Father observed.

At this critical time in history, oil and gas executives and financial investors, along with elected officials, will help determine whether humanity avoids or careens into climate catastrophe that will unimaginably injure human life and dignity, especially of the poor and vulnerable, and wound all creation for which Christians are called to care.

Veerabhadran Ramanathan, Ph.D. is a distinguished professor of climate sciences at the University of California San Diego and council member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at the Vatican.

Daniel J. Misleh is executive director of Catholic Climate Covenant.

Daniel R. DiLeo, Ph.D. is assistant professor and director of the Justice and Peace Studies Program at Creighton University.

<http://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/392943-pope-francis-took-the-climate-crisis-to-those-that-can-fix-it-oil>

June 19, 2018

The week that was: world religious leaders confront climate disruption

By Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas
Reviving Creation

Leaders of the Eastern Church and the Western Church, representing billions of people worldwide, spoke with one voice this month about the moral urgency of confronting the climate crisis.

“A civilization is defined and judged by our respect for the dignity of humanity and the integrity of nature,” declared the head of the Orthodox Church, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, in his keynote address for a three-day international symposium held in Greece. “Toward a Green Attica: Preserving the Planet and Protecting Its People” was the ninth international, inter-disciplinary, and inter-religious symposium that Patriarch Bartholomew has convened since 1991 to highlight the spiritual basis of ecological care and to strengthen collaboration across disciplines in our quest to build a just and habitable world.

I accepted an invitation to attend the symposium, along with 200 leaders in a variety of fields – science, economics, theology, public policy, journalism, business, and social activism. Gathering in Athens and visiting the islands of Spetses and Hydra, we studied climate science, explored strategic actions toward sustainability and resilience, and renewed our commitment to push for the economic and societal changes that must take place if we are to avert social and ecological chaos and widespread suffering. (For the program and a list of participants, visit [here](#).)

The Bishop of Salisbury, the Rt. Rev. Nicholas Holtam, represented the Archbishop of Canterbury and affirmed the commitment of the Anglican Consultative Council to address the climate crisis (see, for example, [Resolution 16.08: Response to Global Climate Change](#)). As the Church of England states on its Website, “[We believe that responding to climate change is an essential part of our responsibility to safeguard God’s creation.](#)” (I note that from September 1 to October 4, Anglicans will unite with Christians around the world to care for God’s creation in a “Season of Creation.” Excellent materials for “Creation Season” worship, study, and prayer are available from the Anglican Communion Environmental Network and other sources [here](#), and a complete guide to celebrating a 2018 “Season of Creation” is available [here](#).)

Peter Cardinal Turkson, a Ghanaian Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church who worked closely with Pope Francis in developing the papal encyclical, *Laudato Si*, represented the Pope at the symposium. Cardinal Turkson read a statement from Pope Francis that included these lines: “It is not just the homes of vulnerable people around the world that are crumbling, as can be seen in the world’s growing exodus of climate migrants and environmental refugees. As I sought to point out in my Encyclical *Laudato Si*, we may well be condemning future generations to a common home left in ruins. Today we must honestly ask ourselves a basic question: ‘What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?’” (The entire statement can be found [here](#).)

One of the most powerful, disturbing and illuminating lectures was given by Jeffrey Sachs, a world-renowned professor of economics and director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. Sachs gave a one-hour overview of the history of economics that included a blistering critique of corporate capitalism and its veneration of greed, by which “Nature is utterly sacrificed for profit.” (A professional videographer recorded his speech, but until that video becomes available, you can watch a more basic recording [here](#)).

Other speakers at the symposium included such luminaries as award-winning scientist and activist Vandana Shiva, who argued that modern industrial agriculture has become “an act of war” against human health and the health of the Earth. She noted that the chemicals used to kill insects are the same chemicals that were used in Hitler’s concentration camps. Members of Hitler’s “poison cartel” were tried at Nuremberg for their crimes, she said, “but those crimes continue in the name of feeding the world.” Asserting that only 5% of cancers have a genetic basis, she maintained that the recent merger of corporate giants Monsanto and Bayer created a “cancer train”: one part of the company makes carcinogenic chemicals, and the other part makes the medicine used to treat cancer. She also contended: “Climate change is the destruction of the metabolic system of the planet to regulate her climate.”

Professor Hans Joachim Schellnuber, Director of Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact, gave a hair-raising presentation on the precarious health of “the vital organs of the planet,” such as the Gulf Stream, coral reefs, Alpine glaciers, the Amazon rainforest, and West Antarctic Ice Sheet (a recent study shows that [Antarctica’s ice loss has tripled in a decade; if that continues, we are in serious trouble](#)). Citing a 2017 article in the journal *Science*, “[A roadmap for rapid decarbonization](#),” Schellnuber asserted that we could halve carbon emissions every decade – “but we have to *want* to do it.”

Other speakers likewise underscored the urgent need to galvanize humanity’s vision, will, and moral courage as we confront the climate crisis, which poses an existential threat to civilization. Writer and activist Raj Patel urged us to consider the question, “What sort of ancestor do you want to be?” When asked about the role of civil disobedience, he replied, “Now and yesterday is a good day to put our bodies on the lever of the machine.”

Award-winning human rights advocate Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp spoke movingly about the power of compassion, based on his own experience as a three-month-old infant who was protected from the Nazis by a Roman Catholic family, and spared from death by an SS guard who took pity on him. “We are wood plucked out of the fire,” he cried. “How can I ever despair? We are able to plant the future into the present... We desperately need each other... A decade is rising before us, a decade where miracles can happen. Can we declare this decade a sacred time? We are one human family, one Earth community with a common destiny. Is this not a moment of *kairos*?... We are men and women of radical hope.”

Speaking of hope – Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) from 2010-2016, gave one of the most impassioned appeals to active hope that I’ve ever heard. Figueres was a key player in the successful delivery of the Paris Climate Accord, an agreement that she deemed “fundamentally necessary” yet also “insufficient.” Figueres is a small, vigorous woman; her concentrated focus and fierce tenacity reminded me of a diminutive songbird with the astonishing capacity to migrate thousands of miles. Like the Rabbi, she, too, spoke of *kairos*, which she defined – citing Patriarch Bartholomew – as “the intersection of conviction and commitment.” In response to the urgent question, “What can we do?” she exhorted everyone: 1) to eradicate meat from our diets; 2) to be careful in our methods of transportation; 3) if we live in a democracy, to vote responsibly (to do otherwise is “collusion with a crime against humanity”); and 4) to leverage the power of capital by divesting from fossil fuel companies and investing in clean renewables.

Figueres went further: she challenged communities of faith to “strengthen the arc of faith” – that is, to “inject confidence” in the process of transformation that has started and that must accelerate. After all, limiting global average temperatures to a 1.5° rise – the aspirational goal of the Paris Climate Accord – gives only a 66% guarantee of saving small island states. How many of us would board an airplane that had only a 66% chance of landing safely? She also challenged faith communities to “expand the arc of love,” so that no one is excluded.

Both Jeffrey Sachs and Cardinal Turkson left the symposium early to travel to Rome. Pope Francis had taken the unprecedented step of inviting the world’s top fossil fuel executives – including the chairman of Exxon Mobil, the chief executive of the Italian energy giant Eni, and the chief executive of BP – along with money managers of major financial institutions, to [meet with him in a two-day, closed-door conference at the Vatican](#). Sachs and Turkson joined the meeting to add their perspectives.

“There is no time to lose,” the Pope told the participants. He appealed to them “to be the core of a group of leaders who envision the global energy transition in a way that will take into account all the peoples of the earth, as well as future generations and all species and ecosystems.”

Thus, in one extraordinary week, Christian Churches, both East and West, called for robust action to address climate disruption.

The Rt. Rev. Marc Andrus, Bishop of California and leader of the Presiding Bishop’s delegation to UN Climate Summits, commented: “The moment is dire, and also is our (humanity’s) moment of greatest possibility. St. Irenaeus called a human fully alive the glory of God. Now, 1,300 years later we may understand that for humanity to act as one for the good of the Earth is yet a greater expression of God’s glory.”

Looking back on the symposium, Bishop Marc was thankful for its “great spirit of respect and mutuality... Rather than lobbying to enlist people to each cause, there was a celebration of what each person is doing to heal the Earth, and a seeking to support each person on their path, to make connections. A good example of this to me was the tremendous joy we all felt as the Ecumenical Patriarch released two kestrels that had been nursed back to health by an Athenian woman whose ministry is protecting and healing endangered birds.”

Another Episcopal participant, Dr. Sheila Moore Andrus, a biologist and an active climate champion from Diocese of CA, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet new climate activists and connect with individuals she has respected for many years – including the Rev. Fletcher Harper, who, she said, “is currently working on a project similar to one I am working on for the Diocese of CA: a web-based tool that can help people decrease their carbon footprint and aggregate those choices by church and diocesan Community. The conference gave Fletcher, Marc and me a chance to explore ways to promote such a tool among interfaith groups, and all this in settings filled with inspiring talks and sacred indoor/outdoor spaces.”

The Rev. Fletcher Harper, Executive Director of GreenFaith, concluded: “The fact that it was searingly hot during the symposium made the point about the need for action as powerfully as any of the speakers. This September, the [multi-faith service at Grace Cathedral](#) at the start of the

[Global Climate Action Summit](#) gives everyone a chance – whether in person or on the live-stream – to commit to living the change in our own diet, transportation and home energy use that’s needed for a non-scorched, sustainable future.”

<http://revivingcreation.org/the-week-that-was-world-religious-leaders-confront-climate-disruption/>

June 21, 2018

How Islam can represent a model for environmental stewardship

United Nations Environment Program

The world, not just the UN, is waking up to the power of faith-based organizations (FBOs). How can Islam, and other faiths, contribute to solutions to sustainability and mitigate climate change risks?

Odeh Al-Jayyousi, Professor and head of innovation at Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain, scholar in sustainable innovation and a member of UN Global Scientific Advisory Panel, for UN Environment’s Global Environment Outlook 6 ([GEO6](#)), argues that Islamic worldview represents a unique model for a transition to sustainable development by focusing on justice, degrowth and harmony between human and nature.

He commented that Islam views the environmental challenges as an indicator for a moral and ethical crisis. Looking at the creation of human, Earth, and cosmos as signs of the Creator (*Kitab Manthoor*) is a key in Islamic values.

Prof. Al-Jayyousi elaborated that Islamic worldview defines a good life (*Hayat Tayebah*) living lightly on Earth (*Zohd*) and caring for both people and nature. Islamic discourse offers a sense of hope and optimism about the possibility of attaining harmony between human and nature. Earth will find a balance if humans rethink their lifestyles and mindsets as stated in the *Quran*:

*Corruption has appeared in both land and sea
Because of what people’s own hands have brought
So that they may taste something of what they have done
So that hopefully they will turn back
Qur’an 30: 41*

Professor Al-Jayyousi calls to revive the holistic view of Islam which is founded on the notion of harmony and “natural state” (*fitra*) and in respecting balance (*mizan*) and proportion (*mikdar*) in the systems of the universe. These notions provide an ethical dimension and a mandate for all humans to respect nature and all forms of life.

Hence, the overcoming environmental crisis and mitigating the impact of climate change, from an Islamic perspective is underpinned by defining the role of humans as trustees and stewards (*khalifah*). This balance has been disturbed because to human choices which result in overconsumption, overexploitation and overuse of resources.

Islamic values call to save integrity and to protect the diversity of all forms of life. Professor Al-Jayyousi commented that the ecological crisis is linked to human ethics and values. Human actions are responsible for the global ecological crisis. “Reflecting on the main environmental problems, such as the destruction of natural habitats, loss of biodiversity, climate change, and erosion of soil, we see that all are triggered by human greed and ignorance. Human responsibility is to save and protect livelihood and ecosystem services to ensure a sustainable civilization learning from and reflecting on the fate of past civilizations”, said Professor Al-Jayyousi.

He cited a verse from the Holy Book, Quran, “Every living thing is in a state of worship”. He commented that when one hurts a bird or a plant, he/she is silencing a community of worshippers. To celebrate the symphony of life, all humans need to celebrate and protect biological and cultural diversity.

Islamic worldview calls to make a transition to a sustainable society and economy by adopting responsible development and respecting sustainability principles. This change requires a shift in norms and practices. Religion can become a powerful part of the solution if humans embody a holistic spiritual view towards mankind, earth and cosmos.

In 2015 in Istanbul, the Muslim world in its Islamic declaration for climate change set the framework for an ethical code of conduct to build a low-emission climate resilient future.

Al-Jayyousi aspires to see a new Islamic discourse that emphasizes and links faith, reason and empathy to ensure an ecological insight (*Baseera*). He calls to rethink educational systems that neglected the beauty and majesty of nature and the cosmos.

“The extinction of species around us which are simply communities like us (*Ummam Amthalokom*) may extend to humankind unless we change our worldviews and development models”, warns Prof. Al-Jayyousi. He calls to revive the concept of Green Endowment Fund (*Waqf*) to support a transition to sustainable economy by promoting innovation (*ijtihad*) inspired by nature and culture.

He proposed a conceptual model with three domains to address climate change and sustainability:

- Green activism (Jihad)
- Green innovation (Ijtihad)
- Green lifestyle (Zohd).

He refers to this as a Green JIZ model, which represents an Islamic response to climate change embodying the concept of [de-growth](#).

“Conflict and poor governance are putting the Middle East and North Africa at jeopardy” points out Prof. Al-Jayyousi. He calls for a sustainable region that is founded on human and environmental justice. An optimist, Prof. Al-Jayyousi is inspired by prophet Mohammed saying “*If it is the Last day of life and you have a small plant, make sure you plant it*”.

About the Author:

Professor Odeh Al-Jayyousi is the head of Innovation and Technology Management at Arabian Gulf University, Bahrain. He published a book on “Islam and sustainable development”, UK, (2012) and a book on Integral Innovation, 2017, UK. He is a member of UN GEO6- Scientific Advisory Panel. E-mail: [odjayyousi\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:odjayyousi[at]gmail.com)

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/how-islam-can-represent-model-environmental-stewardship>

June 22, 2018

Buddhism and ecologically-sustainable living

By Paul Grogan
Tibet Sun

The Earth is undoubtedly facing a global environmental crisis. Human activities are changing the climate, melting the glaciers, clearing the forest, exterminating many species, creating antibiotic resistance, polluting our water sources, and moving species into new locations where their success becomes a problem.

Most people are concerned about this crisis but are struggling to find effective solutions, and are greatly overwhelmed by the sheer scale and complexity of the individual problems.

As a research scientist studying ecology in Europe and North America over the past 30 years, I perhaps understand these problems more than most. And I have come to learn recently through reading and hearing teachings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama that Tibetan Buddhism in particular provides a very powerful over-arching framework to address this crisis and achieve more sustainable living for our society. Why do I believe this?

Tibetan Buddhist philosophy highlights the importance and significance of interconnections — not just among peoples but also between people and their environment. We are profoundly connected to, and dependent on, the animals, plants, microbes, as well as water, soil, and rocks around us. Understanding and sustaining this complex web of interconnections and interdependencies is the basis for much ecological science research, and it is also one of the fundamental bases of Buddhist philosophy.

Secondly, the central concept of impermanence in Buddhism is demonstrated very clearly in ecology. Genes change over evolutionary time, species evolve according to changes in habitats,

and new biologically-driven and physical disturbance events are frequently occurring in all the world's ecosystems. Understanding and managing these changes and their impacts is at the heart of ecological sustainability.

Thirdly, Buddhism is the most outwardly compassionate of the world's religions. We cannot live sustainably unless we are living in a way that is compassionate to each other — that promotes and respects human rights, individual dignity, and social justice. And that is compassionate to the other species in our environment.

An additional perspective promoting environmentally-sustainable living is that we cannot live sustainably unless we are compassionate to the future humans that will live on Earth. In other words, if we are mindful of the negative impacts that our current environmentally-destructive activities will have on future generations, then we are likely to live in a more environmentally-benign way.

Western society has reached its current state of 'progress' by focussing primarily on the 'parts' rather than the 'whole'. Extraordinary technological developments have been achieved, but they focus primarily on benefiting individuals rather than society as a whole. Consequently, we tend now to approach each environmental problem separately (for example, developing the use of renewable solar and wind energy to replace fossil fuels).

These individual initiatives are good, but they do not directly address the one fundamental issue that underlies all global environmental issues: human behaviour. How ought we to live in order to achieve an environmental and socially-sustainable existence for our civilisation? The very common Buddhist mantra 'Om Mani Padme Hum' can be interpreted as 'May Compassion and Wisdom arise within me'. Compassionate and wise living — truly aware and mindful of the impacts of each and all of our activities on each other, on the biotic and abiotic environment, and on future generations — would result in much slower, gentler, and therefore more mature lifestyles.

This is what the Earth needs, and we can rise to the task by suppressing our base genetically-driven traits for competition, greed, and population growth. Tibetan Buddhist philosophy provides a distinctive and extremely valuable perspective on how to live that matches the principles of ecologically-sustainable living. Therefore, Tibetan Buddhists should be very proud of this heritage. And the rest of the world needs to wake up to Buddhism's enormous potential to help humanity acknowledge and address the fundamental root cause of the global environmental crisis.

References:

- Bstan-'dzin-ryga-mtsho, Dalai Lama XIV. 2005. *The Universe in a Single Atom – The convergence of science and spirituality*. Harmony Books, New York.
- Grogan, P. 2013. "Our Anthropocene Future - What can biology tell us?" *Free Inquiry*. February/March issue. Vol. 32 (2):16-19. Council for Secular Humanism. New York. (PDF) http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=library&page=index_33

About the author

Paul Grogan is a professor of terrestrial ecosystem ecology at the Department of Biology, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada. He and his students have published more than 60 ecological science papers on their research in the Arctic as well as in temperate and tropical habitats. He has become particularly keen on communicating science perspectives to the general public that will help to move our society toward more sustainable living.

<https://www.tibetsun.com/opinions/2018/06/22/buddhism-and-ecologically-sustainable-living>

June 26, 2018

Climate change is a top spiritual priority for these religious leaders

By Juliet Eilperin
Washington Post

ABOARD THE SHIP MORE SPACIOUS THAN THE HEAVENS — Off the island of Spetses, the leader of 300 million Christians worldwide told a group of nearly 200 religious leaders, academics and activists that they needed to move beyond intellectualism when it came to the environment.

“What remains for us is to preach what we practice,” said Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople. “Now we must begin the long and difficult way from the mind to the heart . . . May God guide you in your service to his people and the care of his creation.”

The environment has defined 78-year-old Bartholomew's tenure for more than a quarter-century: The gathering at sea this month was the ninth he has organized since the mid-1990s. This one focused on Attica, the peninsula surrounding Athens that juts out into the Aegean Sea, and Bartholomew brought together scientists and clergy to examine the state of bodies of water including the Danube and Amazon rivers, the Baltic and Adriatic seas, and the Arctic Ocean.

In November 1997, he had delivered an address in Santa Barbara, Calif., where he officially classified crimes against the natural world as sins.

“For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation; for humans to degrade the integrity of Earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the Earth of its natural forests, or destroying its wetlands; for humans to injure other humans with disease, for humans to contaminate the Earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life, with poisonous substances,” he told a crowd that included then-Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. “These are sins.”

Pope Francis has likewise drawn global attention to environmental activism: On the same day Bartholomew was concluding his conference in Greece, the pope brought the leaders of

multinational energy and investment firms to the Vatican to discuss the path forward on climate change.

At a time when some political leaders have become more cautious about — or have outright rejected — policies aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions, several major faith leaders are making environmental care a top spiritual priority.

But they have also struggled to inspire some of their congregants to action.

“Even when there’s a will, there is not always a willingness to act,” said Nigerian Cardinal John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan, one of two cardinals who traveled to the patriarch’s conference. “The spirit is willing, but very often, the flesh is weak.”

Still, Onaiyekan and others who had journeyed to Greece for the three-day “Green Attica” conference emphasized that they would persist in raising the moral and ethical dimensions of climate change.

In Nigeria, Onaiyekan said in an interview that “there is a kind of ambiguity about climate change” because it is “a nation largely dependent on oil revenue.” But those living on the Niger Delta have experienced the damage associated with oil production firsthand, he said. It would be naive, he said, to expect oil companies and governments to shift their practices on their own.

“If you are waiting for them to change, you will wait till Jesus comes back again,” he said. “We feel the only area where we can actually make an impact is to constantly keep challenging our leaders to stop killing us. Stop killing your people.”

Francis — who issued the first papal encyclical focused solely on the environment, [“Laudato Si,”](#) in 2015 — pressed this message during his private audience this month with executives from ExxonMobil, Eni, BP, Royal Dutch Shell, Equinor and Pemex.

Calling climate change “[a challenge of epochal proportions,](#)” the pope said that the private sector had taken modest steps toward incorporating climate risks into its business models and funding renewable energy.

“Progress has indeed been made,” he told the group as he wrapped up the two-day session. “But is it enough?”

Former energy secretary Ernest Moniz, who attended the meeting, said in an interview that participants discussed “the moral and ethical dimensions” of climate change, as well as ways to shift to a low-carbon path.

“Everybody was there trying to find a way to go forward,” Moniz said.

The patriarch, who resides in Istanbul, has spent years bringing together unlikely allies while also seeking to reorient the Orthodox Church. In 1989, his predecessor, Patriarch Dimitrios I,

designated Sept. 1 as a day of prayer for the welfare of all creation, and Bartholomew has expanded upon this initiative.

Jane Lubchenco, who headed the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration during Barack Obama's administration and served as the scientific co-chair of most of these conferences, said the patriarch had worked to "position the Orthodox Church as a very stewardship-focused religion."

Back in 1995, she recalled, he convened a meeting on the meaning of the apocalypse in the modern world, to commemorate the 1,900th anniversary of the Book of Revelation. In that context, Lubchenco said, Bartholomew warned that the apocalypse could be underway if humans did not reassess their impact on the Earth.

This month's gathering — which included stops on the islands of Spetses and Hydra — included similarly dire warnings from researchers. Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, who directs the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, described the current changes arising from fossil-fuel burning as "disruption on a global scale."

Without a sharp reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, Schellnhuber told the audience, large swaths of Nigeria, the Philippines and elsewhere "will become uninhabitable" because they will be too hot for humans to live in.

Some of the most fiery rhetoric came from Columbia University Earth Institute director Jeffrey Sachs, who spoke to the group in Greece before departing for the Vatican to participate in the papal climate conference. In an impassioned speech, Sachs charted [the historic development of the global capitalist economy](#), arguing that its foundation upon the idea of "limited liability" has meant that corporations will not take responsibility for the economic damage they have caused.

"What we've proved is greed unleashed has no boundaries at all," Sachs said. "That is the modern economy: Unleash the greed."

The patriarch, who sat in the front row for the entirety of the conference, opened and closed the proceedings. Speaking in English, he framed conservation as a cause inextricably linked to both his faith and the broader cause of social justice.

"Any kind of alienation between human beings and nature is a distortion of Christian theology and anthropology," he said.

Even small details of Bartholomew's itinerary carried symbolic significance. His top environmental adviser, the Rev. John Chryssavgis, asked the conference hotels to avoid plastic straws and nixed a planned blessing for Hydra's fishing fleet that was sponsored by an oil company.

With his free-flowing white beard and braided ponytail — high-ranking Orthodox officials eschew haircuts on the grounds that the practice smacks of vanity — the patriarch stirred an outpouring of affection as he visited two small islands during his tour. Church bells pealed as his

yacht came into the islands' harbors, and local residents thronged him as he made his way into town.

But it is unclear whether that reverence has translated into an embrace of his environmental mission, especially in the United States. [The Rev. Terence Baz](#), an Orthodox priest in Clifton, N.J., said his parishioners are “blue-collar workers, mostly Republican.”

He added that many conservatives from the Episcopal Church and other Protestant sects have recently switched to the Orthodox Church in search of a more tradition-bound faith, “So there is a resistance against recognizing the reality of what is going to come.”

Chrysavgis said the patriarch has plans to “reach out to parishes in a more systematic fashion” on environmental issues through the church hierarchy but added that “it’s a real struggle.”

American religious conservatives such as E. Calvin Beisner, founder of the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation, wrote in an email that “many Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestants” share his skepticism of the idea that burning fossil fuels will cause major environmental damage.

“The abundant, affordable, reliable energy generated from fossil fuels has been indispensable to lifting and keeping whole societies out of poverty,” he said, adding that these benefits “far outweigh their costs, whether to individuals, to specific nations or regions, or to the entire world.”

But as the hydrofoil cruised toward Athens, the bishop of Salisbury, Nick Holtam, said leaders such as Bartholomew and Francis can bolster policymakers’ convictions.

“Churches don’t look like campaigning organizations,” Holtam said, but when it comes to politicians, “they do need the legitimacy of people who will support them in doing hard things.”

https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/climate-change-is-a-top-spiritual-priority-for-these-religious-leaders/2018/06/26/d5e06fd2-749e-11e8-9780-b1dd6a09b549_story.html

June 29, 2018

Pope Francis challenges fossil fuel execs to act now

'There is no time to lose'

By Tony Magliano
National Catholic Reporter

Challenging world oil executives to recognize the urgent environmental need to quickly transition from fossil fuel extraction and burning to clean energy production, Pope Francis called them to take to heart that "civilization requires energy, but energy must not destroy civilization."

Gathering the heads of some of the world's largest oil and gas corporations — including ExxonMobil, BP, and Royal Dutch Shell — to the recent "Energy Transition and Care for our Common Home" Vatican conference, the pope [told the CEOs](#) that meeting the energy needs of everyone, especially the more than 1 billion people without electricity, must urgently be undertaken, but in ways "that avoid creating environmental imbalances resulting in deterioration and pollution gravely harmful to our human family, both now and in the future."

The pontiff appealed to the energy executives to see the necessary moral interconnectedness of the elimination of poverty and hunger — including providing "energy for all" — with "sustainable development of renewable forms of energy" to replace dirty fossil fuels that are greatly contributing to a dangerous rise in global temperatures and thus leading to harsher environments and, not surprisingly, increased poverty.

"Temperatures over the planet as a whole continue the rapid warming trend we've seen over the last 40 years," said NASA scientist Gavin Schmidt.

According to NASA, during the past century the Earth's average surface temperature has risen about 2 degrees Fahrenheit — largely due to increased human-made global warming emissions like carbon dioxide.

And the [past four years](#) are the hottest years on record — since 1880.

"Our common home," as Francis likes to call our planet, is indisputably warming up, causing more frequent, more intense, hurricanes, wildfires, floods, droughts and heat waves.

The Holy Father reminded corporate oil executives that the 2015 Paris climate agreement signed by 196 nations to make the necessary changes to limit global warming was not on track, and that there is real concern that carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases still remain dangerously high.

Here it is important to note that President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Paris climate agreement, despite the fact that historically the U.S. has put more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than any country, and is currently the [world's second largest emitter](#) of heat-trapping gases.

And the world's poor nations, which have generated the least amount of global warming gases, are the countries that are, and will, suffer the most. Here Francis laments:

It is the poor who suffer most from the ravages of global warming, with increasing disruption in the agricultural sector, water insecurity, and exposure to severe weather events. ...

The transition to accessible and clean energy is a duty that we owe towards millions of our brothers and sisters around the world, poorer countries and generations yet to come. ...

There can be no renewal with our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself.

In a heartfelt appeal to oil and gas corporate leaders, the Holy Father asked them to put their skills and privileged positions to "the service of two great needs in today's world: the care of the poor and the environment."

And with urgent warning to all of us Francis concluded: "There is no time to lose: We received the earth as a garden-home from the Creator; let us not pass it on to future generations as a wilderness."

[Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated social justice and peace columnist. He is available to speak at diocesan or parish gatherings. Tony can be reached at tmag@zoominternet.net.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/making-difference/pope-francis-challenges-fossil-fuel-execs-act-now>

June 30, 2018

Leading Economist Champions Pope Francis' 'Laudato Si'

By Christopher White
The Tablet

ROME – Jeffrey Sachs – one of the world's best-known economists – is also arguably one of the world's biggest cheerleaders of Pope Francis and believes him to be the most important moral leader in the world today.

Sachs, who is not Catholic, has advised the Vatican on papal documents for over 25 years now. Despite having notable disagreements with the Church on issues such as contraception and population control, he's accepted the call of the last three popes for people of "goodwill" to dialogue with the Church and seek common understanding.

Through his work with the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Sachs was a critical player in helping craft "Laudato Si'," Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical calling for greater care for creation, and today he's a leading champion of the document on the global stage.

Sachs was recently in Rome for meetings of the Pontifical Academy and spoke with The Tablet on the third anniversary of the encyclical's release, which he believes remains a clarion call for change from policymakers and powerbrokers all the way down to everyday Catholics in the pews.

***The Tablet:* You've consulted on a number of papal documents, both under St. Pope John Paul II and now Francis. How was the process for "Laudato Si'" different than previous experiences?**

Each time that I've participated, it's been a very serious and impressive process. In "Centesimus Annus" [Pope John Paul II's 1991 encyclical on Catholic social teaching] advisory preparation they called in many economists from around the world for input and a very considered process with a long discussion with Pope John Paul II.

In the case of "Laudato si'," there was an absolutely remarkable period of lead-up bringing the world's top scientists, climatologists, engineers, as well as many other communities of engagement – politicians, judges, mayors, and others to the Vatican so that this issue could be explored in tremendous depth.

I regard the Pontifical Academy of Sciences as a unique institution in the world because it's the cutting edge and the highest level of scientific engagement, combined with the faith of the Church. There are no counterparts that I know of with the convening power where the world's leading experts came, made inputs, contributed, and then we all sat back and watched this beautiful encyclical emerge.

***The Tablet:* By some accounts, "Laudato Si'" is the most quoted papal document in history in just three years' time. How do you account for that?**

It's magnificent – absolutely magnificent. You read it and it's breathtaking. I often say that I can assign it to first year graduate students in earth sciences, biology, theology, diplomacy, or political science. It's so compellingly holistic that it can be read from all these crucial points of view, so therefore it inspires in its profundity, and it speaks to our urgent needs in a very direct way. The language is also very clear, and I think it brings the full emotional response to all of the knowledge that is deeply interwoven in the document.

***The Tablet:* Pope Francis recently met with leading oil industry executives and urged them to reduce their use of fossil fuels. Do you believe they'll take this to heart?**

I think it was a very significant gathering, and I was privileged to be part of it. These were oil industry executives who have accepted the basics of climate change. They know that this is real and that they have an important measure of responsibility.

However, I don't think that the industry is taking as a group the decisive clarity of action – the strength and urgency of action necessary in light of the science. Pope Francis spoke to them extremely directly and said you have the responsibility of the Paris Climate Agreement and a lot of that involves leaving oil and gas under the ground because if we try to take all of the oil and the gas that we economically and profitably can, we will wreck the planet. Pope Francis was very direct, and I know that in such settings everyone listens in rapt attention, so I'm sure that it has a big effect.

The Tablet: What's been your experience with U.S. leaders over the past three years since the release of the encyclical – both in terms of embrace of, and resistance to, the document?

I've been to many university gatherings since *Laudato si'* was issued, and of course, I love universities and believe they are centers of learning and knowledge, reflection and contemplation and are unique in our society. "*Laudato Si'*" has been deeply received by scholars in the United States and these are universities holding powerful meetings engaging faculties across many disciplines, engaging students, and engaging the public.

On the other hand, some time you see parts of the American Catholic community that are resistant and even misunderstanding completely the process because they say, 'Who is the pope to speak about these issues? He's not a climatologist.' They seem not to be aware of the commitment of the Church to get the best knowledge and the most rigorous science in the world as preparation for a document like this. They simply seem not to be aware of how it really works and how this is a Church that is committed to scientific evidence and rigor, as well as to the morality, the ethics, and the social teachings and theology.

There are definitely parts of conservative Catholic America that have been resistant to this, but I think they really misunderstood when they glibly say 'the pope shouldn't get into this.' The pope is into this, of course, because it's at the core of our moral need, but he doesn't do it lightly. He does it on the basis of the most careful, multi-year examination of this issue, which is thoroughly embedded in "*Laudato Si'*."

***The Tablet:* Some of your critics complain that because you're at odds with the Church on certain issues that you shouldn't be involved in consulting on Church documents. What's your response to them, and in the process of being involved, are there areas where you've come to sympathize more with Church teaching?**

I love the Church's social teaching, and I love the leadership the Church shows in goodwill to humanity. Pope Francis has said repeatedly that his encyclicals are a call to all of humanity and they touch me very deeply. I find Pope Francis to be our greatest moral leader in the world.

When I had the profound honor to work with Pope John Paul II, I found similarly the power of this Church to promote the common good in ways that no other institution can. I came here in 1999 when Pope John Paul II was propounding the Jubilee Year and the call to debt relief. I'm one of the world's authorities on sovereign debt crises, and what Pope John Paul II said on that occasion was not only accurate, which I've come to expect, but profoundly important in moving the U.S. Congress and moving international institutions.

I came here in 1991, around "Centesimus Annus," and I was then Poland's leading external economic advisor, and obviously, Pope John Paul II was deeply interested in interrogating me closely about Poland's economic reforms that I was very involved in. Of course, this Church played a huge role in making those reforms successful in helping keep the moral spirit and the morale of the Polish people. So, when the Church calls, we listen and we find it compelling. We also respond to the profound ethics of this Church and our ears, and heads, and hearts are open.

The Tablet: Much of “Laudato Si’” is engaged in calling on broad, structural changes in our world. How would you respond to the average Catholic who says, ‘Give me a tangible way in which I can live it out practically in my own life’?

I hope that their parishes have solar panels on their roofs, and I hope that they’re speaking with their congressmen who very often take contributions from oil companies, and therefore, don’t speak about the urgency of climate change, and tell them that ‘we are your real constituency – not the oil company. You are to look after us, and we hear Pope Francis’ call and agree with it, and we want our representatives to represent the public, the common good, and future generations.’

I hope similarly that within the Church, Catholics will tell their bishops who are big voices in our nation and our world to please follow Pope Francis in his plan for our common home. Each person has a role to play in being a responsible steward of their own homes and a responsible citizen. They may be business people, they may be students, they may be academics, they may be community leaders or politicians – everybody has a role to play to pitch in for the common good, and “Laudato Si’” is a magnificent and inspiring guide for us.

I think people should reflect on their multiple roles in our households, as consumers, and producers, within the multiple sectors of society, to answer that question by thinking carefully what indeed they can do, what Pope Francis calls on all us to do, which is to play our role for the common good.

<https://thetablet.org/leading-economist-champions-pope-francis-laudato-si/>

July 2, 2018

Major new research institute at Campion Hall

Jesuits in Britain

The Jesuits in Britain are pleased to announce that a new research institute called the Laudato Si’ Institute (LSI) is being established at [Campion Hall](#), the Jesuit permanent private hall of the University of Oxford. The LSI will be established during the academic year 2018-2019 and will formally open in September 2019.

The aim of the Laudato Si’ Institute is to foster interdisciplinary research arising out of the intellectual challenges presented most vividly in Pope Francis’ encyclical letter Laudato Si’, while being faithful to Ignatian traditions and reflective practice.

The premise of Laudato Si’ is that the crumbling of the earth’s fabric, largely through human activity, is ultimately devastating for humanity and other creatures, particularly the poorest communities on earth.

In contemporary Western thought, academic disciplines are often treated by specialists in isolation, so that the interrelationships between different social, ecological, technological, political, economic, philosophical and religious issues are obscured. The Laudato Si' Institute will comprise:

- (1) An ambitious research programme using a dialogical method that enlists philosophical, ethical and theological insights as well as scholarly research in the natural and social sciences.
- (2) A global network of allied activities inspired by Laudato Si' in order to foster international collaboration and link scholarship across different global cultures and contexts.

The Laudato Si' Institute will be informed by and act as a resource for allied educational initiatives of the Jesuits in Britain and elsewhere. It will also engage with scholars in other faith traditions as relevant to its research themes.

Its overall mission is to contribute to the intellectual basis for individual and structural transformation towards an ecological conversion at the levels of individuals, communities, public policy and governance.

Professor [Celia Deane-Drummond](#), currently Professor of Theology and Director of the Center for Theology, Science and Human Flourishing at the University of Notre Dame, USA, will be the inaugural Director of the Institute.

[Fr Damian Howard SJ](#), Jesuit provincial, welcomed the announcement, saying "As Jesuits, we are dutybound to seek out new intellectual frontiers and to bring to them the light of the Gospel. I am delighted that Professor Deane-Drummond has agreed to take on the role of Director of the new Laudato Si' Institute. The intellectual and spiritual exploration of Pope Francis' teaching in Laudato Si' is vitally important work for the future of humanity. I look forward with great excitement to seeing how the work of the Institute unfolds."

"When Pope Francis released his encyclical Laudato Si' in June of 2015, I knew a fresh, invigorating wind of change was blowing through the Church" said Professor Celia Deane-Drummond. "For the first time in the Church's history, environmental scientists, conservationists and anthropologists, whether they were believers or not, woke up and listened'.

She further commented: "The challenge for those of us who have been working at the boundary of ecology, philosophy and theology for the last quarter century is to discern how to implement and work out with intellectual rigor the message of Laudato Si', and use that as a basis for deeper individual and societal ecological conversion....I consider it a great privilege and honour to have been given the opportunity to direct this new initiative."

Professor Deane-Drummond, currently Director of the Center for Theology, Science and Human Flourishing at the University of Notre Dame, USA, is a theologian who has professional experience in academic science and has two doctorates in plant physiology and systematic theology. She has a well-established track record in publishing in science, theology, environmental ethics and at the intersection between theology and the natural sciences. Professor

Deane-Drummond has also served as Chair of the European Forum for the Study of Religion and Environment from 2011-2018. Her most recent books include *A Primer in Ecotheology: Theology for a Fragile Earth* (2017) and *Theology and Ecology Across the Disciplines: On Care for Our Common Home* (2018).

<https://www.jesuit.org.uk/major-new-research-institute-campion-hall>

July 4, 2018

Al Gore: Pope Francis a ‘moral force’ for solving climate crisis

By Alessandro Gisotti
Vatican News

Nobel Peace Prize Winner and former U.S. Vice President, Al Gore, is one of the world’s most vocal defenders of the environment. His 2007 documentary film, “An Inconvenient Truth”, won an Oscar and his Climate Reality Project recently hosted an important summit in Berlin. In this exclusive interview with Vatican News, Al Gore praises Pope Francis’ encyclical, “Laudato si’”, and calls for a “Sustainability Revolution”.

You are one the strongest voices in the world calling for environmental protection. Why are you so passionately involved in this “green battle” for our planet?

I believe that the purpose of life is to glorify God — and if we heap contempt and destruction on God’s creation, that is grotesquely inconsistent with the way we are supposed to be living our lives. Moreover, the climate crisis is now the biggest existential challenge humanity has ever faced. And it is not only humanity that is at risk; according to the world’s biologists, up to half of all the living species with which we share this Earth are in danger of extinction during this century. When Noah was instructed to gather two of every species in his ark in order to “keep them alive with thee,” I believe that instruction is also meant for us.

At present, we are using the thin shell of atmosphere surrounding our planet as an open sewer for 110 million tons of heat-trapping manmade global warming pollution every day. The accumulated total is now trapping as much extra heat energy as would be released by 400,000 Hiroshima-class uncle bombs exploding every 24 hours. The consequences of that extra heat energy are clear: Stronger storms, bigger downpours, more destructive floods and mudslides, deeper and longer droughts, crop failures, water scarcity in many regions, strengthening wildfires, spreading disease, melting ice, and sea level rise — along with the acidification of the world ocean, and more.

So, there is really no choice here. We have to solve the climate crisis. As Pope Francis has said, “if we destroy creation, creation will destroy us.”

I have been fortunate to be able to pour every ounce of energy I have into efforts to contribute to the solution to his crisis. And I am so inspired by the millions of activists and leaders around the world who are driving clean energy development in the Sustainability Revolution. The real passion and energy are coming from these activists and leaders.

In a recent interview you said that climate change is not a political issue, “it is a moral and spiritual issue”. How do you see the importance of a spiritual leader like Pope Francis in sharing this commitment to safeguard the environment?

Pope Francis’s leadership has been an inspiration to all of us across the world, particularly when it comes to his strong and repeated emphasis on solving the climate crisis. I am grateful for and in awe of the clarity of the moral force he embodies. He also speaks in the most powerful way about the most vulnerable among us — the poor — and helps all who listen to understand how they are uniquely affected by the climate crisis. In particular, his papal encyclical, **Laudato si’**, marked a crucial step for the Catholic church in leading the world to commit to addressing the climate crisis ahead of the Paris Agreement.

In these and many other ways, the Pope has been at the forefront in leading the world toward constructive climate action. Virtually all of my Catholic colleagues and friends are thrilled to the marrow of their bones that he is providing this kind of spiritual leadership. As am I.

More generally, spiritual teaching obviously plays a crucial role in communities around the world. The Pope is a model for leaders of other faith traditions to communicate the dangers posed by the climate crisis and our duty as stewards of God’s creation to solve it.

In his Encyclical letter Laudato si, on care for our common home, Pope Francis affirms that climate change and poverty are deeply interrelated in many regions of the world. How do you see that issue?

As Pope Francis has emphasized, those living in poverty are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, which is detrimentally impacting access to necessary resources and threatening human health. For example, Puerto Rico, where more than 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, is still trying to recover from the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, which decimated the country’s electrical grid and mobile phone networks, and flooded entire neighborhoods.

Moreover, the co-pollution (along with CO₂) from spewing carbon emissions into the atmosphere is making people sick. It is well known that allowing more air pollution into our cities and smaller communities is making even more people sick. According to the principles of Environmental Justice, we know that the plumes of this pollution are more likely to go into communities that have been deprived of the political and economic power necessary to defend themselves. So, that is where the first damage is done.

And it isn’t just those living in poverty who are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis. The list includes the mentally ill, those with pre-existing medical conditions, the elderly, infants and children, the homeless and minority communities. For example, in the United States, African

American children are three-times more likely than the overall population to suffer from diseases related to air pollution, are twice as likely to have asthma and ten times more likely to die from asthma than are children from the majority community.

Recently Pope Francis urged top oil executives to commit to efforts for producing clean fuel. What is needed to achieve this “dream”?

I was very happy to see Pope Francis convene top energy and investment executives to agree upon the importance of a price on carbon emissions. To achieve this, there first needs to be a viable alternative to burning and putting pollutants into the air. Fortunately, there is. Renewable energy and other solutions to the climate crisis are now competing economically with fossil fuels. As a result, the big fossil fuel companies are being forced to re-examine their business models. Once the economic question is taken out of the equation then I am hopeful that the moral choice will become starkly clear to many more people and will prevail.

We are in the beginning stages of a global “**Sustainability Revolution**,” that has the scale and impact of the Industrial Revolution, but the speed of the Digital Revolution. Facilitated by the emergence of new technologies and increasingly informed consumers, sustainable business practices have spread rapidly in the past few years.

As a result of growing social and political pressure — and the rising cost of carbon pollution — governments all around the world are passing legislation to reduce their emissions. At the end of 2017, China established a carbon market, joining the European Union and other countries such as Chile and Colombia who have also now put a price on carbon.

Pope Francis’ conference at the Vatican with oil company executives is an extremely encouraging sign that this transition to a sustainable future may quickly becoming a reality rather than a dream. But, we need to move even faster to ensure this transition occurs in time to prevent the worst effects of the climate crisis.

Your Climate Reality Project held its 38th activist training seminar in Berlin from June 26-28. What do you hope will come out of this meeting?

In Berlin, 700 trainees from 50 countries and from all walks of life joined together for three days of intensive training with renowned climate scientists and communicators to learn how they can inspire and lead their communities in taking action to solve the climate crisis. The training included a wide range of open sessions (and many breakout sessions on particular aspects of the crisis and its solutions) all exploring how to raise public awareness of the climate crisis, build support for the practical solutions available to us today, and pressure our representatives to act.

We conducted this training in Berlin at a time when Germany and the EU are particularly experiencing the effects of the climate crisis. Without concerted action by government leaders, such effects are predicted to worsen significantly in coming years. Germany, for example, is in the process of effectively implementing an energy transition away from coal and in doing so, will hopefully serve as a beacon for other nations in the EU to reexamine their own climate action policies.

Climate Reality has trained more than 15,000 activists working in 141 countries. Our previous training was held in Mexico City this past March, and in August we will be hosting another in Los Angeles, CA.

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2018-07/al-gore-pope-francis-climate-crisis.html>

July 5, 2018

‘Laudato Si’ Three Years Later: The US Response

By Judy Roberts

National Catholic Register

Diocesan action plans provide tips on how to better live out Pope Francis’ call for better care of our common home.

In the three years since Pope Francis issued his environmental epistle [Laudato Si \(Care for Our Common Home\)](#), many Catholics have responded in a way that may be unparalleled for a papal encyclical.

Across the country, dioceses from Boston to San Francisco are developing *Laudato Si* “action plans,” some modeled after one the Archdiocese of Atlanta [developed](#) with the help of environmental scientists at the University of Georgia. The Diocese of Burlington, Vermont, devoted 2017 to the message of *Laudato Si* through a “Year of Creation” with activities that included an ecological justice conference, liturgies with creation themes and an ecological awareness and action project for Catholic schools in the state.

In 2016 and 2017, hundreds of priests and deacons received specialized training in implementing the message of the encyclical through a “*Laudato Si* in the Parish” program of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the [Catholic Climate Covenant](#), which was formed by the USCCB in 2006 to implement Catholic social teaching on ecology. Elsewhere, “green” and “creation care” teams are springing up in parishes, and religious communities are responding with resources like [Healing Earth](#), a free, online environmental science e-textbook developed by the Society of Jesus.

Daniel Misleh, executive director of the Catholic Climate Covenant, said with the release of *Laudato Si*, his organization counted about 120 statements, articles and homilies from bishops around the country. “I think that’s pretty unprecedented for an encyclical, and, since then, it’s been gathering momentum.”

Misleh attributes the robust response to the high level of interest among those engaged with environmental issues, as well as to the popularity of Pope Francis. “He’s a pope that really is admired and is attractive to Catholics and non-Catholics. I think because it came from him, and because of his charisma, it has had this impact.”

USCCB environmental policy adviser Ricardo Simmonds, who tracked the encyclical's reception when it was released, said, "I can't remember a time when a papal encyclical received so much attention." Simmonds added that perhaps the only other encyclical that had such wide appeal was Pope John XXIII's [*Pacem in Terris \(Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity and Liberty\)*](#) in 1963.

Addressing the Skepticism

Of course, not all Catholics have welcomed *Laudato Si*. Writing in [*The Federalist*](#), Catholic Maureen Mullarkey reflected the concerns some have expressed about the encyclical when she called it "a malignant jumble of dubious science, policy prescriptions, [and] doomsday rhetoric."

Indeed, the encyclical's full embrace of the science of climate change has put off some who might otherwise support its underlying and Scripture-based admonition to use the Earth's goods responsibly. According to such critics, the encyclical overreached in endorsing the science so unequivocally and in pushing for Catholics to embrace international mechanisms intended to reduce man-made climate change.

Hal Mann of Perrysburg, Ohio, in the Diocese of Toledo, learned that not all Catholics shared his enthusiasm about *Laudato Si* when he mentioned the encyclical to a fellow parishioner who retorted, "Oh, Pope Francis went off the rails. This thing about climate change and global warming is just not right."

Undaunted, Mann, a former business owner who is a master gardener and Ohio-certified volunteer naturalist, contacted his diocese to see what was being done in response to the encyclical, only to learn that Bishop Daniel Thomas was two steps ahead of him in commissioning a "*Laudato Si* Task Force."

Mann, who now is a member of the task force, said that like his fellow parishioner, he had been skeptical about climate change before undergoing what he calls his "ecological conversion."

"I used to think this environmental stuff got in the way of prosperity and jobs and really was a bunch of malarkey."

His transformation came through an interest in native plants and the information he began gleaning from naturalists and conservationists about the importance of ecosystems for sustaining life. "You can't destroy the environment that enables life and still say that you're pro-life," said Mann, a daily Massgoer who is pro-life. "You can't destroy the systems that make the air, produce food and give us the clean drinking water that we have to have to live. ... To be against the environment seems to be against life."

Still, although Mann believes strongly in the science behind climate change, he does think disagreement about it should not keep people from protecting and nurturing God-given ecosystems. "The very fact that God made all of this means we shouldn't plunder it and disrespect all of creation just because of controversy about the scientific aspects."

Toledo's Approach

Given the polarized nature of the topic of climate change, the Toledo Diocese's *Laudato Si* Task Force has chosen to remain focused on the encyclical and its teachings without getting mired in its political components, said Rodney Schuster, executive director of Catholic Charities in the diocese. "We knew it would just be a death knell, as politicized as the nation is."

The task force's activities so far have concentrated on helping parishes form creation-care teams, making sure diocesan schools are recycling and reducing waste, and partnering with the [National Wildlife Federation's "Sacred Grounds" program](#), which helps religious groups create rain and pollinator gardens and other sites as "Certified Wildlife Habitat" spaces and engage their members about environmental stewardship. Toledo's task force also asked the Catholic Climate Covenant's "Catholic Energies" program to conduct an energy audit of the diocesan pastoral center, cathedral and bishop's residence.

The task force did, however, vote to sign the Catholic Climate Covenant's [declaration](#) affirming the "Paris Climate Agreement" and opposing U.S. withdrawal from it. Nearly 600 Catholic institutions, including 37 archdioceses and dioceses, religious communities, health care systems, universities, parishes and schools, have signed the declaration, which is in line with the position of the U.S. bishops.

Bishop Thomas Tobin of the Diocese of Providence, R.I., which did not sign the declaration, drew a distinction between it and the message of *Laudato Si* in a [June 15 tweet](#). "... One can support the faith-filled vision of 'Laudato Si' without necessarily endorsing the Paris Climate Accord," Bishop Tobin wrote. "The first is a comprehensive statement of faith; the second a political agreement. Let's set partisan politics aside and protect our common home."

Although the Catholic Climate Covenant's Misleh thinks the science of climate change is clear, he does believe Catholics with differing views can come together to clean up the planet and that most can agree on the need to do so. "I do think the climate issue is still a little bit neuralgic for people. They see it more as a political issue than a moral issue. I wouldn't pretend that it's uniform across the board, that people are engaged, but we can bring people together, particularly when they think about how it impacts them or will impact their children in the future."

Practical Tips

Indeed, action plans like the one adopted in the Atlanta Archdiocese offer practical things anyone can do regardless of his or her views on the science of climate change, although Atlanta's does contain a political action section that suggests lobbying elected officials and supporting candidates who support the environment.

[The Atlanta plan](#), which has been adapted for use in the Archdioceses of New Orleans, Boston and San Francisco and the Diocese of Savannah, Georgia, lists "easy," "moderate" and "advanced" ideas for parishes, parishioners, homes and families in the areas of energy conservation and efficiency, purchasing and recycling, transportation, water conservation, buying and sharing food, creating sustainable landscapes and assisting climate-vulnerable

populations. The plan also contains a section on *Laudato Si* and young people and has been incorporated into the science and religion curriculum in all Catholic schools in the archdiocese.

Additionally, as part of the plan, many parishes are establishing creation-care green teams, and an annual “Green Mass” is celebrated in the archdiocese for those who volunteer or work in “green jobs” or environmental sustainability and “for all who love planet Earth.”

The archdiocese also has attempted to respond to what *Laudato Si* said about population growth and the environment by offering a workshop for clergy on giving spiritual guidance to help couples understand human ecology and natural family planning according to Church teaching. Although limiting population growth is a popular tenet of the secular environmental movement, *Laudato Si* said, “To blame population growth, instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some, is one way of refusing to face the issues.” The encyclical goes on to say that failure to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a human embryo, for example, makes it difficult to hear the cry of nature itself, because everything is connected.

Paula Gwynn Grant, archdiocesan spokesman, said in offering multiple options, the Atlanta plan is a place where everyone can come together, no matter what side of the political aisle they are on. “We can all agree there’s something you can do to make the community and the world better, in terms of taking care of the environment.”

Judy Roberts writes from Graytown, Ohio.

Other dioceses and archdioceses that have responded to *Laudato Si* include:

- Chicago, which has started a “[Care for Creation Ministry](#)” and is tracking energy consumption in its 2,700 buildings.
- Cincinnati, which has a “[Climate Change Task Force](#).”
- Monterey, California, which has partnered with the Romero Institute’s [Greenpower](#) program to set up teams to decrease electricity usage and increase the use of renewable energy.
- San Diego, which recently held a “[teach-in](#)” on *Laudato Si* and climate change featuring environmentalist Tom English and leaders from parishes with creation-care teams.

<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/laudato-si-three-years-later-the-us-response>

July 6, 2018

The world needs a change of heart on environmental issues, pope says

By Hannah Brockhaus
Catholic News Agency

Vatican City ([CNA/EWTN News](#)) - Christians have an important role to play in helping people have a change of heart and mind regarding responsible protection of the earth, Pope Francis said Friday.

Actions which support the future of the planet “presuppose a transformation on a deeper level, namely a change of hearts and minds,” the pope said July 6. “The religions, and the Christian Churches in particular, have a key role to play.”

Quoting a Jan. 17, 2001 catechesis from St. Pope John Paul II, he said: “We must encourage and support an ‘ecological conversion.’”

Pope Francis spoke to around 300 participants in a July 5-6 international conference called “Saving our Common Home and the Future of Life on Earth,” held for the third anniversary of the publication of Pope Francis’ environmental encyclical, *Laudato Si*.

Pointing to St. Francis of Assisi as an inspiration and guide, he prayed using words from *Laudato Si*, that “our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.”

“After all, that hope is based on our faith in the power of our heavenly Father,” he said.

“We can think back,” he continued, “on the call that Francis of Assisi received from the Lord in the little church of San Damiano: ‘Go and repair my house, which, as you can see, lies in ruins.’ Today, the ‘common home’ of our planet also needs urgently to be repaired and secured for a sustainable future.”

Francis said the subjects of the two upcoming synods – young people and indigenous people, especially those from the Amazon region – should be at the forefront of a Catholic’s commitment to the common home.

Young people will “face the consequences of the current environmental and climate crisis,” he said, and “consequently, intergenerational solidarity ‘is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us’ (*Laudato Si* 159).”

Catholics can learn a lot from indigenous people and their love for the land, the pope said, noting his grief at seeing the lands of indigenous people taken “and their cultures trampled on by predatory schemes and by new forms of colonialism, fueled by the culture of waste and consumerism.”

He explained that indigenous communities treat the land like a gift from God and their ancestors, rather than like a commodity, and that this is something everyone can learn from.

He also expressed hope that states, local authorities, civil society, and economic and religious institutions will “promote the culture and practice of an integral ecology,” voicing his support for initiatives such as the upcoming COP24 Summit, which will be held in Poland in December 2018.

Referencing the 2015 Paris Agreement, which the United States controversially withdrew from last year, Francis stated that governments “should strive to honor the commitments” made in the agreement and to avoid creating worse consequences, especially those countries which are “more powerful and pollute the most.”

Quoting *Laudato Si*, the pope said that God, “who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way.”

“He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, for he has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. Praise be to him!”

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/the-world-needs-a-change-of-heart-on-environmental-issues-pope-says-27137>

July 1, 2018

D&R Greenway Offers Unique Bus Excursion to Regional Premier Performance of Sam Guarnaccia’s *Emergent Universe Oratorio*, Villanova University

New Jersey Stage

(PRINCETON, NJ) -- [D&R Greenway Land Trust](#) invites the public to a unique bus excursion to the regional premier performance of Sam Guarnaccia’s *Emergent Universe Oratorio*. Performed by the Main Line Symphony Orchestra, with choral singers from Pennsylvania and Vermont, it will take place at Villanova University Church, on Saturday, July 28 at 7:30pm. The bus will depart at 5:30pm from D&R Greenway Land Trust’s Johnson Education Center, returning by 11:30pm. Wine and hors d’oeuvres will be provided.

At the post-party after the Villanova performance, participants will meet with composer Sam Guarnaccia and Symphony director Don Liuzzi. Tickets for the bus journey and the *Emergent Universe Oratorio* are \$125. This includes bus trip, wine, hors d’oeuvres, performance and post-party. Space is limited; RSVP by Thursday, July 19: Most convenient payment: www.drgreenway.org, DONATE, and specify BUS TRIP. On July 28 at 5:30pm, the bus will leave One Preservation Place, off Rosedale Road, Princeton. A portion of the fee supports D&R Greenway’s preservation of New Jersey’s segment of the universe.

Sam Guarnaccia’s *Emergent Universe Oratorio* inspired the dynamic paintings by award-winning environmental artist Cameron (Cami) Davis, currently in D&R Greenway’s galleries: *Cosmophilia* may be seen through July 25 in D&R Greenway’s Johnson Education Center, 1 Preservation Place, Princeton 08540. Gallery hours Monday-Friday 10:00am-5:00pm. Call to be sure galleries not rented at the time of prospective visit.

Our regional premiere of the *Emergent Universe Oratorio* will be performed in the majestic

setting of the Villanova University Church on July 28. D&R Greenway President Linda Mead attended the Ohio premiere in Cleveland, observing, “This oratorio soars, inspired by, and composed to inspire conservation of, the Earth. It is a beautiful melding of music, poetry and philosophies—some familiar, some eye-opening!” Both the artist and the composer drew significant influences from the 2011 Emmy-winning documentary *Journey of the Universe*, by Mary Evelyn Tucker and Brian Swimme of Yale.

Sam Guarnaccia addresses questions about the impact of stars, tectonic plates, even sea life of hundreds of millions of years ago upon today’s humans. He weaves in words and thoughts of Rainer Maria Rilke, Wendell Berry, John Elder, among others, carrying audiences to the “beginning of time.” Guarnaccia explains, “The motivation for this oratorio was to add weight and depth to our awareness of what we are doing to the planet.” Cultural historian, geologist and teacher Thomas Berry also impacted Guarnaccia during this composition: “A new revelatory experience is needed, an experience wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process. This awakening is our human participation in the dream of the Earth...”

The oratorio is related to opera in that it features recitatives and music. It differs from opera in that it contains no performance. This oratorio interacts with the 2011 Emmy-winning documentary *Journey of the Universe*, by Mary Evelyn Tucker and Brian Swimme, which dramatizes interconnectedness and universal energy from the moment of the Big Bang, forward.

Don Liuzzi, director of the Main Line Symphony Orchestra and principal timpanist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, describes his experience of the oratorio: “The more we talk about [the perils to our planet] this as a society, the less chance we have of ruining this planet.” “Science links everyone on the planet,” Guarnaccia adds. D&R Greenway’s Linda Mead asserts, “It is the melding of science, music and new thinking that makes this work so inspiring. This magical, unforgettable evening can transform how you view your place in the world and the actions you yourself need to take for the sake of the planet.”

D&R Greenway Land Trust is in its 29th year of preserving and protecting natural lands, farmlands and open spaces throughout central and southern New Jersey. Through continuous preservation and stewardship -- caring for land and easements to ensure they remain protected and ecologically healthy in perpetuity -- D&R Greenway nurtures a healthier and more diverse environment for people and wild species in seven counties. Accredited by the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission, D&R Greenway’s mission is to preserve and care for land and inspire a conservation ethic, now and for the future. Since its founding in 1989, D&R Greenway has permanently preserved more than 20,000 acres, an area 20 times the size of New York City’s Central Park, including 30 miles of trails open to the public. The Johnson Education Center, a circa 1900 restored barn at One Preservation Place, Princeton, is D&R Greenway’s home. Through programs, art exhibits and related lectures, D&R Greenway inspires greater public commitment to safeguarding land.

<https://www.newjerseystage.com/articles/getarticle.php?titlelink=dandr-greenway-offers-unique-bus-excursion-to-regional-premier-performance-of-sam-guarnaccias-emergent-universe-oratorio>

July 10, 2018

Sisters mark anniversary of cornfield chapel symbolizing pipeline protest

By Catholic News Service
[Global Sisters Report](#)

The Adorers of the Blood of Christ held a [prayer service](#) and reflection July 8 to mark the first anniversary of the opening of a chapel in a cornfield that symbolizes their opposition to the building of a natural gas pipeline on their property in Lancaster County.

It also marked the first anniversary of the religious sisters' federal lawsuit challenging construction of the pipeline.

The chapel was built right along the proposed path of the pipeline by Lancaster Against Pipelines, a community group dedicated to opposing its construction. Made of four posts and several cross boards, the simple chapel is located just outside of the pipeline right of way. Several benches are available for people to sit, pray, reflect and talk.

The Adorers hope that the chapel will draw people of all faiths to prayer and reflection about how land and other natural resources ought to be used.

In addition to building the chapel, the Adorers have sued Williams/Transco, the company that would lay the pipeline, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which approved the company's request to do so. The religious order said approval of the pipeline violated the sisters' right to practice their faith under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and they asked that it be rerouted.

The Adorers argue that the presence of a fossil fuel pipeline on their property against their will would violate their deeply held religious convictions about the sanctity of the earth. In an October 2005 Land Ethic, the Adorers state that they honor the sacred nature of earth and all creation, seek to reduce fossil fuel reliance, and oppose environmentally destructive practices, such as hydraulic fracking.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, about two-thirds of natural gas production in the United States comes from fracking.

Last year, a U.S. District Court judge dismissed the lawsuit, citing a lack of jurisdiction. The Adorers appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit, located in Philadelphia, which heard arguments for the case in January. The Court of Appeals has not yet issued a decision. If it rules in favor of the Adorers, the case will be remanded to the District Court.

The 183-mile pipeline, which is being built by Tulsa, Oklahoma-based Williams Partners, will carry gas from the Marcellus Shale in northeastern Pennsylvania to markets in the mid-Atlantic region.

Williams maintains that, although the company respects people's right to protest, it wants to complete the project "in a safe, efficient manner."

<http://globalsistersreport.org/news/environment/sisters-mark-anniversary-cornfield-chapel-symbolizing-pipeline-protest-54941>

July 13, 2018

Conservatives Must Join the Climate Change Conversation

By Mitch Hescox and Alex Flint
Christian Post

I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.

– Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, Laudato Si'

On the third anniversary of his encyclical on climate change, Pope Francis [stated](#), "There is a real danger that we will leave future generations only rubble, deserts, and refuse." The Pope is not alone in his concern.

Evangelical Christian leaders, both here in the United States and worldwide, have also called for action to overcome climate change. In 2006, hundreds of evangelical leaders signed the Evangelical Climate Initiative, which called for a market-based approach to reducing climate pollution. In 2011, the Lausanne Movement, which was founded by eminent evangelical statesmen Billy Graham and John Scott, added a prominent voice with the [Cape Town Commitment](#). Finally, the National Association of Evangelicals joined the chorus in [October 2015](#).

We accept the challenge of the Pope and these evangelical leaders. It's time for a fundamental reconsideration of the application of conservative values to the issue of climate change.

Across our nation's history, conservatives have been great protectors of the environment. Teddy Roosevelt, a staunch conservationist, stated, "Of all the questions which can come before this nation, short of the actual preservation of its existence in a great war, there is none which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us."

Richard Nixon enacted the 1970 Clean Air Act. Ronald Reagan was instrumental in the ratification of the 1987 Montreal Protocol—the first binding international agreement that reduced atmospheric pollutants, specifically ozone-depleting chemicals, and highly potent man-made greenhouse gases. George H. W. Bush negotiated and signed the 1990 Clean Air Act, the

last major environmental legislation passed by Congress, which included a market-based approach that significantly reduced the cost of compliance.

Despite our history of Republican leadership on environmental issues, today many Republican politicians have lost touch with core conservative values when it comes to the environment—values that cause us to believe we should protect the natural beauty of God's creation, be wise stewards of its resources, defend our children from pollution, and reduce the risk from rising oceans and increasingly violent storms.

Our frustration is compounded by the fact that, because conservative politicians have largely not participated in discussions about how to address climate change, the solutions proposed have been liberal in nature, and we know there are better, conservative solutions that should be pursued.

We don't need policies that increase big government, but ones that correct market failures and ensure that pollution's threat to our children's health and future is eliminated. We believe a conservative approach guided by straightforward science and economics works best, and the most efficient means to do so is a revenue-neutral carbon tax.

We're conservatives, so we generally do not like taxes, but most economists agree a carbon tax is more efficient than regulations. In fact, a recent analysis shows a tax would cost the economy half the costs of comparable regulations. In this case, we think the proper application of core conservative values, especially being responsible, is to recognize the problem and then propose the most effective, least expensive solution.

Pope Francis called for "a conversation which includes everyone," a welcome and timely invitation. We believe conservatives must not only join the climate conversation but lead it with a responsible and economically efficient proposal—a revenue-neutral carbon tax.

The Reverend Mitchell Hescox is President and CEO of the Evangelical Environmental Network.

Alex Flint, Executive Director of Alliance for Market Solutions, previously served as Republican staff director of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and as senior vice president of government affairs at the Nuclear Energy Institute.

<https://www.christianpost.com/voice/conservatives-must-join-the-climate-change-conversation.html>

July 17, 2018

Vatican's former legal chief says canon law should include care of creation

By Elise Harris
Catholic News Agency

Rome, Italy - The Vatican's former top advisor on canon law has made a public call to insert

legal obligations for the care of creation into the Church's universal canon law - making it a legal duty for Catholics not only "not to harm" the environment, but to improve it.

According to veteran Vatican watcher Andrea Tornielli, Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio, former head of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, made the proposal during a July 12 event in Rome titled "Dialogue on Catholic Investments for the Energy Transition."

During the closed-door discussion, representatives from the Vatican and Catholic organizations spoke about how to invest responsibly towards a transition to renewable energies.

In an interview with Vatican Insider, Coccopalmerio discussed canons 208-221 of the Church's Code of Canon Law, which enumerate "Obligations and rights of all the faithful."

This section "outlines an 'identikit' of the faithful and of their life as a Christian," the cardinal said, but noted that nothing is mentioned "about one of the most serious duties: that of protecting and promoting the natural environment in which the faithful live."

The proposal he outlined, which he suggested could be submitted to the pope but considered by his former department, would be to ask for a new canon to be added to the obligations of the all faithful, specifically treating environmental responsibility.

Coccopalmerio, whose resignation was accepted by Pope Francis in April this year, went on to give his own ideas of how it might be worded: "Every faithful Christian, mindful that creation is the common house, has the grave duty not only not to damage, but also to improve, both through everyday behavior, and through specific initiatives, the natural environment in which each person is called to live."

The canons Coccopalmerio referenced address general obligations for Catholics relating to the practice of the faith and maintaining communion with the Church. They do not address specific moral obligations or particular doctrinal teachings. Those canons do not, for example, include the Church's prohibition of artificial contraception or the obligation to observe just labor practices.

Drawing inspiration from *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical on the environment, participants at the event agreed on the Catholic Program of Disinvestment, sponsored by the Catholic Climate Movement, which urges ecclesial institutions to make a public commitment to move away from financial investments in fossil fuels.

Participants also highlighted the importance of pursuing ethical investment strategies in line with the social doctrine of the Catholic Church, according to Tornielli.

Pope Francis has often expressed his environmental concerns and, in his [message](#) on the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in 2016, he said maintaining our common home ought to be considered a work of mercy.

"We usually think of the works of mercy individually and in relation to a specific initiative: hospitals for the sick, soup kitchens for the hungry, shelters for the homeless, schools for those to be educated, the confessional and spiritual direction for those needing counsel and forgiveness," the pope said in that message.

Looking at the concept of works of mercy, "we see that the object of mercy is human life itself and everything it embraces," he said. Francis proposed caring for creation as "a complement" to the two traditional sets of seven corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

“May the works of mercy also include care for our common home,” he said, explaining that as a spiritual work, care for creation “calls for a grateful contemplation of God’s world which allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us.”

In a [conference](#) held earlier this month to mark the third anniversary of the publication of *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis said a change of heart is needed when it comes to issues related to the environment.

Future actions which promote the care of creation, “presuppose a transformation on a deeper level, namely a change of hearts and minds,” he said, adding that while this obligation binds all religious communities, Christians have a special role to play.

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/vaticans-ormer-legal-chief-says-canon-law-should-include-care-of-creation-37830>

July 19, 2018

Climate change: The moral case for Christian action

By Joseph Sapati Moeono-Kolio

Christian Today

Joseph Sapati Moeono-Kolio is from Samoa and is currently living in Aotearoa, New Zealand. He is a member of the Pacific Climate Warriors, a group of Pacific Islanders who refuse to have their homes, communities and cultures ceded to the effects of climate change. In partnership with CAFOD, they recently toured Europe, training young climate advocates in Poland and Belgium, visiting schools and meeting with political leaders in the United Kingdom and sharing their experiences and best practice insights at the [Laudato Si' Conference](#) at the Vatican, where they met with Pope Francis last week. Here, Joe shares a reflection on the state of our common home and our duty as Christians to protect it.

In his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote: 'The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole.'

His words expressed the Church's long-held view that our relationship with creation extended further than just being purely extractive and exploitative. It is an integral relationship, one where the dignity of any part of creation is intertwined with that of the other. It is one that is underscored by recognising that every corner of creation, of which humanity is but a part, is imprinted with the fingerprint of its Creator, testifying to the words of the Psalmist that 'The earth is the LORD's' (Psalm 24:1-2).

Understanding, therefore, that the very basis of our existence is both provisional and contingent upon the Creator, the natural inclination is to then ponder what humanity's role is as a part of this creation. From the very beginning, the Bible makes this abundantly clear: 'The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to take care of it and to look after it' (Genesis 2:15). Here, we see

a clear illustration of humanity's intended relationship with creation. In being placed in the garden, we are both gifted the beauty and fruits of creation to enjoy but also charged with its upkeep and the health of the common home we all share with the rest of creation.

So how are we doing?

It's at this stage that views radically diverge. In the West, the answer to this has unfortunately varied according to ideological lines. While all are in agreement that for the most part, we have severely damaged the health of the planet, not all are ready to be convinced as to the scale of the damage offered up by the scientific community.

This is most evident in the debate on climate change. Despite the evidence that our habits of human consumption, usage of fossil fuels, over-production and waste is impacting the climate, not all have been convinced, for a variety of different reasons. Responses to the climate crisis range from apathy to complete denialism. What should be an issue that causes us to reflect more urgently on our status as stewards of the earth is now relegated to one that is used to fuel the growing rate of polarisation in the West.

The situation in frontline communities, however, paints a very different picture. Far from being just a matter for political debates, climate change is having very real human impacts all across the globe. For us on the front lines, climate change is neither a distant nor abstract concept. It is real, and it is now our lived reality.

Let me be clear – we have no interest in the ideological culture wars of the West, where the science of climate change is refuted more by politicians and pundits than actual scientists. We have no vested interest in the incendiary rhetoric of this debate, where toxic arguments from ideology distract from addressing the toxic environment which is our reality. We have no dog in that fight. What concerns us is that which is playing out before our very eyes – the erosion of our islands and with it, the inheritance of our future generations. What concerns us is the lack of focus and, thereby, the lack of urgency.

There are obviously many sides to this issue and the different approaches and narratives that colour it. It is more than cold data and even colder economic models – it is a human issue first and foremost. Climate change is Cyclones Winston and Gita flattening Fiji and Tonga, and destroying the infrastructure of our island nations on an almost annual basis. Climate change is the washing away of the graveyards of our ancestors and the erosion of the futures of our children. It is wildfires in California, droughts in Pakistan and Syria, more hurricanes like Irma and flooding in Florida.

Climate change changes more than just the climate. The stress caused to our common home fractures our communities and displaces our families. We must remember that in the noise of political arguments and ideological narratives, we do not forget nor become desensitised to the suffering of human beings at the centre of this crisis. At a deeper level, climate change is the manifestation of our failure to protect the garden we were tasked with keeping.

'Francis, rebuild my house for it has fallen into disrepair,' St Francis of Assisi was told.

Yet even as our home falls into disrepair, our resolve to fix it must not fail. Our faith now summons us to rise to the occasion, to stand by all in our home who are vulnerable and to begin again the task of rebuilding it. S. Francis of Assisi was given this great task 800 years ago.

Now, in the gathering clouds of uncertainty, we are once again called – this time by another Francis – to have the courage to stand. In his landmark encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminds us that care for the environment is infinitely tied to concern for the poor. It is also a matter of intergenerational justice, for when we 'start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realise that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others' (*Laudato Si'*, 159). This must now be at the centre of our outlook on the current crisis – the human face of climate change and what that means for future generations.

The upkeep of our common home is our collective duty. Last week's *Laudato Si'* conference in Rome brought together the world's leading climate scientists, civic, faith and business leaders as well as representatives from indigenous communities on the front lines of climate change. The voices of remarkable young people from around the world resounded the call for more ambitious action, a reminder that it is our generation and the ones still to come that will inherit the fruits of our actions here and now. The Pacific Climate Warriors – Pacific Islanders connected by our common purpose to protect our island homes – is one such group rising to the challenge, building the groundswell of grassroots community-led climate action in order to influence the decisions that will ultimately shape our future.

Among the campaigns that the warriors have spearheaded is the '1.5 to stay alive' campaign that gave voice to our perilous reality during the 2015 COP21 negotiations and has subsequently become embedded in the climate action vernacular. 1.5 to stay alive encapsulates the simple fact that a rise in the earth's average annual temperature to anything more than 1.5°C would spell disaster for many of our island communities. It is more than just a slogan, it is the truth upon which our ability to exist hangs in the balance.

We travelled to Europe for almost three days in order to press the urgency of the situation and the need for our elders – to whom we traditionally look to for guidance and leadership – to steer our collective canoe away from its current trajectory, to chart a new course towards a more sustainable future.

This spirit must now be carried forward into the upcoming Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco, a city named after St Francis of Assisi, later this year. This is our next opportunity to mobilise the different spheres of climate action, which must be sustained ahead of the G20 Summit in Argentina and COP24 in Poland. These gatherings in populous Christian nations present us with the chance to put our faith and these principles into action and to fulfil our moral duty as stewards of creation. Beyond these high-level meetings, the grass roots mobilisations of people of faith, young people, indigenous communities and climate action groups around the world must continue to energise the march towards environmental justice.

'The one who has hope, lives differently,' said Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

Courage, dear friends. Above all else, we must not be disheartened or give way to cynicism but be resolute in our commitment to fighting the injustice of climate change. Although the road is long and the work difficult, we cannot lose our hope – we are after all, people of faith. 'For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you' (Isaiah 41:13). Our faith in Christ both compels us to action and comforts us in the many moments of doubt and frustration. As we reflect therefore on our role as stewards, let us think of those who stand at the front lines of the current crisis, resolve to committing ourselves more fervently to fighting this threat and be comforted in the knowledge that our cause is just.

Finally, we ask that you remember us – the human faces of climate change. See us. Partner with us. [Rise with us](#). On September 8, 2018, the Pacific will rise again once more to join the global fight that is threatening our homes, our cultures and our very way of life. Across the globe, we are calling on people to add their voices to the global chorus for real climate action. For that is the true calling of those of us who profess to follow Christ: to rise up against injustice and to stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable.

We in the Pacific are more than just cyclones, king tides and the current threat of climate change. We have always been more. We are families. We are communities. We are the memories of our ancestors and we are the saltwater that runs through our veins. My friends, let it be well understood – we fight not only for the future of our homes, but for the future of yours as well. The inheritance of our children and grandchildren is cause for our inner conversion, to re-examine ourselves and to stand together, for that is the true meaning of solidarity.

We are more than drowning islands, we are voices from the peripheries calling out to you in the West to remember your role as stewards of God's creation – calling on you to have the courage to act.

'...For the land is mine. And in all the country you possess, you shall allow a redemption of the land' (Leviticus 25:23-24).

<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/climate-change-the-moral-case-for-christian-actionexecute1/130033.htm>

July 19, 2018

Ireland adopts 100-percent fossil fuel divestment strategy

By Sarah Mac Donald
National Catholic Reporter

Second-worst performing EU member on climate change used cross-party collaboration, church inspiration

Dublin — Ireland made history July 12 when it became the [first country in the world](#) to pass a bill committing the country to the divestment of all of its holdings in fossil fuel companies.

The passing of the [Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill](#) has been hailed by climate action campaigners as a boon to their efforts to pressure other countries to sell off their fossil fuel investments — industries which have been a major contributor to climate change.

The landmark divestment bill is a first among the 195 nations that signed on to the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change in 2015. It requires the [Ireland Strategic Investment Fund](#) to divest all public money from peat, coal, oil and gas companies nationally and internationally "as soon as is practicable." Over 300 million euros is believed to be at stake.

The Ireland Strategic Investment Fund is worth about 8 billion euros, which may seem small compared to a country like Norway with a state fund of 1 trillion euros. But the significant difference is that Ireland has pledged to divest 100 percent from fossil fuels, whereas Norway has [committed to partially divest from fossil fuels](#), targeting some coal companies but maintaining its oil and gas holdings.

The bill before the Irish parliament had cross-party support and was the culmination of more than two years of lobbying by politician [Thomas Pringle](#), an Independent member of parliament representing County Donegal in the northwest of the country. His constituency experienced an extreme weather event in August 2017 when two hours of torrential rain washed away a substantial amount of infrastructure. Over the past 12 months, Ireland has experienced three other unprecedented weather events including [Hurricane Ophelia](#), the [Beast from the East snowstorm](#) and the [current heat wave-induced drought](#). Now that climate change appears to have a direct impact at home, people are worried and want the issue addressed.

Pringle was supported in his initiative by a network of civil society groups, including [Trócaire](#), the Irish bishops' development and emergency aid agency, which has been highlighting and lobbying on climate change for well over a decade. It has seen the impact of climate change firsthand in the developing world where the agency does most of its work.

Lorna Gold, Trócaire's project coordinator on *Laudato Si'*, told NCR that the agency was "absolutely delighted" that Ireland finally is taking a position of leadership on a key aspect of climate policy. But her delight is tempered by the realization that Ireland's recent track record on the environment has been patchy. The [2018 Off Target report](#) published by the Climate Action Network Europe, a major non-governmental coalition working on climate and energy issues, rated Ireland as the second-worst performing European Union member in tackling climate change.

Gold, who is author of the recently published [Climate Generation: Awakening to our Children's Future](#), which documents her personal experiences of climate activism and motherhood, believes Ireland is "at an interesting point in terms of its response to climate change." On one hand is the success of the new bill and on the other is Climate Action Network Europe's report which "placed us just above Poland in terms of our climate commitment — 27 out of 28 countries in Europe."

The government has "played a very astute and deliberate game trying to convince the public that the country is doing something about this issue while its strategy around expansion of the beef

and dairy industry is undermining targets and commitments," she said. "But it is not just the agricultural sector, we need to look at transport and at the lack of retrofitting of houses — we are lagging behind in most areas."

However, Gold also detects a renewed public awareness of climate change over the last two years. She believes the government-instituted [Citizens' Assembly](#), which deliberated on climate change and produced a report backing a robust carbon tax, investment in public transport and a shift away from beef and dairy by the farming industry, has been instrumental in shifting the public's understanding.

"When people are given the right information on this issue and when they are given the time to deliberate on it, they really understand what is happening and want robust measures," she said. "The noises coming out of the political classes now on climate change are starting to shift."

A government committee, which includes Gold and theologian Columban Fr. Sean McDonagh, has been set up to address the outcomes of the Citizens' Assembly, and a national dialogue on climate action aims to address the knowledge gap that exists between citizens and the science on climate change.

But the proof of where Ireland is headed will be in the findings of the [National Mitigation Plan's](#) report because as Gold warns, "talking is cheap — and I think people are genuinely fed up with so much talking about this issue when we can see the impact that it is already having."

Her caution is echoed by theologian Msgr. Dermot Lane, the retired head of the former Mater Dei Institute of Education in Dublin and contributor to the book [Laudato Si': An Irish Response](#). He attended the recent Vatican conference to mark the third anniversary of Pope Francis' environmental encyclical, "*Laudato Si'*, On Care for Our Common Home." The message from scientists at the conference, he told NCR, was "globally we are losing the struggle against climate change. We are not meeting the targets of the 2015 Paris Agreement."

Furthermore, Lane is under no illusions that Ireland is now on top because of the Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill. The country is, rather, "second last in the class, having failed to meet its 2020 targets." In January, Prime Minister Leo Varadkar acknowledged that [Ireland is a climate "laggard"](#) when it comes to climate commitments. Lane added that failure to meet carbon emissions targets will be costly for Ireland as the country will have to [pay EU fines of up to 500 million euros](#) for this negligence.

Though Gold and her Trócaire colleagues were initially "quite skeptical" about the Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill, she ascribes its success to three factors, the first being the precedent set by Trócaire's successful 1990s campaign which pushed the Irish government to divest the national pension reserve from companies linked to landmines.

The second is the current political state of play in Ireland. The country is being run by a minority government that is dependent on cross-party collaboration to survive.

"This bill was a real example of what can be achieved when there is cross-party collaboration," Gold said. "It was cross-party across all the parties in the end. There was nobody left outside of the collaboration on this issue."

The third factor is the growing divestment movement both nationally and internationally as the public is concerned by the proliferation of extreme or freak weather events. In Ireland, that same public is incensed by U.S. president Donald Trump's climate change skepticism, his decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement and his removal of climate scientists from the EPA.

"I think it is having the opposite effect to what he had expected," Gold said. "I think globally it has intensified and focused minds on the need to have a very robust response to climate change."

Gold is currently involved in a project to support the church in Ireland to divest from fossil fuels, "working collaboratively with the bishops' conference and their finance committee to examine what investments they have in fossil fuels and to look towards divestment, hopefully in the near future."

She is also working "very closely with religious orders in Ireland and across the world to divest from fossil fuels." To date, six Irish religious orders have made divestment commitments, and Gold is hopeful that the number will rise significantly in the next few years. So far, 90 Catholic institutions and organizations across the world, including Dayton University, the Diocese of Assisi, Italy, the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland, and the Kiltegan and Columban Fathers, have all publicly committed and signed a divestment pledge.

"It is a growing movement within the church," Gold said.

Lane said that the church in Ireland has been "moving slowly in implementing the papal encyclical but it is moving. The bishops are listening to Trócaire and to the *Laudato Si'* working group of the [Council for Catechetics of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference]."

The church has agreed to adopt a "Season of Creation" in September as a follow-up to the papal visit in August.

"The bishops have agreed to make a connection between the World Meeting of Families and *Laudato Si'*, pointing to the link between the care of the human family and the wider family of God's creation," Lane told NCR. "I do know that the bishops are very seriously considering divesting their funds from fossil fuel, and have reached an agreement to do this in principle, and are now waiting for individual dioceses to take action and sign up to the agreement."

For Gold, Francis' recent comments after a meeting with oil industry executives and his recent remarks at the *Laudato Si'* anniversary conference "have really encouraged us that this issue is at the forefront of Catholic social teaching and that we need to protect the environment for creation."

"That means joining the dots between our actions in the financial and economic sphere and what we do in terms of our care for our common home," she said.

[Sarah Mac Donald is a freelance journalist based in Dublin.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/ireland-adopts-100-percent-fossil-fuel-divestment-strategy>

July 25, 2018

“Amazon of the North”: Canada’s Boreal Forest Could Save the Planet – But Only If Trudeau’s Government Saves It First

By Margie Kelly

Natural Resources Defense Council

Clearcutting Canada’s boreal forest threatens Indigenous Peoples’ rights, the survival of wildlife like the iconic boreal caribou, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s commitment to combat climate change, according to a [new report](#) by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). The “Amazon of the North” stores more carbon than the world’s tropical forests, locking in more carbon than the world releases in three decades of burning fossil fuels and making its continued existence critical for limiting the worst impacts of climate change.

“The significance of Canada’s boreal forest to the survival of the planet cannot be overstated: this ‘Amazon of the North’ is stopping a global climate bomb,” said Anthony Swift, Canada Project Director for NRDC. “Yet every year, more than 1 million acres of intact boreal forest are lost to logging, mining, and oil and gas. For too long, Canada has traded on its reputation as an environmental leader, while gambling with the future of the boreal and the world as we know it. Canada must act now to protect a forest that will help save the planet,” said Swift.

Located just below the Arctic Circle, the boreal crowns the earth’s Northern Hemisphere, accounting for one-third of the world’s forested areas and 1 billion acres of Canadian lands.

Preserving the boreal forest must become a global priority for Canadian federal and provincial governments, as well as U.S. corporate customers and consumers of boreal wood products globally. NRDC, which has worked to protect Canada’s environment alongside Indigenous Peoples for decades, recommends the following steps to protect the boreal:

- Canadian policymakers should partner with Indigenous communities to take immediate action to protect the boreal forest through mandatory and enforceable caribou protections and Indigenous-led management;
- Canada’s federal government should account for logging’s negative climate impacts and address those impacts in its national strategy to limit carbon emissions;
- Corporate customers in the international marketplace – particularly U.S. companies, which purchase eighty-percent of Canada’s boreal forest product exports – should use their purchasing power to urge Canada’s governments to prioritize boreal protection and Indigenous-led land management.

Boreal and Indigenous People's Rights

The boreal forest is home to more than 600 Indigenous communities, whose cultural identities are entwined with the forest. Because of colonial legacies related to land rights and the fact that many remaining commercially viable forests in Canada are located on Indigenous lands, Indigenous Peoples often suffer the worst of Canada's unsustainable logging. Despite logging's devastating impacts, many Nations and communities are largely excluded from decision making about development in their territories. However, to protect their homelands, many Indigenous Peoples are leading land-use planning initiatives, including protected area development, frameworks for caribou management and others that have become models for sustainable economic development across Canada.

"The Boreal forest is home to over six hundred Indigenous Communities who have maintained and evolved in a balanced relationship with this vital ecosystem for over ten thousand years," said Valerie Courtois, Director of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative. "As Indigenous Peoples, we have the cultural responsibility of ensuring its health and vitality for future generations, and as Nations, our Rights and Titles need to be recognized and upheld."

Chief Christian Awashish of the Atikamekw First Nation of Opitciwan said, "It is important to understand that we are not against economic development nor do we oppose forestry. However, we believe that the management of the natural resources within our ancestral territory, Nitaskinan, must be carried out only under our consent, at our own pace, and according to our values. The boreal forest is our pantry; respect for our Mother Earth is our first priority. The preservation of traditional practices such as hunting, fishing and gathering is critical to our people and to our culture. We believe that it is possible to find the right balance between extracting natural resources and respecting our cultures, without disturbing the delicate balance of our territory."

Boreal and Climate

Canada's boreal forest is extremely effective at storing carbon when forested areas remain undisturbed and soils are intact - there is as much carbon stored in its trees and soils as is in all the world's recoverable oil reserves combined. But when the forest and soils are heavily logged and degraded, greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere and the forest's ability to continue storing carbon is hampered. Canada says it wants to be a climate leader, but it's unclear how destroying one of the world's largest natural carbon storehouses will achieve this.

Between 1996 and 2015, more than 28 million acres of boreal forest were logged, an area roughly the size of Ohio. Clearcutting in the boreal forest is undermining Canada's efforts to combat climate change, by adding annual greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those of 5.5 million vehicles to the country's already accounted-for emissions. While Prime Minister Trudeau and his Environment Minister describe themselves as [crusaders](#) against the worst impacts of climate change, an analysis by NRDC concluded that each year, clearcutting accounts for 12 percent of the annual emissions Canada agreed to cut by 2030 under the Paris Agreement.

Boreal and Wildlife

Clearcut logging removes nearly all trees from an area, degrading intact forests and leaving ranges greatly diminished for species like the American marten, Canada lynx, wolverine and boreal caribou. Logging's impact is best illustrated by the decline of the boreal caribou, an "indicator species" for the health of the forest more broadly. Boreal caribou have declined significantly due to habitat loss, particularly from logging, and now occupy only half their historic range. Of Canada's 51 boreal caribou ranges, only 14 are currently considered sufficient to support self-sustaining populations. However, not a single Canadian province or territory has finalized a conservation plan to protect boreal caribou habitat, despite the federal government's call to do so under the Species at Risk Act. Without policies that protect the critical habitat for this species, scientists and government reports predict that boreal caribou populations will continue to decline.

Boreal and the International Marketplace

International demand for wood products, especially demand from the U.S., is a major driver of the Canadian forest industry's push into previously undisturbed boreal forest. The international market accounts for more than half of the revenue Canada brings in from the industry, with two-thirds of this coming from the U.S. Much of boreal clearcutting ends up in throwaway [landfill](#) products like tissue, toilet paper, and newsprint.

Since last fall, 21 companies with a combined annual revenue of more than \$140 billion [have written](#) to provincial and federal government officials urging action in partnership with Indigenous Peoples to protect boreal caribou habitat. These companies voiced their desire for "materials that are free of controversy and have been acquired through sustainable harvesting." Today, companies [continue to press](#) federal and provincial governments to fulfill their obligations to protect the boreal caribou.

For a French translation of this press release, please go [here](#).

Additional Resources

- [Cutting It Close: How Unsustainable Logging in Canada's Boreal Forest Threatens Indigenous Rights, Wildlife, and the Global Climate](#)
- [NRDC Report Calls on Canada to Protect the Boreal Forest](#)
- [NRDC: Save the Canadian Boreal](#)

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 3 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world's natural resources, public health, and the environment. NRDC has offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Bozeman, MT, and Beijing. Visit us at www.nrdc.org and follow us on Twitter [@NRDC](#).

Media Contacts: Margie Kelly, mkelly@nrdc.org, 312-651-7935

July 26, 2018

Professor awarded grant for ground-breaking work on the Christian ethics of farmed animal welfare

University of Chester

A University of Chester Professor has been awarded a £450,000 research grant to develop his work engaging churches and policy makers in relation to farmed animal welfare.

Professor David Clough, who is Professor of Theological Ethics at the University, has been awarded the grant by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for a three-year project on the Christian ethics of farmed animal welfare. He will be working in partnership with major UK churches and a number of organisations with interests in animal welfare. The project will produce the first academic book on the Christian ethics of farmed animal welfare and a framework for policy for Christian organisations. It will offer support for policy implementation as well as offering briefings to UK government policy-makers.

Professor Clough is a leading international authority on the place of animals in Christian theology and ethics. He is the founder of [Creature Kind](#) which was established to engage churches and other Christian organisations in thinking about the implications of Christian faith for the treatment of animals, with a special focus on farmed animal welfare. He also recently launched a new [#DefaultVeg](#) project encouraging organisations to adopt a simple and cost-free policy for events catering with benefits for the environment, humans, and animals, with a number of University of Chester Departments and Faculties leading the way.

Through this grant, David will work as part of a small inter-disciplinary research team with Dr David Grumett (New College, The University of Edinburgh), Dr Siobhan Mullan (School of Veterinary Sciences, Bristol University), Dr Margaret Adam as a postdoctoral researcher, and Dr Paul Hurley (University of Southampton). The partnership will also include the following organisations:

- Church of England
- Roman Catholic Church
- Church of Scotland
- Church in Wales
- Methodist Church
- United Reformed Church
- Church Investors Group
- Compassion in World Farming
- Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals
- Catholic Concern for Animals

- Pasture-Fed Livestock Association
- Pan-Orthodox Concern for Animals
- Quaker Concern for Animals
- Veterinary Christian Fellowship.

The project will present its findings to the Church Commissioners and offer briefings to the Church of England bishops in the House of Lords, and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Animals. Three US observers on the project (Dr Charlie Camosy, Dr Matt Halteman, and Dr Grace Kao) will advise on the feasibility of a US successor research project on the same model.

Professor Clough said: “I am extremely pleased to have been awarded this grant, which comes at a time of a growing Christian recognition that concern for animals is a matter of Christian faith. In the 19th Century, Christians were at the forefront of campaigns against cruelty towards animals, and they now have the chance to play the same role in challenging the cruelties inflicted on farmed animals in industrialised systems. Through this project we hope to contribute to public policy debates about farmed animal welfare at a crucial moment: the question of how animal agriculture will be regulated post-Brexit.”

For further information about Professor David Clough, please visit: <https://www.chester.ac.uk/departments/trs/staff/clough>

<http://www.chester.ac.uk/node/43099>

August 1, 2018

Tribal Members Are Already Scrutinizing Keystone XL Environmental Review

By Yessenia Funes
Earther

Construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline is set to begin in 2019, but before then, the public has a chance to comment on the new [environmental assessment](#) that the State Department released Monday. And so far, some tribal members and groups aren't loving its conclusion that the pipeline would have minimal impacts on land, groundwater, and environmental justice.

The federal government has taken a second stab at the environmental review process after President Donald Trump's [commitment](#) to pushing through the crude oil project as well as the new route the Nebraska Public Utilities Commission [approved](#) last year.

That route—dubbed the Mainline Alternative Route—follows the already-existing Keystone Pipeline more closely. The assessment says that while there's potential for oil spills, the developer has response plans in place to prevent any environmental damage. However, the original Keystone Pipeline spilled [more than 400,000 gallons of oil](#) last year.

Overall, the 300-page assessment makes the project sound like a net positive with minimal downsides for the communities that would live near it, including the 67 Native American tribes. And that's what opponents of the pipeline have taken issue with.

"Here's the largest aquifer in the world, and you want to put crude oil in it and consider it a minor impact?" Chandra Mechelle Walker, a member of the Omaha Nation in Nebraska who chairs on the state's Native Caucus for the Democratic Party, told Earther.

She's talking about the [Ogallala Aquifer](#), which covers more than 170,000 square miles from South Dakota all the way to Texas. The underground natural reservoir provides water for an [estimated](#) two million people, as well as [20 percent](#) of the wheat, corn, cotton, and cattle the U.S. produces. Overuse is already threatening the aquifer and its water quality. Any contamination would just worsen that.

The assessment said the State Department reached out to all 67 tribes along the proposed route to include their perspectives. However, the report said only two responded to these consultation requests.

Nicolette Slagle, the research director and deputy director at Honor the Earth, said other pipeline project developers have used loose language around tribal consultation. But sending a letter or making a call doesn't count as tribal consultation, she told Earther. Tribal consultation means holding community meetings on the reservation and meeting with community members and tribal leaders.

Walker was also concerned tribes weren't properly consulted. She pointed to the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, one of the 67 tribes with land along the route, which put out a [resolution](#) last year against the pipeline noting its alignment with other First Nations in the U.S. and Canada.

Though the report found 30 archaeological sites and four properties of cultural significance to indigenous peoples, Slagle wouldn't be surprised if there were more. She also said it's not individual sites that matter to tribes.

"Indigenous folks have a much different way of looking at and relating to the landscape," she said. "One of the problems that comes in when you start talking about protection of sacred places for tribal communities and indigenous communities is that western regulators tend to want to have specific landmarks whereas, from an indigenous perspective, the relationship that they have with the environment is much more broader than that."

Much of the land along the Keystone XL proposed route through holds cultural significance to tribal members, but there's no way for them to measure that in a way the federal government will recognize.

Former President Barack Obama [rejected](#) the project before leaving office, which offers a little bit hope amid this chaos. If environmentalists won this battle once, perhaps they can win again even if the Trump administration has made its stance on oil and gas development [pretty clear](#).

The State Department will soon open a 30-day public comment period for this environmental assessment. Indigenous opponents will have theirs ready.

<https://earth.gizmodo.com/tribal-members-are-already-scrutinizing-keystone-xl-env-1828010617>

August 2, 2018

Canadian ecumenical document embraces Christian concern for environment

By Michael Swan, Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Toronto — Canada's two largest churches, which represent two-thirds of Canadian Christians, have jointly declared that climate change and ecological degradation are central, enduring concerns for Christians.

The declaration is contained in "The Hope Within Us," a document released July 23 from the Roman Catholic-United Church of Canada Dialogue in Canada.

"We claim that the divine presence permeates all creation, holds all together in a dynamic relationship and calls us beyond our human-centered perspective into a consciousness that affirms and respects all life and all creation," it said. "The acceleration of our technology, the rapacious ethic of progress and the greed of our economic and political systems are today wreaking havoc upon the environment and humanity."

The ecumenical document marks 40 years of dialogue between the churches. The 22-page statement draws heavily on Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home." On the United Church side, "The Hope Within Us" leans on the 2006 teaching document "Song of Faith."

But the ecumenical statement also relies on the desert fathers, medieval mystics and Scripture to make its case.

"Early church theologians saw the interrelationship of the Trinity through the dynamic life of creation itself," wrote the 21 dialogue participants, including two Catholic bishops. "In St. Bonaventure's trinitarian theology, every creature is a self-expression of God, and the inner structure of every creature and all creation can be said to reflect the trinitarian footprint."

"It is good theology," said Dennis Patrick O'Hara, director of the Elliott Allen Institute for Theology and Ecology at St. Michael's College in Toronto. "(It) accurately and faithfully reflects the current discussion at the forefront of the Roman Catholic and United Church traditions."

That churches are working together on climate change is particularly significant.

"Let's be serious. If you're dealing with a planetary crisis, as we are, this is not a time for quibbling about barriers between us. It's a time to be finding common voices for the common good of our common home," O'Hara said.

The most significant common ground at play is how both Catholic social teaching and the United Church's social gospel tradition recognize the importance of social sin, said Dominican Father Prakash Lohale, director of ecumenical and interfaith affairs for the Archdiocese of Toronto.

"It's not so much something to feel guilty about, but because we can make that conclusion that creation also is holy -- Pope Francis talks about it as a sacrament -- then I think the concept of social sin could make people conscious," Lohale said.

Ecumenical dialogue provides an opportunity for religion to engage with the most important questions of our time, he added.

"We have long traditions of schisms and differences in theology," he said. "But it's like Pope Francis said during his visit to the World Council of Churches in Geneva. 'Let not our differences stop us.'"

The statement should make it easier for Christians of all stripes to think about ecological issues as matters of faith, said Gail Allen, United Church staff support for the dialogue.

"There are people of faith who are struggling to think through these issues and just want to do it out of their faith," Allen said.

To help parishes and congregations act on the new document, it includes a liturgy for use during Earth Hour, which has been observed in recent years at 8:30 p.m., March 30, in each time zone worldwide.

Allen recognizes that Canadians have conflicting views and conflicting commitments when it comes to climate change. But Christians who make a living in the Alberta oil sands should not feel they are under attack, she said.

"Any move toward a different way of being does need to take into account how we are going to all work together as communities to find new possibilities for people's livelihoods that will be less harmful to the climate," she said.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/canadian-ecumenical-document-embraces-christian-concern-environment>

August 2, 2018

On Climate Change, Faith-Based Shareholders Take the Lead

By Sarah Brodsky
Impactivate

Drawing on many faith communities' belief in the importance of stewarding the earth and caring for its inhabitants, faith-based shareholders have taken strides to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change by engaging corporations to take notice of the scientific and financial case for reducing climate risks.

In the 2018 proxy season, faith-based groups put forward several resolutions requesting more proactive and transparent policies regarding climate change. Here are four that represent the range of work being done by these investors.

Valero Energy Corporation

Several faith-based shareholders, including the US Presbyterian Church, Mercy Investment Services, and Dignity Health, urged Valero Energy Corporation to [develop a business plan](#) detailing how international efforts to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement would affect its business model and financial outlook. The resolution noted that keeping global warming under 2 degrees Celsius (as mandated by the agreement) is predicted to decrease oil demand by up to 23% over 15 years. This would pose a significant challenge for the world's largest independent oil refiner. In a win for faith-based activism, shareholders withdrew this resolution when the company agreed to their request.

Cisco Systems, Inc.

The Unitarian Universalist Association spearheaded a resolution asking Cisco Systems, Inc., to [disclose its lobbying activities](#) related to the climate. Activists are concerned that this tech leader's payments to trade associations, which could fund lobbying campaigns, might jeopardize its reputation if they become public. For example, the resolution pointed out that Cisco is a member of the Chamber of Commerce, which took the EPA to court in opposition to the Clean Power Plan.

Shareholders requested that Cisco reveal all of its trade memberships and contributions to campaigns so that stakeholders can assess risks to its long-term financial prospects and public image. They also asked that it report on the decision-making process that determines lobbying contributions.

Emerson Electric

Shareholders from multiple faith communities, including Friends Fiduciary Corporation, Glenmary Home Missioners, and Community Church of New York, petitioned Emerson Electric to [adopt time-bound goals](#) for reducing its greenhouse-gas emissions and to report on its plans to reach those goals.

The resolution also argued that most companies see higher returns on carbon-reduction investments than on corporate capital investments as a whole, suggesting that setting emissions-reductions targets would be a financially sound move.

United States Steel Corporation

Mercy Investment Services and Portico Benefit Services asked United States Steel Corporation to [set quantitative goals](#) for lowering its greenhouse-gas emissions in accordance with the Paris Agreement targets and to report on how it plans to meet them. Given that the steel industry produces 7% of greenhouse-gas emissions due to human activity, shareholders argued that the company has a responsibility to reduce emissions. The resolution also noted that many of US Steel's peers, including ArcelorMittal and ThyssenKrupp, have announced plans to limit their greenhouse-gas emissions.

With these resolutions, shareholders are encouraging companies to develop a plan, outline measurable goals, and disclose data for environmental issues that could impact the bottom line. If businesses don't take proactive steps to address environmental risks, they may start hearing from faith-based shareholders.

<https://www.impactinvestingexchange.com/on-climate-change-faith-based-shareholders-take-the-lead/>

August 3, 2018

Caritas Philippines lights up poor communities with renewable energy

By Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Manila, Philippines — The social action arm of the Philippine Catholic bishops' conference is doubling efforts to promote the use of renewable energy to light up poor communities around the country.

Caritas Philippines has partnered with a local solar power system provider to accelerate the country's transition to renewable energy and to facilitate the "eradication of energy poverty," ucanews.com reported.

Of the country's 85 dioceses, 43 already are in the process of installing and fully employing solar panel systems as alternative sources of power.

"We are set to bring this renewable power system to far-flung and off-grid communities," said Jing Rey Henderson, communications officer at Caritas Philippines.

Henderson said the organization is coordinating with local power distributors in the provinces to help facilitate the storage of generated solar power and its distribution to communities.

Caritas Philippines inaugurated July 31 three pilot project sites in Sorsogon Diocese's cathedral, which also houses clergy and a minor seminary.

"This is a clear message to everyone that the church is serious in its energy campaign amid the failings of the government to implement the renewal energy law," Bishop Arturo Bastes of Sorsogon said.

Archbishop Rolando Tria Tirona, national director of Caritas Philippines, said the inauguration of the pilot sites is a "historic event" and the country's "concrete response" to Pope Francis' call to care for our common home.

In March, the Philippine bishops entered a partnership with WeGen Distributed Energy Philippines to install solar power services, with no upfront cash requirements, on churches, religious facilities, schools and off-grid communities.

Chris Cantal, the company's associate business development manager, said the firm saw the partnership as "an opportunity to help the church realize the message of Pope Francis' encyclical, "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home."

"As Catholics, we are called to act on the how we could assist Filipinos to minimize dependence on dirty energy," Cantal said.

Philippine Catholic leaders have been vocal in their opposition to "dirty energy sources" that they claimed only benefit large corporations and businesses.

Fr. Edwin Gariguez, executive director of the bishops' social action secretariat, said the church always considers coal as an energy source to be "dirty and destructive."

There are 28 existing coal-fired power plants in the country. Despite strong opposition from environmental groups, the power plants continue to operate, providing about 32 percent of Philippines' electricity, according to Energy and Natural Resource Market Reports.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/caritas-philippines-lights-poor-communities-renewable-energy>

August 5, 2018

Myanmar's indigenous people fight 'fortress' conservation

By Rina Chandran
Reuters

BANGKOK (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Saw Ma Bu's family has lived in the mountainous forests of Myanmar's Kayin state for generations, farming and fishing in the Salween river, even as a decades-long armed conflict raged in the region.

Now, he says, they fear their way of life is under threat as the government declares swathes of forest in indigenous Karen homelands as protected areas.

Saw Ma Bu and other community leaders have drawn up their own plan to conserve the forest, preserve their traditions and livelihoods, and be a model for indigenous lands elsewhere in the country.

Under their proposal, the Karen people would manage the Salween Peace Park, a 5,200 sq km (2,008 sq mile) area on Myanmar's eastern frontier with Thailand.

"The Peace Park is built on the culture and traditions of the indigenous Karen people. Conservation and coexistence with the environment is a fact of life for us, and essential for our survival," said Saw Ma Bu.

Myanmar officials have not yet agreed to their proposal.

Saw Ma Bu has seen protected areas uprooting indigenous people elsewhere in the country, and is keeping a close watch on neighboring Tanintharyi region, where Karen people also live.

Civil society groups there have opposed the creation of large protected areas, saying they could force people from their homes and prevent those who fled fighting from returning.

Saw Ma Bu said the Peace Park would ensure that his community retains the rights to their traditional land.

"In the government's plans for conservation there is no recognition of the territorial rights of our customary land and forest, or our traditional agricultural methods," he said.

His concerns are mirrored amongst indigenous groups around the world, according to the advocacy organization Rights and Research International (RRI).

Indigenous and local communities own more than half the world's land under customary rights. Yet they only have secure legal rights to 10 percent, RRI said.

The rapid growth of protected areas from Peru to Indonesia is exacerbating their vulnerability: more than 250,000 people in 15 countries were evicted because of protected areas from 1990 to 2014, according to data compiled by RRI.

CAREFUL NEGOTIATION

Land under protected areas tripled between 1980 and 2005, and as much as 80 percent of those areas overlapped with indigenous land, RRI said in a report published in June.

This “creates a near-constant state of confrontation and potential for conflict and violence,” including evictions and killings, said Janis Alcorn, a co-author of the report.

“Indigenous people and local communities have been conserving their land and forests for centuries. But the rise of ‘fortress conservation’ is forcing them from their homes, hurting people and forests alike,” she said.

In Kayin state, where the Karen National Union (KNU) fought for autonomy for more than six decades, the conflict has killed hundreds and forced tens of thousands of people from their homes, rights groups say.

The KNU and the Myanmar government reached a ceasefire agreement in 2012, ending their armed confrontation, although relations remain tense.

Government plans for protected areas in the region could undermine the fragile peace by jeopardizing the livelihoods and well-being of Karen people, said Hsa Moo at the Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN).

That is one reason the Peace Park is so important, she added.

Community organizers have held consultations with the nearly 10,000 households within the proposed park, and have mapped their customary land and community forests with “careful negotiation and consensus”, she said.

“It is our hope the Myanmar government will recognize that respecting indigenous and community rights, and strengthening local livelihoods is a step towards achieving meaningful and equitable peace,” she said.

A government official pointed out that a law passed this year enables indigenous people and villagers to apply for a permit to establish a Community Conserved Protected Area.

“Engagement with the local communities lies at the very heart of safeguarding key biodiversity areas,” Win Naing Tha, director of Myanmar’s forests department, said in an e-mail.

“Local communities will be active participants of community forestry and promoting community conserved areas,” he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

RIDGE TO REEF

That promise is being tested as the government launches its ambitious Ridge to Reef Project, which covers about one third of Tanintharyi region and overlaps with some areas that the KNU says are contested.

The \$21 million project covers 1.4 million hectares (5,405 sq miles) and includes forests, mangroves, islands and marine systems.

Officials say that declaring the area as protected is essential to conserve threatened wildlife, and mitigate damage from deforestation, illegal logging and industrial development.

Campaigners say the protected area proposals were made without the free, prior and informed consent of communities.

The protected area could make farming illegal, prevent refugees from returning, and uproot more than 16,000 indigenous people, including many Karen, according to the advocacy group Conservation Alliance Tanawthari (CAT)..

Last month, CAT submitted a formal complaint to the United Nations and the Global Environment Facility - which has funded projects in developing countries since it was established at a U.N. conference in 1992 - asking that they suspend the plan.

“In the name of conservation, the local people will lose their ancestral lands and livelihoods,” CAT said.

CAT has called for a moratorium on establishing protected areas until customary rights of indigenous people are recognized, and a comprehensive peace deal is reached with KNU.

An official from the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP), which is backing the project, said “a wide range of consultations” were held, and that feedback had been incorporated.

“The project will identify and realize opportunities for co-managing with local communities,” said Peter Batchelor, of UNDP in Myanmar.

Campaigners say they will continue to protest the project, and push for recognition for Salween Peace Park.

“By supporting indigenous communities to preserve their cultural heritage and secure tenure claims over land and forest, conservation can take place with, rather than in spite of us,” said KESAN’s Hsa Moo.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-landrights-environment/myanmars-indigenous-people-fight-fortress-conservation-idUSKBN1KR00G>

August 6, 2018

New 'Church of the Wild' explores God through barefoot exploration of the outdoors

By Hannah Natanson
Washington Post

The sound of drumming filtered through the trees and called the people from their cars.

Toting folding chairs and slathered in bug spray, they came from the parking lot — some young, some old; some in pairs, some alone; many in Texas, a few barefoot. Without speaking, they set their chairs in a circle in a leafy clearing in McLean's Turkey Run Park. They grabbed drums laid out on a patterned blanket, gripped the instruments between their knees and joined in the pounding.

“Your hands know what to do,” intoned professional drum circle facilitator Katy Gaughan. “Just drum! There is no right way and no wrong way.”

On a hot and muggy Sunday, Church of the Wild was about to begin.

The church, which meets once a month in parks across the District, Maryland and Virginia, draws about 50 congregants. Services, presided over by the Rev. Sarah Anders, typically run an hour and a half. Worshipers drum, sing and listen to recitations of poetry in an effort to connect with nature and fulfill the church's stated goal: honoring “the mutual indwelling of the Divine with the Earth and all of its beings.”

Anders doesn't preach a sermon — instead, attendees wander through their surroundings in total silence for about half an hour.

“We don't say the G-o-d word a lot,” Anders said. “The emphasis is on God as a universal force. . . . Our mission is to help people come more into their spirits and their hearts.”

Anders established the church in partnership with Beth Norcross, founding director of the Center for Spirituality in Nature and an adjunct faculty member at the Wesley Theological Seminary in the District. Church of the Wild met for the first time in April.

Participants form a circle as they conclude their service at the Church of the Wild gathering at Turkey Run Park in McLean. (Dayna Smith for The Washington Post)

Anders describes her congregation as a nondenominational Christian church, but says she draws on aspects of “all religions” — for example, services sometimes include readings from Jewish texts.

She and Norcross welcome agnostics. They say they hope the nontraditional atmosphere will allow them to better explore their faith and perhaps discover God.

Anders was ordained in the United Church of Christ, a liberal mainline Protestant denomination, and preached for a time at Rockville United Church in Maryland. She quit that job last year. Church of the Wild doesn't pay her (or anyone) a salary, so she earns a living by giving guest sermons and leading religious workshops.

Anders said she left Rockville United because she couldn't bear “tripping over” typical church language one minute longer. “God as a ‘He,’ people as ‘sinners’ — I couldn't sit and hear it anymore,” Anders said. She also wanted to spend her Sundays outdoors; sitting in a sanctuary felt confining.

On Sunday, all anyone could hear for several minutes was banging. Then Gaughan stepped in to organize her charges, leading the group in a rhythm meant to imitate the beating of a heart.

“Heart — beat — space, heart — beat — space,” Gaughan instructed them. “Here we are, one heart beating together.”

One woman nodded and removed her shoes, still drumming. Another closed her eyes.

Gaughan led the drummers to a crescendo — “We’re in the woods, you can be loud!” — before quieting them and ceding the circle to Anders.

“Our theme this month is spiritual listening with nature — not to nature, with nature, and with the other beings in nature,” Anders said. “We find that as we honor the divine in the Earth and all its beings, we become more compassionate.”

Sweating together at Turkey Run, congregants listened by practicing deep breathing. They listened by meditating for several minutes, guided into the subconscious by Anders. They listened as someone played a Native American instrument.

They listened even when they stood, grasped hands and repeatedly sang the chorus to the Alicia Keys song “We Are Here.” Anders said Keys’s lyrics — particularly the line, “We are here for all of us” — perfectly expresses the ideology of Church of the Wild. Congregants worship outdoors on behalf of “all of us,” including neighbors human and nonhuman.

It’s an idea that appears to be picking up support across the continent. There’s now a Wild Church Network that connects 15 outdoor churches from Texas to California to Canada. “It’s really a phenomenon,” Norcross said. “We’re one of many.”

In Virginia, Sunday’s sermon kicked off when Anders bid the group to “open your eyes and begin your wandering.” She invited them to “lean up” against vines and trunks — though “not that one,” given its wrapping of poison ivy.

Worshippers rose and dispersed. Some marched purposefully along forest paths; others walked slowly and deliberately toward nothing in particular.

For the next 20 minutes, no one spoke or made a sound beyond the occasional snapping of a twig. One woman took off her sandals and trod barefoot through the grass. A man in a red bandanna stood face-to-face with a tree and locked eyes with its trunk. Another man climbed a nearby picnic table, lay on his back and stared up into the green canopy, unblinking.

A woman in a pink shirt approached a small tree, leaned her forehead against its trunk and closed her eyes. She remained there for several minutes, snapping her chewing gum.

After the service, congregants chatted and snacked on ice pops and crackers doled out from a portable cooler. Milling among the others, 50-year-old Smithsonian employee Kelly Richmond said she has never been into organized religion, but Church of the Wild provides a way to see

and appreciate the magic of nature while avoiding all that talk about a male God and the “power of the patriarchy.” Asked whether she believes in God, Richmond said she needs more information.

Kristina Byrne, a freelance writer who lives in Silver Spring and does consider herself religious, said she has come to every Church of the Wild service since its launch in April. Cradling her 2-year-old son Adisa on her hip, Byrne, 34, said that she has been worshiping by walking around the woods long before Church of the Wild began.

“To me, it’s like the woods and God are the same thing,” she said. “So it’s nice to see groups of people doing what I’ve always done.”

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/08/06/no-sermons-at-this-church-congregants-wander-silent-and-barefoot-through-nature-at-church-of-the-wild/>

August 8, 2018

This man powers his whole house, plus two cars, with the sun

By Samantha Harrington
Yale Climate Connections

His faith motivated him to go solar.

Listen to the audio recording of this story here:

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2018/08/man-powers-house-two-cars-with-solar/>

Three years ago, Arkansas resident Terry Tremwel built an ultra-efficient solar-powered home. He was motivated by more than a desire to save on electricity. He was also driven by his Christian faith.

Tremwel: “When we burn fossil fuels, when we abuse nature, when we abuse creation, we’re working against God’s will for the world, which is to have this idyllic garden in which we can commune with God. One tool for restoring that relationship with the ecosystem, with the world, with the cosmos, is to reduce carbon emissions.”

Tremwel’s large home was designed to be as energy-efficient as possible. It’s tightly insulated, and south-facing windows allow winter sun to warm the house. And its electricity comes from solar power.

Tremwel: “The solar panels on the roof on a net-annual basis provide enough energy for not only all of the home’s operations, but the two electric cars that my wife and I have.”

Tremwel says he gives tours and shows off his zero-dollar electricity bills when people visit. Through his example, he hopes to inspire others to protect and restore God's creation.

Listen to the audio recording of this story here:

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2018/08/man-powers-house-two-cars-with-solar/>

August 8, 2018

Cardinal shares message of 'Laudato Si' at Ghana World Youth Day event

By Damian Awevor, Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Accra, Ghana — A top Vatican official urged young people at a local World Youth Day gathering to protect the planet and actively live the teachings of Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment.

Expressing concern for the accelerating degradation of Earth, Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, told 3,000 Ghanaians Aug. 5 to learn, know and spread the message of the 2015 papal teaching.

Turkson returned to his native Ghana for the country's fourth local observance of World Youth Day. The event allowed young people unable to travel to the Catholic Church's global World Youth Day in January in Panama to gather in their homeland for a celebration.

Emphasizing that Earth is like a mother to humans, Turkson called for deeper respect and more concrete steps to protect the planet during the event's closing ceremony. He also appealed for greater attention to the needs of poor and disadvantaged people.

The cardinal also addressed the importance of the need to change lifestyles to reduce environmental abuse. He noted that Pope Francis acknowledges that environmental awareness is growing as the world better understands the impact of the damage being done to Earth and all life on the planet.

The pope, he said, remains hopeful about the possibility of reversing the trend of environmental abuse as people adopt the encyclical's teachings.

The cardinal explained to the young Ghanaians that the full title of the encyclical, "Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home," was inspired by the invocation of St. Francis of Assisi, "Praise be to you my Lord," in his Canticle of the Creatures.

Climate change, he said, is a growing concern because it affects everyone and that the well-being of future generations is at stake.

He noted that scientific consensus holds that human activities have led to global warming, which has caused climates to change as shown through now unpredictable rainfall patterns, the extinction of some plant and animal species and the disappearance of islands and atolls under rising seas.

To save the earth and environment from destruction, he called for an end to the felling of trees at current rates. He also advocated for the reintroduction of the Arbor Day celebration in Ghana and elsewhere to encourage the planting of trees.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/cardinal-shares-message-laudato-si-ghana-world-youth-day-event>

August 13, 2018

Ecology monks in Thailand seek to end environmental suffering

By Kiley Price
Mongabay

- *At a time when Pope Francis is calling upon religious leaders to step up as environmental advocates, Thai Buddhist monks are answering the call. Through rituals like tree ordinations, monks are integrating Buddhist principles into the environmental movement in order to garner support from their followers and encourage sustainable practices.*
- *Although Buddhism is typically a religion famed for its detachment from society, ecology monks believe that their religion is inherently tied to nature.*
- *With such an immense amount of influence in villages throughout Thailand, Buddhist monks are utilizing their position to add a unique moral dimension to the environmental movement. However, rituals alone are not enough.*

As development in Thailand is increasing, so is deforestation. Acres of forests are cleared for contract farming, habitats are torn down to make room for new factories, and soil is eroded, causing massive flooding during the rainy season.

But amid the environmental wreckage, some trees remain untouched. These trees are wrapped in iconic bright orange robes and deemed sacred, protected from harm and destruction. These trees have been ordained as monks.

At a time when [Pope Francis is calling upon religious leaders](#) to step up as environmental advocates, Thai Buddhist monks are answering the call. Through rituals like tree ordinations, some monks in Thailand are integrating Buddhist principles into the environmental movement in order to garner support from their followers and encourage sustainable practices.

Dr. Susan Darlington, professor of anthropology and Asian studies at Hampshire College in the U.S. and author of the book [*The Ordination of a Tree*](#), explains that protecting trees is a form of merit-making, an important practice in Buddhism. By accumulating merit through performing good deeds, Buddhists are ensuring a better next life and taking a step closer to reaching enlightenment and, ultimately, Nirvana.

“Making merit is extremely important for Thai Buddhists,” Dr. Darlington said. “They see [tree ordination ceremonies] as an act of making merit, which can help with rebirth and, in some cases, having a better life now.”

One of the primary goals in the Buddhist religion is to end suffering, and the forests of Thailand are certainly suffering.

“There are places in Northern Thailand, particularly in Nan Province, where there has been a lot of deforestation, so the watersheds areas fill the water with mud, silt, and pesticide runoff causing more severe flooding in the rainy season and more severe drought in the dry season,” said Gordon Congdon, the Conservation Program Manager for WWF-Thailand. “In many ways, climate change is amplifying problems that are already existing.”

Leaders of Society

With [over 90 percent](#) of the Thai population practicing Buddhism, monks hold an influential role as leaders to whom people look for guidance in all aspects of life.

“They become the leader that people would trust,” said Dr. Chaya Vaddhanaphuti, a geography professor at Chiang Mai University whose PhD studies focused on climate change. “If I asked the farmers who they would choose to trust between government officers and the monks, they would choose the latter.”

With such an immense amount of influence in villages throughout Thailand, monks are utilizing their position to add a unique moral dimension to the environmental movement. However, rituals alone are not enough.

Although Buddhism is typically a religion famed for its detachment from society, ecology monks believe that their religion is inherently tied to nature. Buddhist monks like Phrakhu Ajan Somkit, who is based in Nan Province in northern Thailand where deforestation is an issue of major concern, are entering the political sphere to consult with government officials on environmental initiatives and rights for rural farmers. Other monks, like Phrakhu Win Mektripop, an ecology monk based in Bangkok, are trying to find more sustainable solutions to everyday problems by implementing solar panels in temples and helping villagers create cheap huts out of mud and natural materials.

“When the Buddha was born, he was born under the tree. He was enlightened under the tree. His first sermon was under the tree. We can see that most of his life was related to the forest,” said Phra Win. With a master’s degree in environmental economics from Chulalongkorn University, Phra Win understands how important agriculture is to the rural population of Thailand.

As Thailand [shifted from a low-income to an upper-income society](#) in less than a generation, however, sustainability hasn't exactly been the focus of the country's economic development. For instance, big companies like CP All Public, which [owns over 10,000 7-Eleven stores](#) in Thailand, are taking advantage of the rapid pace of growth by contracting rural farmers to mass-produce monocrops like maize and rice.

"They plant corn, they harvest it, they sell it to the big company and earn just about enough to pay off their debt," said Congdon. "It creates this vicious cycle of dependency on the large companies and the farmers never get ahead, which leads to more and more deforestation."

Seeing no other options, these farmers continue unsustainable practices that are stripping the soil of valuable nutrients and plunging them deeper into debt. However, ecology monks are working to provide an alternative that is beneficial to both the environment and the people.

Education

Another of the most harmful environmental issues in Thailand is simply a lack of knowledge.

"When I lived with the farmers during my PhD studies, they never used the term climate change," said Dr. Vaddhanaphuti. "However, they knew that the climate had changed from how it was affecting their farms."

In order to help teach rural farmers about the environment, Phrakhu Sangkom Thanapanyo Khunsuri, a prominent ecology monk based in Chiang Mai, developed an alternative farming school through his temple in Chonburi called the Maab-Euang Meditation Center for Sufficiency Economy. With 49 full-time students this year, Phra Sangkom mixes Buddhist concepts of personal reflection and a theory called "sufficiency economy." This theory was developed by the previous Thai king, Bhumibol Adulyadej, and encourages subsistence farming, self-sufficiency, and a detachment from material goods.

Along with teaching classes at his school and working in the field, Phra Sangkom often travels throughout Surin and Chiang Mai on speaking tours to bring his philosophy directly to the people. Each speech typically has over 100 attendees, he says.

"If the people understand that the jungle gives them oxygen, water, good food, medicine, and clothes, do you think they are going to help protect it?" Phra Sangkom asked as he gestured to his own farm, which was filled with mangoes, bananas, rice, and more. "Of course!"

Enemies and Allies

Ecology monks like Phra Sangkom have been marked as leading environmental advocates in Thailand, but some have also been marked with a target on their back.

As their environmental influence spreads throughout Thailand, monks are helping to obtain more community forest rights for indigenous people and farmers, which takes land away from both the government and logging and oil companies. Some monks have been prosecuted by the Thai

government for their controversial activism. Others have been assassinated, like [Phrakhu Supoj Suvacano](#), an ecology monk involved in trying to prevent the land around a meditation center in Chiang Mai from being converted into a tangerine farm.

Even in the face of these threats, many ecology monks continue their work, which has started to receive help and support from other outlets, like local universities and NGOs.

“We are figuring out how we can bring the Buddhists who are just sitting and meditating out into the world to deal with the suffering,” said Somboon Chungprampree, executive director of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, an organization which is working to connect activist Buddhists and non-Buddhists from all over Asia. “There is not just personal suffering; there is social and environmental suffering out there and people need to figure out how they can help as a Buddhist.”

Kiley Price is a senior at Wake Forest University. Her reporting in Thailand was sponsored by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting in Washington, DC.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2018/08/ecology-monks-in-thailand/>

August 14, 2018

Should Rivers Have Rights? A Growing Movement Says It's About Time

By Jens Benöhr and Patrick J. Lynch
Yale Environment 360

Inspired by indigenous views of nature, a movement to grant a form of legal “personhood” to rivers is gaining some ground — a key step, advocates say, in reversing centuries of damage inflicted upon the world’s waterways.

Chile is a land of rivers. Along its narrow 3,000-mile length, thousands of rivers and wetlands bring freshwater and nutrients down from the Andes Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. Together, these river systems drain 101 major watersheds that support both terrestrial and marine ecosystems, ranging from arid lands in the north to blue whale nurseries off of Patagonia in the south.

Chile’s second-longest river, the 240-mile Biobío, once tumbled fast and wild through deep gorges and spectacular scenery on its way from the Andes to the sea. The Biobío was one of the world’s great whitewater rafting venues — until the 1990s, when the first of three large hydroelectric dams was built across the river. Over the past two decades, the Biobío dams have flooded more than 13,000 acres, displaced hundreds of families of the indigenous Mapuche people, turned long stretches of this once-unruly river into placid reservoirs, and caused abrupt fluctuations in water levels that have wrecked nesting habitat for native birds and disrupted the river’s natural rhythms.

Today in Chile, despite citizen opposition, hydroelectric development continues at a steady pace. The [Alto Maipo dam](#), currently under construction, threatens the water supply of 7 million people in Santiago. Farther south, construction is about to begin on [La Punilla dam](#) on the Ñuble River, which is expected to flood 4,200 acres in the middle of a World Biosphere Reserve. Another conflict is playing out on the breathtaking San Pedro River, sacred to the Mapuche, Chile's largest indigenous group. A dam that had been abandoned because of concerns it was located in a geologically unstable region [is now back in play](#), despite overwhelming local opposition from both the Mapuche and their non-indigenous neighbors.

With the number of dams in Chile [at 137 and counting](#), indigenous people, citizens, and environmental activists [including the authors, members of the [Chilean Free-Flowing Rivers Network](#)] say the time has come to look at granting legal rights — a form of legal personhood — to the nation's rivers. This campaign is not occurring in isolation, however, and is taking inspiration from other countries where a small but growing number of courts and legislatures have begun bestowing legal rights upon rivers. Three countries — New Zealand, Colombia, and India — have all taken such steps over the past two years, though the practical ramifications of these declarations remain unclear.

In Chile, as in other places, we have come to this point because the traditional Western view of rivers — and of nature generally — has failed us. Western legal systems and governments traditionally viewed water and water rights as property, leading to overuse and contamination. One criticism levied by environmental groups is that in countries like Chile and the United States, corporations are granted the same rights as people while the living ecosystems upon which we depend for survival are not. Chile's Water Code was established during the Pinochet dictatorship, and still treats water as a replenishable (rather than increasingly scarce) natural resource. Under the code, companies may trade water rights to the highest bidder. Water is not a universal right in Chile, but a corporate one. This has inevitably led to the degradation of many rivers and the ecosystems they support, as well as to ongoing conflicts among users.

In figuring out how countries can reverse this environmental degradation and reduce conflicts, a lot can be learned from the indigenous view of rivers. Legal innovations that successfully incorporate this outlook could better protect rivers, essentially by giving them the same basic rights as people.

Today, the Mapuche nation — which retained autonomy until the 1880s, when it was finally occupied by the newly independent Chilean Republic — numbers around 1.1 million strong. Their territory extends across the southern portions of present-day Chile and Argentina. It's easy for an outsider to understand why the Mapuche fought so hard for their homeland; the region is defined by lush forests, spectacular landscapes, and some of the most stunning rivers on the planet, including, until its recent damming, the Biobío. Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a founder and senior attorney with the global Waterkeeper Alliance, said the Biobío was once “the jewel of Chile” and compared it to the Grand Canyon.

The cultural importance of the Biobío is heavily reflected in the Mapuche worldview, which presents a duality of one great earthly river and one spiritual river coexisting to create a balance between the earthly and spiritual dimensions. The Biobío signifies the terrestrial river, its

hundreds of branches extending throughout the region, around which innumerable families constituted their lineages. Above the Biobío flows the great river of the sky, the *Wenu-leufú*, what Western astrologers labeled the Milky Way. This “galactic river” is home to the ancestors who inhabited the earth since its origins.

As this duality indicates, Mapuche culture is built around a profound understanding of and interdependence with rivers. Like the Eskimo-Aleuts and their more than 50 words for snow, the Mapudungun language has numerous words for water — *trayenko*, *lil*, *menoko*, *leufú*, *leufquén*, *traytrayko*, to name a few. Mapuche view rivers, lakes, and wetlands as sacred places inhabited by a great diversity of not just flora and fauna, but also spirits, which the Mapuche call *ngen*. If you want to enter the home of a *ngen* in search of medicine, food, or water, you must first ask permission.

Each river nook and eddy has its own *ngen*, meaning a single watershed and its people can be protected by hundreds of spirits. Contaminate or dam a river, even a small tributary, and the *ngen* will leave, abandoning the place and its people. Since *ngen* are protectors of both the land and its people — Mapuche literally means “people of the land” — their departure leaves the people who remain to suffer. In Western terms, suffering comes in the form of depression, alcoholism, and other mental and social health issues that have been widely documented in Mapuche communities that inhabit the upper, dammed part of the Biobío’s watershed. Thus, for the Mapuche and other indigenous communities, conservation of the natural environment is also a matter of public health.

A key question now faces communities like the Mapuche and others around the world: Given the likelihood of ongoing water conflicts and continuing degradation of rivers, what legal changes could help protect both rivers and communities?

One solution to reducing conflicts draws on the “corporations are people” logic, applying it to waterways. Over the last two years, a series of legislative acts and court decisions have emerged across the globe that propose caring for a river as if it were a person. In 2017, New Zealand granted the status of legal personhood [to the Whanganui River](#), the third-longest in the country and, the indigenous Māori believe, a living ancestor of their people. In doing so, the New Zealand parliament merged Western legal values with the Māori worldview to resolve the country’s [longest-running water conflict](#), during which the Māori fought hydroelectric projects and gravel extraction schemes.

Under the new agreement, the Whanganui has the same rights as a person. A special committee that includes community representatives is authorized to act as legal administrator, and the river can now be represented in court proceedings. The river will be represented by two officials, one from the Whanganui iwi (Māori word meaning “people”) and the other from the government. Through the agreement, the Whanganui iwi will be granted authority to conduct cultural activities, give official geographic name assignments, and get financing for social and environmental projects, [which include the river’s ecosystem restoration](#).

In May 2017, Colombia’s Constitutional Court granted legal personhood to the Río Atrato, part of the [Chocó biogeographic region](#), an important biodiversity hotspot. The Atrato flows through

the territories of 91 different indigenous communities for whom the river is the main source of both food and cultural traditions. The court's decision establishes the Atrato River as a "subject of rights, which entails its protection, conservation, maintenance, and, in the specific case, restoration." The decision instructs the government to create an Atrato Guardians Commission consisting of 14 legal guardians from communities affected by mining and pollution.

The river is the first in Colombia to receive this status, the result of local environmental campaigns against the mining industry. Gold mining was the first activity on the Atrato to draw international attention, and has [badly damaged sections of the river](#) through the use of dredging machines and [mercury and cyanide used in the gold mining process](#). Recognition of legal personhood for the Atrato seeks to stop or lessen the damage caused by mining and clean up the mess made to date. However, local groups are still struggling to find a practical way to implement these legal protections.

Another notable decision regarding the legal personhood of rivers was handed down by India's High Court of Uttarakhand in 2017. This [ruling declared](#) both the Ganges and Yamuna rivers living entities with legal rights. The decision was short-lived, however, since [India's Supreme Court overruled it](#) out of concern for practical application of the ruling. In 2017, the Madhya Pradesh state legislature also passed legislation recognizing the Narmada River as a living entity, citing both religious reasons and the river's importance for drinking water and agriculture.

Those declarations are an important first step, but given the high levels of contamination in Indian waterways, it remains unclear how far these legal actions will go in remediating the problems. The Ganges is a profoundly contaminated river, with [high levels of heavy metals other toxins caused by human activities](#). When and if India's government or its courts bestow legal status on the Ganges and other waterways, officials must not only curtail ongoing pollution but also launch restoration programs to return these sick rivers to health.

Despite the promise held by establishing legal rights for rivers, difficult questions remain. What does it mean for a river to have the rights of a person? Does a river have the right to flow freely, and does this mean its waters can't be dammed or diverted? Is compensation to affected communities permissible in lieu of court orders requiring removal of large obstructions like dams? What can we do to move beyond merely acknowledging humanity's connection to rivers to actually saving them? And, finally, and perhaps most important, how should a legal regime determine who will advocate on behalf of a river, which lacks a voice of its own? In the future, these are questions policymakers will have to address.

Camila Badilla, coordinator of the Chilean Free-Flowing Rivers Network, says that granting legal rights to rivers is just one step in an ongoing transformation in how humans view their place in the natural world. "Perhaps in the future we will stop feeling like the center of nature," she says. "Granting a right to a river is the first big step to opening ourselves up to seeing and understanding other living beings."

Grant Gutierrez, a U.S. environmental anthropologist at Dartmouth College, and Tomas Gonzalez Astorga, a Chilean kayaker and natural resources engineer who coordinates the

commission of investigation of the Chilean Free-Flowing Rivers Network, also contributed to this article.

<https://e360.yale.edu/features/should-rivers-have-rights-a-growing-movement-says-its-about-time>

August 16, 2018

Clergy divided as Kenya moves to save forest, evict 40,000 settlers

By Frederick Nzwili, Religion News Service
National Catholic Reporter

NAIROBI, Kenya — When forest rangers arrived at Mau Forest Complex in June to evict thousands of illegal settlers, frightened villagers started moving out.

Villagers sought refuge at churches, schools and trading centers as smoke billowed from their homes, which were razed in the exercise. Churches, schools and crops have been burned in a clearing process that government officials say will save the main water supply.

Amid the mass clearing, clerics have been pulled into the controversy. Some religious leaders support the evictions, saying they are key to protecting the forest complex as a God-given heritage and an essential ecosystem. Other leaders are opposed, saying the evictions are inhumane.

More than 40,000 farmers and herders have been targeted in the mass eviction. They have been occupying 146,000 hectares (about 360,000 acres) of the 400,000-hectare (988,000-acre) forest land in a section known as Maasai Mau. They had bought pieces of land in what some church leaders describe as politically driven purchases aimed at influencing voting patterns in the region.

Some have lived in the forest for more than 30 years. But with visible massive destruction of the forest and river sources, the government is now forcing residents to move. Concerns include how removal of trees and brush has exacerbated erosion, increased soil in riverbeds and put them at risk of running dry. Communities downstream depend on the rivers to supply drinking water, including for livestock and wildlife living in refuge parks.

In the eviction process, large-scale tea farms have also been shut. Owners have been ordered to let the crop grow into bushes. Some 7,000 residents have been evicted this summer as the government reclaimed 12,000 hectares from them.

Jackson Ole Sapit, the Anglican archbishop of Kenya, told Religion News Service he supports the evictions. He said the forest is a holy ecosystem that must be saved at all costs.

"If we don't preserve it now, we will soon see communities suffering serious water shortages, and even wildlife and livestock," he said. "This is very urgent."

According to Sapit, the forest is home to many rivers that serve important bodies of water, including Lake Victoria, Lake Natron and the River Nile.

The forest "gives life to the Mara River, which is the lifeline of the wildebeests migration, one of the wonders of the world," said Sapit, referring to the phenomenon in which 1.5 million wildebeests, zebra and antelope make a circular tour between the Serengeti game reserve and the Maasai Mara in Kenya in search of greener pastures. "Killing forest will kill the wildebeest migration."

Others agree the government is taking necessary steps.

"I think the evictions are a win-win situation for Kenyans — including the settlers," said the Rev. Charles Odira, a Catholic priest and a conservationist. "It may take time to restore the forest, but in the long run the action will prove very beneficial for the country."

Kenya's government has ruled out compensation for forest residents, saying that they settled there illegally. The residents have to look for alternative land to settle or return to their original homelands. Some have been surrendering land title deeds, which government officials claim are fake.

According to Hassan Ole Naado, deputy secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, most of the settlers are innocent citizens who were duped by racketeers to purchase the forest land.

"The racketeers used their influence and power to swindle these people. The authorities should pursue them (instead)," said Naado.

While the evictions have widespread support in Kenya, some church leaders have raised a red flag. They say they are not opposed to the conservation of the water supply, but they argue the evictions are cruel.

Paul Leleito, a retired bishop of the African Gospel Church, said government authorities have failed to follow a steering commission's recommendations to clear the area by marking the forest border, determining land ownership and using resources to support residents who are forced to leave.

"My concern is they have enforced the evictions without a proper prior warning," said Leleito. "Many of those affected by eviction have no shelter and are living in the open where (they) suffer cold nights. Some of them are sick. Children are not going to school."

Leleito urged the government to give evicted residents time to plan their departure.

"For now, the people should be allowed to harvest the crops they had planted in farms," said Leleito. "This is not happening, and the crops are likely to go to waste."

Meanwhile, clerics are warning politicians not to use the evictions to score political points, which they fear is dividing the local communities. Sapit suggested that the forest should be fenced in to prevent future encroachment or illegal settlement.

"We need to look at the greater good and encourage the government to protect the environment," said Sapit.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/clergy-divided-kenya-moves-save-forest-evict-40000-settlers>

August 17, 2018

Indigenous Peoples' Right To Land Can Help In Achieving Conservation Goals

By Palash Sanyal
Science Trends

Indigenous people make up about five percent of the world's population, residing in 70 countries with minimum or no management control over their land, resources, and lives. Even though the actual number is unknown for native populations, about 70% of the world's population does not have a registered title to their land.

[A recent analysis](#) showed 370 million indigenous peoples have rights or claims to over 25% of the world's land area which includes two-fifth of the world's protected and reserved zones, mostly unrecognized. Published in [Nature](#), the study pointed that providing the rights to land and resources to natives can ensure greater ecological conservation and meeting local and global conservation goals.

The researchers compiled land data from 87 countries out of 235 nations excluding Antarctica and some deserted islands in the Southern Ocean. They used five types of spatial dataset: regulatory, geographic range of indigenous peoples' estates, preserved regions, human footprint, and anthropogenic biomes. Africa and Asia have the highest number of states with the native inhabitants. The results show indigenous communities hold 37% of the natural lands, and the lowest density of land use among these vulnerable population does not come across as a surprise. Almost 70% of the remote and least dense places belong to native communities. But the researchers also pointed out growing outside intervention in these areas.

The barriers towards granting land rights and maintaining trust are multiple. First, there is no consensus on defining indigenous peoples' and land, and it is often disputed by proponents. Second, laws and agreements are based on trust, and there is usually a lack of trust between authorities and the natives. Third, governments are reluctant toward handling indigenous issues,

especially land law reform, as it can destabilize the relationship between indigenous and settler communities, also toppling the state.

Fourth is the cultural sensitivity towards the indigenous population. The idea of land and resource varies throughout aboriginal societies within the spectrum of collective against individual rights. Fifth, the use of Free Prior Informed consent (FPIC) has been questionable in resource management. The idea of FPIC is to place bottom-up support and discussion for indigenous populations before the commencement of development projects on native lands or using indigenous resources. There have been cases where corporations and businesses have abused the duty to consult, which brings us to external problems, e.g. fossil fuel, mining, or agricultural industry intervention.

The deep connection of indigenous people to their cultural and social space allows them to manage their natural environment better. Their daily life, livelihood, and skillset all depend on interaction with the natural environment. The analysis emphasized their institutional capacity to be persistent and resilient.

Indigenous people have their motivations and desires to prosper, like any other community of the world. It is unfair to put the unnecessary burden of conservation on them when it comes to creating goals for global carbon reduction. The study urges a “bottom-up” approach to ensure community participation in policy design, interventions, and implementation process of any initiative taken. The growing representation of the indigenous society in the global post-2020 biodiversity framework is a positive sign, even though this pattern needs to be channeled in local, national and regional contexts. The [World Bank](#) and [United Nations](#) focus on such consultation and interventions as part of their green fiscal reform initiatives. Innovation and technological advancement will influence their traditional life. Preserving the conventional ways of life, and providing education and technical skillset to find local solutions to complex modern problems is a must.

Indigenous people are at the forefront of facing the adverse impact of climate change. Change in the weather pattern, disease cycles, food cycles, and natural disasters bring unwarranted consequences for the aboriginal communities. Providing land rights will guarantee that they have the administrative stability to become resilient communities. Their sustained existence will ensure the crucial traditional knowledge is passed on from generation to generation and also toward achieving global targets for conservation.

Palash Sanyal is a professional in the field of sustainable development, environment and energy. He has worked with IFAD, TEDTalk, WaterAid Bangladesh and other non-government organisations. Palash specialises in innovative design process, behavioural change and transdisciplinary sustainability issues. He has more than five years of facilitation experience, facilitating controversial issues for Soliya, UNESCO, Harvard University, University of Saskatchewan and various other organisations. Twitter: @prsanyal.

<https://sciencetrends.com/indigenous-peoples-right-to-land-can-help-in-achieving-conservation-goals/>

August 20, 2018

Lessons Learned from Centuries of Indigenous Forest Management

By Richard Schiffman

Yale Environment 360

In an interview with Yale Environment 360, ecologist Charles M. Peters discusses how, in an era of runaway destruction of tropical forests, the centuries-old ecological understanding of indigenous woodland residents can help point the way to the restoration of damaged rainforests.

Over centuries, even millennia, indigenous communities have developed interdependent systems of agriculture and forestry that are uniquely suited to the ecological requirements of the land they inhabit. Yet even today, says [Charles M. Peters](#), a curator of Botany at the New York Botanical Garden, that skill and knowledge often remain unacknowledged, with some government officials and conservationists arguing that indigenous communities should sometimes be excluded from protected lands that are part of their historical territory.

In an interview with *Yale Environment 360*, Peters — author of the [recently published book](#), *Managing the Wild: Stories of People and Plants and Tropical Forests* — discusses what he has learned from 35 years of working with indigenous forest communities; explains how indigenous farming, even slash-and-burn agriculture, can actually improve forest health; and reflects on the need to enlist indigenous groups as allies in the struggle to preserve and restore tropical forests.

“We need everyone’s input to solve this problem,” Peters told *Yale e360*. “I’m saying [forest dwellers] have incredible knowledge ... There are tracts of forest all over the world that have been intensively managed for generations by local people, and that’s precisely why they are still forests.”

Yale Environment 360: Governments and NGOs often think they know better how to manage forests than the communities that live in them. You are suggesting that local people know a lot more than we give them credit for.

Charles Peters: Local people know a lot more about how to manage tropical forests than we do. Indigenous forest-dwelling communities need to be at the table when decisions are made about tropical forests, because there is this incredible body of traditional knowledge and experience in this replicated experiment that they have been engaged in that has been going on in the tropics for hundreds and thousands of years.

e360: How do you make use of this resource of traditional knowledge in your own work with indigenous groups?

Peters: The way interventions usually go is that you have some idea and you go to the community and you try to implement that idea. In most cases, the agenda involves some

particular species and protecting that. It really has nothing to do with what the community itself might know how to do and what is in their best interest.

My method is different. We go in and the first thing we do is we try to define the demand for a given forest resource through household interviews. We ask people, for example, what did they make their house out of? Where did they get these materials? We talk about rattan, we talk about bamboo, medicinal plants, forest fruits. Then we go into the forest to find out how much of these resources are out there. We quantify the demand and supply for a particular resource. When you put those two things together, you can figure out how big a piece of forest the community needs to produce the resources that they require.

e360: You also train local people to do things that professional foresters usually do, like conducting forest surveys and measuring the growth of trees.

Peters: That's right. We teach them how to do growth studies and [tree] inventories so that later on they can monitor the forest themselves. The community needs to know how much the timber or the rattan grows in a year, because that is all that you can sustainably harvest ... This also empowers them to deal more effectively with their governments. Nowadays, to continue gathering forest resources, somebody has to give you permission — the forest department or the central government. That usually involves writing a management plan, applying for a permit. To do that, you need to provide numbers, you have to provide data on things like the stock and yield of a resource.

e360: The idea that local people should even be allowed to use resources in the forest is not universally accepted by conservationists. In the past, there was an emphasis on creating pristine forest reserves that exclude humans and human activities. Was that wise?

Peters: In recent decades, we've moved a bit away from this strict protectionist conservation mindset — to kick the people out of the reserves. In many ways, though, we are still in that mindset. But some people are coming around to the idea of allowing local people to make some use of these resources.

That is what happened in Brazil, for example, with the extractive reserve idea. It is a whole new kind of protected area that gives communities the right to extract rubber, Brazil nuts, and other products from pieces of forest as a form of conservation. There are millions of hectares of extractive reserves currently in Brazil. Granted, the execution of the extractive reserve has not always been very good at all.

e360: You mentioned Brazil. You have worked extensively in the Amazon. Some people believe that the form of slash-and burn agriculture that is practiced there is destructive to the rainforest. You have a different view.

Peters: There is a way to do slash-and-burn incorrectly, but properly done it is a really amazing solution to enriching sterile tropical soils. In temperate soils you can farm them every year — they were glaciated, it's new, mineral-rich dirt. Most of the nutrients are in the soil. But in the tropics and especially the Amazon, which gets heavily rained on, the soils are leached out and

nutrient-poor. Most of the nutrients are in the vegetation, not in the soil. So when you clear the forest there is not much left. If you try to farm that land as we farm in temperate zones, it doesn't work. The soil is not good enough, you have to add a huge amount of fertilizer and other inputs. But when you take a small piece of forest and burn it, then corn, rice, cassava, or a variety of other crops are planted in the ash. These sites are farmed for several years until excessive competition by weeds and declining yields make additional cultivation untenable. Eventually the forest returns.

e360: It is an agricultural system that works in the tropics.

Peters: If you were looking for someone who could help you farm the moon, these are the people who could help you figure that out. So this is why I'm saying they have incredible knowledge. We don't have to give them complete control, but let's ask them what they think before we tell them what they need to do.

e360: I've done some reporting from the Amazon. I was frankly surprised by how beautiful some of the small farm plots in the jungle were. They were full of fruit trees, cassava plants, flowers, in some cases even fish ponds, with a great variety of birds and wildlife, especially at the margins.

Peters: You know you see advertisements from some conservation group with pictures taken immediately after the smoking burn, and it looks horrible. But come back to the same site 10 years later and things look very different. All of this is a bit insidious, the way we disenfranchise the people who actually know how to farm these areas, who actually know something about the forest and how it regenerates.

e360: You have argued that not only do indigenous farmers not destroy the forests that they depend on, but they frequently improve them. How so?

Peters: For the longest time we thought that indigenous people just put in their swiddens [temporary agricultural plots formed by cutting back and burning off vegetative cover] and just walked away from it and cleared another piece of forest. But we've been finding, to the contrary, that the fallow [open area] that they leave, they are actively managing that, they are enriching it with things that are of use to them. In addition to agricultural crops, they plant fruit trees, timber species, thatch palms, medicinal plants, and rattan canes in their fields. The villagers return to their fallows periodically to weed, to clear the underbrush, remove unwanted tree species, and, depending on the season, they collect fruits and palm thatch. Far from being abandoned, much of the fallow vegetation created by indigenous farmers in the tropics is enriched with useful species and carefully managed. For them, there is no clear line between agriculture and forestry. Forest succession is carefully controlled, rather than arrested or inhibited.

e360: You write in your book about working in Borneo where the Kenyah Dayak people manage subsistence orchards of amazing complexity. Can you talk about that?

Peters: I'm a forester and I know what foresters can do in temperate forests, for example. We do really well managing one species like pine or spruce. In a hardwood forest maybe we can do a

couple of species of oak and then we move into the tropics and maybe we find four or five species that we feel are merchantable — so we cut four or five species. But the trees that come up to replace them are totally different species and so we exhaust the forest and we don't have anything more to cut.

But these guys in Borneo are managing 150 species of trees in a hectare. So we Western foresters can't manage four species in a plot, and these people are managing 150. As a forester you just go, "Oh my God, how do they do this?" Because to do what they are doing you have to pay attention to every one of those species and ask how it is doing and what its requirements are. Are there seedlings and saplings? Are you ensuring that once you harvest that tree there will be others of its kind that take its place? It's a very complicated and wonderful thing. And all of this is being accomplished with traditional knowledge, as opposed to putting in plots and counting things [as Western foresters do]. How are they doing this? How did they learn this? They learned it by trial and error over a thousand years and more.

e360: They have a lot to teach us.

Peters: We Western silviculturalists have learned basically nothing from them, because we don't even see that they have any useful information. Well, that is totally incorrect. Do you know the one thing that has been transferred from Western forestry to traditional forestry? Do you know what the one thing we have given them is? We have given them chainsaws.

e360: Which is a mixed blessing.

Peters: Yes, a mixed blessing.

e360: What lessons have you learned personally from working with indigenous foresters?

Peters: We conventional foresters operate at the level of adult trees — we manage forest composition at the adult tree stage. What all of these community silvicultural systems have in common is that they are operating at the seedling and the sapling stage to create a forest that you won't see for decades in the canopy. They are actually doing something that to an outsider is invisible, but that is producing lasting changes because they are controlling precisely what is able to regenerate and what is not.

e360: We sometimes speak about virgin wilderness untouched by human intervention. But you suggest in your book that much of what we call pristine forest has actually been created by human interventions over a period of centuries.

Peters: That's right. You walk through it, you think you are in pristine forest and the people tell you, "Oh, no, no, this is an orchard that we have created." These forms of indigenous resource management had been invisible to us. There are tracts of forest all over the world in Brazil, in Africa, in Southeast Asia that have been intensively managed for generations by local people and that's precisely why they are still forests — because they are important to local communities and carefully managed by them. And then somebody in a district forest office comes along and draws

a circle and says, “This is a virgin protected area” and kicks the people out — that sort of thing happens a lot.

e360: You write about numerous cases where indigenous people have successfully managed, and in some cases saved, their local forests from destruction. Do we know how much forest they have succeeded in saving?

Peters: We don’t really know how big it is globally. But it is probably getting smaller every year because it gets no support. It is not recognized and somebody — oil companies, palm oil interests, you name it — is paying these people a lot of money to do something that is in nobody’s interest. These systems of indigenous management are really fragile. No one thinks that they know what they are doing, people think that [forest dwellers] are the problem and not the solution. And when you receive no support, when someone comes in and says, “We want to buy your timber and here’s the money,” and you don’t have any alternative, you will sell it off.

<https://e360.yale.edu/features/lessons-learned-from-centuries-of-indigenous-forest-management>

August 23, 2018

In Sicily, A Plague of Cancer Overwhelms an Oil Refinery Town

Yale Environment 360

The winner of the 2018 Yale Environment 360 Video Contest examines how the people of Augusta, Sicily, led by the town’s priest, are fighting back against a cancer epidemic linked to a massive petrochemical complex.

Watch the video here:

<https://e360.yale.edu/features/in-sicily-a-plague-of-cancer-overwhelms-an-oil-refinery-town>

The Augusta-Priolo petroleum refinery complex, one of Europe’s largest, has for more than 50 years spewed a toxic brew of pollutants into the air and water of eastern Sicily. In recent decades, the roughly 60,000 residents of surrounding towns have experienced abnormally high rates of cancer, an outbreak that [one comprehensive study](#) has shown is tied to emissions from the refineries.

In his new documentary, “Venerable Augusta” — winner of the 2018 Yale Environment 360 Video Contest — Italian filmmaker Francesco Cannavà depicts the crisis in Augusta and nearby towns through the eyes of the local priest, Father Palmiro Prisutto. We follow him and other Augusta residents as they stage a demonstration against government inaction in the face of a deadly epidemic. “The accusation I am making today against the Italian state is this: Our cancer dead have been murdered,” says Prisutto. “For some time, the population has repeated this chorus: ‘Better to die of cancer than of hunger.’ This saying is unacceptable. One cannot trade health and life merely for a job.”

Also featured in the film is Augusta resident and cancer patient Carmelo Miano, who, shortly before he dies, says, “The Fifth Commandment says, ‘Thou shall not kill.’ Here, instead, they are killing everyone.”

About the Filmmaker: A Rome-based film director and screenwriter, Francesco Cannavà has made documentary films on subjects ranging from human evolution, to Greek grave masks on the Aeolian Islands, to Italian youth soccer. His films have won awards at European film festivals and have been screened at numerous international festivals, including the Tribeca Film Festival in New York.

About the Contest: *The Yale Environment 360 Video Contest honors the year’s best environmental films, with the aim of recognizing work that has not previously been widely seen. Entries for 2018 were received from six continents, with a prize of \$2,000 going to the first-place winner.*

<https://e360.yale.edu/features/in-sicily-a-plague-of-cancer-overwhelms-an-oil-refinery-town>

August 23, 2018

Catholic institutions commit to climate action

By Erika Street Hopman
Yale Climate Connections

They're speaking out in support of the Paris Agreement.

Listen to the audio version of this article here:

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2018/08/catholic-institutions-commit-to-climate-action/>

Last year, President Trump announced that the U.S. will pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement. But almost 600 U.S. Catholic institutions recently [signed a declaration](#) stating that they still support climate action.

Aguto: “We come upon this with a desire to take this out of the realm of partisanship and economic interest, and to work together in order to manifest climate solutions – so manifesting the most challenging commandments of our faith, which are to love our brother and sister, to love our neighbor, and most importantly and most courageously, to love our enemy, and stepping forth and building bridges towards a common future.”

Jose Aguto of the nonprofit Catholic Climate Covenant says the dioceses, parishes and schools that signed the declaration will now commit to specific actions.

Aguto: "For example, having homilies on care for creation, having educational sessions amongst parishioners or reducing your carbon footprint."

In September, the covenant will share the commitments publicly.

Aguto: "We would love for the Catholic church to be a leader and an inspiration with regard to climate action in spirit, word, and deed."

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2018/08/catholic-institutions-commit-to-climate-action/>

August 24, 2018

Green Hajj takes roots in Mecca: How devout are working to reduce carbon footprints

Diligent Media Corporation

Thousands of cleaners are busy separating plastic from other rubbish as more than two million Muslims wrap up a pilgrimage to Mecca that presents a huge environmental challenge for Saudi Arabia.

The Mamuniya camp in Mina near the holy city is dotted with colour-coded barrels -- black for organic waste and blue for cans and plastics for recycling.

It's all part of an initiative to reduce the environmental footprint of the hajj, one of the world's largest annual gatherings.

More than 42,000 tonnes of waste are produced during the pilgrimage to Islam's holiest sites, according of Mohammed al-Saati, head of sanitation for the Mecca municipality.

"We're facing some real challenges, primarily the sheer volume of waste produced ... along with the number of pilgrims, the limited space around the holy sites, different nationalities and the weather," Saati told AFP.

"Islam as a religion does not encourage excess," he added.

"Pilgrims can be friends of the environment. It starts by raising awareness back home." The hajj, which started on Sunday and ends tomorrow, drew nearly 2.4 million Muslims from around the world this year, according to official Saudi figures.

More than 13,000 sanitation workers and supervisors were hired during the pilgrimage season, which saw temperatures rise to 44 degrees Celsius (111 Fahrenheit) this week.

A handful of camps in the town of Mina, the site of the symbolic stoning of the devil ritual during hajj, have begun to implement plans to turn "green", cutting back on waste and encouraging pilgrims to do their part.

Banners hanging near the Kaaba, a black structure inside Mecca's Grand Mosque towards which Muslims around the world pray, also featured the recycle logo this year.

Authorities aim to cut waste volumes by two-thirds by 2030, Saati said, with a plan that speaks to both environmental ethics and religious belief.

Sorted waste collected from the pilgrimage sites will be sold to companies that handle recycling.

All proceeds will be given to charity in standing with the Muslim belief in "sadaqah," or voluntary donations.

Workers in bright green vests made their way across the streets and alleys, picking up soda cans and plastic water bottles as pilgrims packed their things to return home.

Signs encouraging pilgrims to sort their waste could be seen across the Mamuniya camp -- along with signs reading "Sadaqah, not litter." "The idea of an environmentally friendly camp is really important to us, to preserve the sanctity of the site," said Hatem Mumena, the camp's general manager.

But he admits there is still far to go, as the numbers of pilgrims attending hajj is expected to rise. Saudi Arabia hopes to welcome some 30 million pilgrims per year by 2030.

"This is just the beginning," Mumena said.

<https://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-green-hajj-takes-roots-in-mecca-how-devouts-are-working-to-reduce-carbon-footprints-2653860>

August 25, 2018

Irish bishops announce divestment from fossil fuels ahead of the pope's visit

By Christine A. Scheller
Religion News Service

DUBLIN (RNS) — Hours before the arrival of Pope Francis, the world's leading champion of the environment, the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference announced it would divest from fossil fuels.

The move comes in response to Francis' 2015 environmental encyclical, "[Laudato Si](#)," (or "On Care for Our Common Home"), and follows the introduction of a bill in the Irish Parliament requiring the country's sovereign wealth fund to divest from all fossil fuels.

The bishop's move means withdrawing investments in 200 oil and gas companies within 5 years, Bishop William Crean, chairman of the Irish Catholic humanitarian agency Trócaire, said in a statement.

The Irish Bishops Conference joins 95 other Catholic organizations worldwide in committing to divestment. If the Irish bill passes, it will make Ireland the world's first government to divest from fossil fuels.

"The impact in terms of human suffering to families is devastating," the Irish bishops said in a statement Friday (Aug. 24). Climate change is already leading to forced migration, separation of families, and increased pressure on resources."

On June 9, Pope Francis met with oil executives at the Vatican. "Civilization requires energy, but energy must not destroy civilization," he said in his address.

Building a more sustainable approach to the economy, work and the environment is one of six major themes at the World Meeting of Families in Dublin this week.

At a panel on "Care for Our Common Home: Why the family matters to the future of our planet," and at an interfaith service at Dublin's Christchurch Cathedral, bishops from Myanmar and New Zealand addressed the topic of climate change.

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar, noted that three decades of international debate and negotiation over environmental degradation are "already exacerbating hunger, water shortages in the poorest parts of the world, affecting profoundly and unjustly those who have done least to cause the problem, and who have least resources to cope."

Bo said, "We often fail to see that decisions we make in one arena of life — what we consume, how much we consume, what transport we use, how we dispose of things — have an impact on everything else."

A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach, he said.

Juan Carlos Mendoza, managing director of the United Nation's Convention to Combat Desertification, said tackling climate change is not something that is going to be done by politicians or leaders.

"It's going to be by people, including the communities of faith," he told RNS. "They play a very critical role in their families, in their parishes, as citizens."

[The Great Green Wall Initiative](#), which seeks to combat the impacts of climate change in the countries in the Sahara, is one example, he said.

“We have seen local communities of different religions coming together around this” Mendoza said. Muslims and Christians who live in close proximity are working together towards land rehabilitation.”

Cardinal John Dew, archbishop of Wellington, New Zealand, also spoke at the gathering.

“The world is gifted to us for our good, for our use, but not for our domination. This means protecting it for those who will come after us, “ he said. “We’ve come to see ourselves as lords and masters, people who are entitled to plunder it at will,” he said. “The pope asks us to lament for the harm that we have done and to repent.”

<https://religionnews.com/2018/08/25/irish-bishops-announce-divestment-from-fossil-fuels-ahead-of-the-popes-visit/>

August 31, 2018

Buddhist Monks Battle to Save Cambodia’s Forests

By Dipen DB
Buddhist Door Global

Deforestation is a major environmental threat in Cambodia. According to a World Bank report, 73 per cent of the country was under forest cover in 1990, but by 2010 that had fallen to 57 per cent. Now Cambodia’s forests have found support from an unlikely group of activists: Buddhist monks, who have united in organizations, such as the Monks Community Forest (MCF) and the Independent Monk Network for Social Justice (IMNSJ), to battle to save forests by demanding stronger government action against deforestation and by lobbying lawmakers for greater protection.

“We lost the forest and this made the temperature increase and our rain unpredictable, which lead to increased diseases and an increased release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere,” said Venerable Bun, head of Samrong Pagoda in Oddar Meanchey Province. In 2002, Ven. Bun Saluth established the MCF to protect a 18,261-hectare forest. “I had to think about ways to protect this land,” he said. “So we [monks] created a boundary by digging a ditch around the entire forest.” (Climate Heroes)

Ven. Bun grew up in a rural village, the son of a farmer, but left home at an early age to become a monk. He spent five years studying in Thailand, where he lived with the “ecology monks,” a group of engaged Buddhist monks who are actively working to protect the environment by integrating Buddhist principles with environmental awareness in Thailand. He returned to his country in February 2002 with a vision to protect his own country’s forest, and has since succeeded in preserving 18,261 hectares of forest land in Oddar Meanchey Province. The MCF is the largest community-managed forest conservation site in Cambodia. For his work, Ven. Bun was awarded the Equator Prize by the United Nations Development Programme in 2010.

“When I returned home to Oddar Meanchey I realized the importance of these forests,” he said. “In Thailand they have largely lost their forests and the government must replant huge areas. In Cambodia we should treasure the forests that we already have and preserve them for the next generation.” (Climate Heroes)

Another organization active in the preservation of Cambodia’s shrinking forests is the Independent Monk Network for Social Justice (IMNSJ), which has more than 5,000 monastic followers who are teaching local people how to use social media to raise awareness of illegal logging by uploading photos and videos, and by writing articles. The monks also teach local residents what they can do to prevent deforestation.

IMNSJ founder and leader Ven. Buntenh, ordained 16 years ago, has now made it his business to fight deforestation: “No one has told me that I should go out there to protect the forest, but for me it was a logical thing to do. I am doing all I can to save it. I plant new trees, I help the people who live from the forest, I am reminding the government of the promises they’ve made.” (The Star Online)

Among Ven. Buntenh’s current concerns are the threats against Prey Lang, one of Cambodia’s largest and oldest evergreen woodlands. Prey Lang has 3,600 square kilometres of forest, including giant luxury timber trees, and is home to at least 20 endangered plant species and 27 endangered animal species. Large sections of Prey Lang have already disappeared to make space for plantations, and illegal loggers have removed large patches of trees in protected areas.

“The government says that the cutting of the forest is necessary for the development of our country. But if this is development, why does it cause us so much grief?” said San Reth, a 63-year-old Cambodian who has lived his entire life near Prey Lang and used to be dependent on the forest for his livelihood. He is happy with the support of the monks. “For a long time, we hoped a good man will stand up to save our forest,” he said. (The Star Online)

However, the activist monks are also coming under threat for their activities. Last year, a pagoda that houses them was searched by the police. Even the supreme patriarch of Cambodia’s monastic sangha has turned against the activists, saying that monks should not be involved in protests, and calling on pagodas to keep their doors closed to those who are. Over the past few years, many attempts have been made to thwart the activities of the monks.

The monks are not the only ones under threat—several activists and journalists have been intimidated or even killed for reporting on illegal logging. Similar threats were made on Ven. Buntenh’s life some time ago. “I don’t think I’m a good monk, because I am mean to the police and to the military,” Ven. Buntenh stated. “But I’m ready to give everything for my people and the forest. If I have to give my life for it today or tomorrow, then I’m willing to make that sacrifice.” (The Star Online)

<https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/buddhist-monks-battle-to-save-cambodiarsquos-forests>

August 31, 2018

First Nations Celebrate Win Against Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion

By Shannan Stoll
Common Dreams

Indigenous leaders, coast protectors, and others demonstrate against the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada, on March 10, 2018. (Photo: Jason Redmond/Getty Images)

A Federal Court of Appeal on Thursday struck down the Canadian government's approval of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain oil pipeline expansion, halting construction of the 1,150-kilometer project indefinitely.

The expansion would have tripled capacity of the existing Trans Mountain pipeline, allowing it to ship up to 890,000 barrels of bitumen oil every day from Alberta's tar sands to a terminal in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The court decision [cited the Trudeau government's failure to consult](#) with Canada's First Nations, specifically the government's insufficient treatment of oral traditional evidence, lack of sufficient time given in the consultation process for affected groups to inform themselves well enough to participate, and failure to consult about the environmental assessment.

The decision comes after months of indigenous-led opposition to the pipeline. Efforts suffered a big blow back in May, when the Canadian government [announced](#) it would purchase the project for \$4.5 billion when Kinder Morgan struggled to fund the expansion.

The court decision cited the Trudeau government's failure to consult with Canada's First Nations.

“Without question today is a day of celebration,” said Grand Chief Stewart Philip of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs in an [interview posted on Facebook](#). “But also it's a day that we must reflect on our journey up to this point in our opposition to the Kinder Morgan Trans mountain expansion project. And I'd like to take this opportunity to thank that massive infrastructure that was pulled together in terms of grassroots people, indigenous leadership, and rank-and-file British Columbians and Canadians.”

Here's what that leadership has looked like.

[Coast protectors](#)

In British Columbia, indigenous coast protectors led direct actions of allies, environmental activists, and local residents to stop pipeline expansion. Over 200 people have been arrested in direct actions over the past several months.

This campaign was launched in March, when the [coast protectors built a traditional cedar watch house](#) in Burnaby, the site of the planned oil terminal for the expansion project. The cedar watch house was a gathering place for people organizing actions to stop construction of the pipeline.

CBC News reported that [211 people were arrested](#) between March and early July at Kinder Morgan's work sites.

[Divest the globe](#)

Even before the direct actions of coast protectors began in British Columbia, indigenous groups—including Mazaska Talks and the Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion—organized an ongoing campaign to put financial pressure on the banks funding the pipeline. The indigenous-led divestment movement that emerged from Standing Rock [expanded its focus last year](#) to target the banks funding four tar sands pipelines, including Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline.

[Native women](#) were particularly involved in leading the campaign and engaged in work to expand the movement to a global stage.

Last October, the Divest the Globe campaign saw demonstrations in more than 50 cities around the world.

[Tiny House Warriors](#)

Indigenous women have had a leading role in opposing the pipeline. Since the fall of 2017, the Tiny House Warriors have been building homes in the path of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. Women of the Secwepemc First Nation formed the group, building homes that were fossil fuel-free, mobile, and solar-powered.

In July, three were [placed on the site of an ancient Secwepemc village](#) in North Thompson River Provincial Park near Clearwater, British Columbia. That month, Kanahus Manuel, who co-founded the group, was arrested “after allegedly defying an eviction order from the BC Parks service,” [according to Canada's National Observer](#).

Thursday's decision will require the Canadian government to restart its consultation with First Nations, which would likely cost millions of dollars.

What happens next isn't certain, but for now the First Nations and allies who opposed the pipeline expansion are celebrating the victory.

“I'm elated,” [said Grand Chief Philip in a press conference](#) Thursday. “The future of our grandchildren depends on our ability and our courage and our integrity to stand up and defend the land and defend the water.”

This article was written for YES! Magazine, a national, nonprofit media organization that fuses powerful ideas and practical actions. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 License.

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2018/08/31/first-nations-celebrate-win-against-trans-mountain-pipeline-expansion>

September 1, 2018

Pope calls for action on ‘emergency’ of plastics littering oceans

By Josh Gabbatiss, Science Correspondent
Independent

Pontiff encourages followers to preserve 'great waters and all they contain'

In a message focusing on the “precious element” of water, [Pope Francis](#) has called for urgent action to combat the “emergency” of [plastics](#) littering seas and oceans.

He lamented the lack of effective regulation to protect the world’s waters while also drawing attention to the perilous ocean crossings made by migrants around the world.

To mark the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Francis issued a statement intended to galvanise the global community into saving the “impressive and marvellous,” God-given gift of the “great waters and all they contain.”

“Sadly, all too often many efforts fail due to the lack of effective regulation and means of control, particularly with regard to the protection of marine areas beyond national confines,” the pope wrote.

“We cannot allow our seas and oceans to be littered by endless fields of floating plastic,” Francis said.

“Here, too, our active commitment is needed to confront this emergency.”

Francis recommended a two-pronged approach, saying: “We need to pray as if everything depended on God’s providence and work as if everything depended on us.”

He also denounced as “unacceptable” the privatisation of water resources at the expense of the “human right to have access to this good.”

With countries from Italy to Australia promoting policies to thwart migrants from arriving by sea, Francis prayed that “waters may not be a sign of separation of peoples, but of encounter for the human community.”

“Let us pray that those who risk their lives at sea in search of a better future may be kept safe,” Francis added.

Malta and Italy have recently cracked down on charity-run boats that aim to rescue migrants from smugglers’ unseaworthy boats.

Other EU nations, such as Hungary and Poland, have refused to share the burden of caring for some of the hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers who reached the continent’s southern shores in recent years.

Francis did not single out any countries. Instead, he directed part of his message to all politicians having to tackle migration and climate change, appealing for them to apply “generous and farsighted responsibility.”

The emphasis on preserving the marine environment is the latest act by the current pope to establish his environmental credentials.

At last year’s climate talks in Bonn, Francis [rebuked those who denied the science behind climate change](#), and urged negotiators not to fall prey to such “perverse attitudes”.

He also described climate change as “one of the most worrisome phenomena that humanity is facing”.

In [a previous message](#) to mark the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation he has also emphasised the role that a changing climate and environmental disasters are having on the world’s most vulnerable people.

“God gave us a bountiful garden, but we have turned it into a polluted wasteland of debris, desolation and filth,” he said.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/pope-francis-plastic-pollution-oceans-seas-environment-water-refugees-a8518386.html>

September 1, 2018

Season of Creation marks month of eco-contemplation for Christians

By Brian Roewe
National Catholic Reporter

Christians across the globe Thursday joined in celebrating the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, but for many the day only marks the beginning of a longer contemplation on the planet the pope regularly refers to as our common home.

The Season of Creation is a month-long prayerful observation of the state of the world, its beauty and the ecological crises that threaten it and all its inhabitants. It runs from Sept. 1, the World Day of Prayer for Creation, through Oct. 4, the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi.

For many Catholics, the day of prayer for creation landed on their radar for the first time last year after Pope Francis officially placed it on the Catholic liturgical calendar. Because of the timing -- Francis instituted the annual prayer day just three weeks before Sept. 1 -- many Catholic groups scrambled to piece together small celebrations with an eye toward larger, more coordinated events this year.

At the Vatican Thursday, Francis helped kick off the Season of Creation by celebrating the World Day of Prayer for Creation [with a message](#) that urged Catholics to view care for creation among the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

The Season of Creation comes as the planet continues its own season of sizzling temperatures.

July 2016 was the warmest month ever recorded -- with modern records extending back 136 years -- and 15 consecutive months of record global heat. NASA has projected 2016 will eclipse 2015 as the warmest year on record, which would make it 16 of the 17 [warmest years on record](#) since 1880 occurring since 2001 (the remaining year, 1998, is tied for 6th on the list).

A Christian tradition of creation care

While 2016 marks the first year of concerted Catholic participation in the Season of Creation, other Christian denominations have recognized it for decades.

A common origin point is 1989, when Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I proclaimed Sept. 1 as a day of prayer for creation in the Orthodox church. From there, faith communities, often at the parish and grassroots levels, began extending the celebration beyond a day throughout the month and until the Assisi feast.

One of the earliest organized celebrations of the season [occurred in 2000](#) at a Lutheran church in Adelaide, South Australia. Three years later, the Catholic bishops of the Philippines issued a pastoral statement creating a day and season for creation, with different dioceses then adding them to their calendars in subsequent years. In 2007 the Third European Ecumenical Assembly adopted it, with the World Council of Churches following suit the next year.

It's been the passion at the local level that has grown the Season of Creation into something bigger, said Episcopal Rev. Fletcher Harper, executive director of GreenFaith, an interfaith environmental coalition. That the pope, ecumenical patriarch and the archbishop of Canterbury now all recognize it "represents an affirmation of the really good work that people all over the world, that Christians all over the world have been doing," he told *NCR*.

For many, the day and season have come to symbolize not only collective awareness of the responsibility to properly tend to the earth, but also a gathering point for all Christians and faiths.

“I can’t think of many themes and specific campaigns that bring Christians together at such scale as this one,” said Tomas Insua, co-founder and global coordinator of the Global Catholic Climate Movement, who added that this year’s efforts mark a first in terms of global coordination around the season.

Prayer and action

The 300-plus climate network of Catholic organizations has led coordinating efforts for the 2016 Season of Creation along with the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network, which produces the monthly papal prayer intention videos. For the Season of Creation, it released a modified version of Francis’ [February prayer intention](#) calling for care for creation. [The prayer intention for September is for the centrality of the human person.]

“As we are [the pope’s] official service of prayer we couldn’t miss this project,” said Jesuit Fr. Frédéric Fornos, international director of the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network (formerly called the Apostleship of Prayer).

Fornos said the pope encourages all the Catholic church to be engaged in the day of prayer and the spiritual and lifestyle transformations he has called for in his encyclical “*Laudato Si*’, on Care for Our Common Home.”

“He gave us the direction, and then we commit ourselves,” Fornos told *NCR* in an email.

During a private audience Thursday morning, Fornos said Francis was aware of the ecumenical initiatives planned around the World Day of Prayer.

Other sponsors of the Season of Creation include the World Council of Churches, GreenFaith, the ACT Alliance and the Anglican Communion Environmental Network.

Events around the Season of Creation began Thursday morning with an ecumenical online prayer service. Almost 200 additional prayer services on six continents have been planned, according to the Global Catholic Climate Movement. A map of the various events is on its website and the [Season of Creation website](#). Insua told *NCR* roughly half of the celebrations are ecumenical.

Prayer is essential to the season, said Fornos.

“[C]hanging our lifestyle is not enough, because change requires a deep conversion. It is the prayer, closeness to Jesus, at his word, which can transform our hearts and our lives and help us to live everyday with a simple way and solidarity style,” he told *NCR*.

Along with the pope’s video, people can pray with Francis through the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network by using its Click To Pray app. The daily prayer for Thursday read in part, “Father of All Creation, on this World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, I am thankful for the beauty of the world that you have created for all your children. Help me to live each day aware of my vocation as a steward of your creation and work with others for the care of our common home.”

In addition to prayer, many have used the Season of Creation as occasion to live out their litanies.

On Thursday morning the English charity Christian Aid announced that more than 3,500 churches in the United Kingdom have already or plan to substitute fossil fuels for renewable energy as an electricity source, including 2,000 parishes from 16 Catholic dioceses.

Along similar lines, the Global Catholic Climate Movement anticipates a major announcement at the season's end of religious congregations divesting from fossil fuels. On the one-year anniversary of Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, four Pacific-area religious orders announced their divestment intentions. Global Catholic Climate Movement will host a [Sept. 7 webinar](#) on divestment.

Other plans under way for the Season of Creation include:

- The Vatican produced a [booklet for vespers celebrations](#) on the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. Similar liturgical resources have been compiled by the U.S. bishops' conference, Global Catholic Climate Movement, Franciscan Action Network and Columban Mission Institute in Sydney. ([all available here](#))
- The Sisters of Mercy will share a visual meditation daily [on their website](#), inviting photographers to send their own shots demonstrating “an aspect of the beauty of our world.”
- The Catholic Climate Covenant has released materials for its [annual Feast of St. Francis program](#), now in its fifth year. This year's theme centers on the presidential election and echoes the pope's call for constructive dialogue – at home and in politics – about the impacts of environmental harm on the poor.
- Numerous faith groups are using the season as a way to prepare for participation in a wider climate mobilization set for mid-October.

Having an official date for creation care on the Catholic liturgical calendar is “massively significant” in terms of making it concrete in their daily lives and communities,” Insua said.

“Having this happen every year will be a good way of not letting *Laudato Si'* fade away,” he said.

Liturgical emphasis

Another way to breathe life into the encyclical would be formally adding a season for creation in the liturgical year, according to one Australian priest.

Columban Fr. Charles Rue has proposed doing just that, viewing it as “one way to structurally help implement the vision of Pope Francis given in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*,” he wrote [in a proposal paper](#) that has circulated among faith-based environmental circles. A fellow Columban, Fr. Sean McDonagh, has [made a similar endorsement](#) of inserting creation care deeper into the spiritual and liturgical lives of Catholics.

Rue added that a new liturgical season focused on creation “would help believers face the 21st century ecological challenge” in a way that recognizes its magnitude.

“Church communities would be in a better position to dialogue with people of other churches and faiths, scientists and people of good will about earth as our common home, leading to new commitments as congregations and individuals,” he said.

Insua said the development of a liturgical season of creation would be a big step toward embedding *Laudato Si'* into the mindset and lives of Catholics. For now, Harper of GreenFaith said seeing the day of prayer eventually raise to the significance of other notable days within the religious calendar would be a major step forward in ingraining environmental concern with faith.

“What I’d love to see is the day of prayer for creation assume some of that dignity and the ability to provoke the kind of introspection and change in life,” he said.

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/season-creation-marks-month-eco-contemplation-christians>

September 3, 2018

Sisters of Earth: hopes and dreams

By Joan Brown
Global Sisters Report

How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy, the subtitle of Joanna Macy's book [Active Hope](#), aptly describes the time many of us feel immersed in this summer of 2018. It was also the inspiration for the [Sisters of Earth](#) gathering that took place July 12-15 at Mount Saint Joseph, home of the Sisters of Charity in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The conference is held every other year. Begun in 1994 through the inspiration of several U.S. and Canadian Catholic sisters, this informal network includes women of all ages — a means for women engaged in diverse professions to explore the new cosmology and its implications for a new and emerging worldview; to address concerns about the ecological/spiritual crises of our times; and to support one another in healing the human spirit and restoring Earth's support systems.

The Cincinnati gathering location was chosen partly because of the ancestral inspiration of Sister of Charity [Paula Gonzalez](#), who promoted solar power and sustainability projects and teachings throughout the Catholic world. This year, nearly 100 women from the United States and Canada began by remembering Sister Paula and other guiding ancestors.

A visit to the cemetery where Paula is buried and a circle of remembering and dance set in motion a weekend filled with tears, laughter and inspiration. For three days we explored the theme, "Sharing the Wisdom, Shaping the Dream: Creating the Future We Want."

The vision of Sisters of Earth includes four elements of Active Hope: gratitude, pain for the world, seeing through new eyes, and bringing forth something new. Mercy Sr. Jan Stocking and Diza Velasco, two directors of [Rockhaven Ecozoic Center](#) in House Springs, Missouri, guided us through an experiential day focusing upon each of these four elements.

We combined the wisdom of Active Hope and the [Awakening the Dreamer](#) program, asking: Who are we? Where are we? How did we get here and what is possible? And — where do we go from here?

Sisters of Earth are very engaged in the world's suffering and realities of climate change. In a "Despair Ritual" we owned the pain of the world, and entered into anger, despair, sadness or fear, in order to be open to creative ways forward. I was really moved when the youngest woman in the group stepped to the circle, lifted the stone of fear, and bravely said, "I am afraid I will not have the strength to bear all of the suffering of the world that lies ahead in my lifetime."

Rituals of song, dance, anointing, and blessing honored such moving moments of the weekend. Composer and performer Joyce Rouse masterfully wove her music into our hearts and helped create some boisterous laughter at a Saturday night of song, dance and acting. She wrote a song for Sisters of Earth, called "A Life Well Lived," which reflects much of the wisdom shared over the weekend — ranging from bio-mimicry to dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery.

We shared inspiring stories of the work of Sisters of Earth:

[Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati](#) Marge Kloos and Mary Bookser described how their community is following Paula's inspiration by living into the meaning of transformational community life and the common good. They are changing the witness and the look of their campus through education, and by addressing climate change with sustainable technologies: geo-thermal, energy efficiency measures, replacement of 25,000 lights with LEDs, and installing a first solar array for six of their sisters' residential homes. They are saving thousands of tons of carbon emissions and sending excess energy to their utility company six months of each year.

The [Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill](#) in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, with their extended community and school children, are getting their hands dirty with a garden project. Sr. Barbara Ann Smelko said, "Two weeks after planting potatoes, seeing green shoots emerge in the field was the most thrilling and exciting thing any of us had witnessed in a long time."

Potatoes have become a community affair with young people harvesting, elder sisters sorting and cleaning, and volunteers building wooden crates to transport the harvest to a local food bank. Bat houses, butterfly gardens, an Amish-built garden shed and now onions stand witness to a spiritual community in physical terms — and to Mother Seton's theology: "Nature speaks to us in God's design."

A 2000 assembly and a study of cosmology and feminist cosmology over the years pushed the [Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky](#), an international community (based in the United States, India, Botswana and Nepal), to "scrutinize our lifestyles where we live", said Sr. Susan Gatz.

To help them reach a 2017 goal of zero emissions, they developed principles to guide decision making: protecting Earth and creatures; developing eco-consciousness; caring for the poor and marginalized, especially women; repurposing/relinquishment for mission; and collaboration.

Caroline Cromer, their sustainability director, helps the community implement numerous projects sprung from their years of reflection: a conservation easement on property in Pennsylvania; putting aside carbon offset money from travel to plant trees on their property in all of the countries they serve; bio-gas production and the creation of a plastic-free zone in their Indian community.

Through Caroline, the community is purchasing electric vehicles and battery-run lawn mowers; restoring native habitat; and discovering ways to address medical waste in their sisters' elder care facility. They are also part of a "best practice" collaborative with Loretto, Dominican, and Charity Sisters and other community partners.

Anne Simons-Bucher, filling in via Skype for Joanna Macy (who was ill), shared another example of a life well lived in community at [Canticle Farm, Oakland, California](#).

Among the many surprises of this neighborhood community (intentionally racially mixed), is what she called the "Big Work" — to live in relationships that heal cultural and racial divides. Great honesty, truth telling, love and action are required to address the foundational causes of much of the ecological degradation, human cruelty, and economic disparity.

Two quotes inspire Anne in her "Big Work." St. [Francis of Assisi](#) called followers to their soul work when he said, "I have done what is mine to do. May you do what is yours." And a line from the poet [David Whyte](#) propels one into the far reaches of what is required in our moment: "What you can plan is too small for you to live."

Mabel Najarro, a Salvadoran Sister of Earth living in Victoria, British Columbia, reflected upon the weekend and the meaning of Active Hope:

Active hope is like a magic wound of pure love that always keeps us enlightened and in connection with the positive constructive energy from the universe, even if we are facing darkness in our lives and around the world. Our choices must be taken with consciousness and from the energy of pure love that sustains everything in the universe. From that source, we always are going to harvest the result of our deeds, because the pure love of the universe will never fail.

Author's note: All women are welcome to be part of the Sisters of Earth Network. For information or to join contact Loretta Peters at loretta502@embarqmail.com.

[Joan Brown is a Franciscan Sister from the Rochester, Minnesota, community and the executive director of [New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light](http://www.newmexicointerfaith.org) working on creation care and climate justice.]

<https://www.globalsistersreport.org/column/capital-e-earth/environment/sisters-earth-hopes-and-dreams-55335>

September 4, 2018

Pope: Pray, act to protect clean water, guarantee access to it

By Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Vatican City — Water is a gift of God that makes life possible and yet millions of people do not have access to safe drinking water, and rivers, seas and oceans continue to be polluted, Pope Francis said.

"Care for water sources and water basins is an urgent imperative," the pope said in a message Sept. 1, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, an observance begun by the Orthodox Church and now celebrated by many Christians.

With the world day 2018 focused on water, Francis drew special attention to the more than 600 million people who do not have regular access to clean drinking water.

"Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights," he said, quoting from his encyclical "Laudato Si" on the environment.

"In considering the fundamental role of water in creation and in human development," he wrote, "I feel the need to give thanks to God for 'Sister Water,'" as St. Francis of Assisi said. Water is "simple and useful for life like nothing else on our planet."

Fulfilling the Gospel mandate to give the thirsty something to drink involves more than individual acts of charity, although those are important, he said. It also involves "concrete choices and a constant commitment to ensure to all the primary good of water."

Believers have an obligation to thank God for the gift of water and "to praise him for covering the earth with the oceans," Francis said. But they also have an obligation to work together to keep the oceans clean instead of allowing them to be "littered by endless fields of floating plastic."

Thinking of oceans and seas, also led the pope to think of the thousands of migrants and refugees who "risk their lives at sea in search of a better future."

"Let us ask the Lord and all those engaged in the noble service of politics that the more sensitive questions of our day, such as those linked to movements of migration, climate change and the right of everyone to enjoy primary goods, may be faced with generous and farsighted responsibility and in a spirit of cooperation, especially among those countries most able to help," he wrote.

Francis also offered prayers for people who fish and others who earn their livings at sea, for those who minister to them and for all the scientists and public policy experts who help the public recognize the treasures of the sea and work to protect them.

And, as the Catholic Church prepares for a world Synod of Bishops on young people, he urged Christians to educate and pray for the young "that they may grow in knowledge and respect for our common home and in the desire to care for the essential good of water, for the benefit of all."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/francis-chronicles/pope-pray-act-protect-clean-water-guarantee-access-it>

September 4, 2018

Indigenous Activists Win “David vs. Goliath” Victory as Court Rejects \$4.5B Trans Mountain Pipeline

Democracy Now!

Watch the show here:

https://www.democracynow.org/2018/9/4/indigenous_activists_win_david_v_goliath

This is a rush transcript. Copy may not be in its final form.

Canada’s Federal Court of Appeals has rejected the government’s approval to triple the capacity of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline in a major victory for indigenous groups and environmentalists. On Thursday, Justice Eleanor Dawson nullified licensing for the \$7.4 billion project and brought construction to a halt until the National Energy Board and the federal government complete court-ordered fixes. Her ruling cited inadequate consultations with indigenous peoples affected by the project, and found the National Energy Board’s assessment of the expansion was so flawed that the federal Cabinet should not have relied on it during the approval process. Just minutes after the court’s decision, Kinder Morgan’s shareholders agreed to sell the existing pipeline and the expansion project to the federal government for \$4.5 billion. Prime Minister Trudeau had announced in May that Canada would purchase the pipeline. This means the government now owns the project as its expansion faces years of further review. We speak with Winona LaDuke, Native American activist and executive director of the group Honor the Earth, and Eriel Deranger, founder and executive director of the group Indigenous Climate Action.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: In a major victory for indigenous groups and environmentalists, Canada's Federal Court of Appeals has rejected the government's approval to triple the capacity of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline. On Thursday, Justice Eleanor Dawson nullified licensing for the \$7.4 billion project and brought construction to a halt until the National Energy Board and the federal government complete court-ordered fixes. Her ruling cited inadequate consultations with indigenous peoples affected by the project, and found the National Energy Board's assessment of the expansion was so flawed that the federal Cabinet should not have relied on it during the approval process. She said the report failed to address the impact the project could have on the marine environment near a shipping terminal at the end of the expanded line or the impact of a sevenfold increase in tanker traffic on endangered killer whales in the area.

Hours after the court decision, indigenous groups celebrated the ruling. This is Tsleil-Waututh Chief Rueben George responding to the court decision Thursday.

RUEBEN GEORGE: We're winning. At the beginning, I remember people saying this is a David-and-Goliath fight. And it's true. The spirit of the people that I feel behind me was too big for Kinder Morgan. It was too big.

AMY GOODMAN: In an interesting twist just minutes after the court's decision, Kinder Morgan's shareholders agreed to sell the existing pipeline and the expansion project to the federal government for four-and-a-half billion dollars. Prime Minister Trudeau had announced in May that Canada would purchase the pipeline. This means the government now owns the project as its expansion faces years of further review. Canada's finance minister, Bill Morneau, responded to the developments Thursday.

BILL MORNEAU: We're absolutely committed to moving forward with this project. What the decision today asked us to do was to respond promptly, gave us some direction on how we could do that in a way that was going to be efficient from a time standpoint. So we will—we will be considering our next steps in light of that. What we really saw today was a confirmation that our government's decision to buy this pipeline, because of political risks that were hard for a private-sector actor, was absolutely the right conclusion.

AMY GOODMAN: Kinder Morgan has confirmed its work on the pipeline will now stop, saying in a statement, "Trans Mountain is currently taking measures to suspend construction related activities on the Project in a safe and orderly manner," unquote. Well, all of this prompted Alberta's premier, Rachel Notley, to announce Alberta is pulling out of Canada's federal climate plan.

RACHEL NOTLEY: Until the federal government gets its act together, Alberta is pulling out of the federal climate plan. And let's be clear: Without Alberta, that plan isn't worth the paper it's written on.

AMY GOODMAN: For more, we're joined by Winona LaDuke, Native American activist, executive director of the group Honor the Earth. She lives and works on the White Earth reservation in northern Minnesota, but she is joining us from Mexico City. And joining us from

Alberta, Canada, by phone is Eriel Deranger, founder and executive director of the group Indigenous Climate Action, a member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation.

We welcome you both to *Democracy Now!* Well, let's go north first to Eriel. Your response to the judge's decision and what this means for First Nations' opposition to this pipeline?

ERIEL DERANGER: Well, I think, first off, we have to consider the fact that this isn't the first time that the federal court has ruled in favor of First Nations. In 2016, we saw that, with respect to the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline, that it found that the previous administration had failed to adequately consult with First Nations. This is another case where consultation is flawed.

We have to consider what this actually means. The consultation process in this country is fundamentally broken and doesn't actually uphold international standards that are outlined within the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. And that is really the fundamental thing, that we need to be achieving free, prior and informed consent. And we're not getting that through the consultation process. And we have to look at what we're doing wrong in this country, and take actual measures to correct it. And that means giving communities the right to say no. And that's not happening here.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: And I'd like to ask you—in terms of Prime Minister Trudeau, on the one hand, he claims that he is a leading fighter trying to halt climate change; on the other hand, he's continuing to pursue the exploitation of fossil fuels in Canada. Can you talk about his situation right now?

ERIEL DERANGER: Yeah, you know, this is exactly it. The fact of the matter is, is that we are not talking about moving the line towards taking aggressive steps to take action on climate change, but we're talking about building a giant constructed pipeline that will carry Alberta's bitumen, which is extracted from my people's territory, that increases global climate change by adding enormous amounts of emissions annually. And we're talking about a government that's doing whatever it takes to get this pipeline built, so that we can continue to create emissions rather than decreasing emissions like the rest of the world.

AMY GOODMAN: Can you talk about what it means that the shareholders have just voted, Trans Mountain, that, yes, the government can buy it for four-and-a-half billion dollars? So that means you all own it now, and yet the judge has ruled against it moving forward.

ERIEL DERANGER: Well, this is just it. We are out \$4.5 billion in this country because of government's lack of ability to look at the fact that indigenous rights actually hold weight. They hold their weight in this country. The court has continued to rule on our side, that the government is failing to do this. And now we're out \$4.5 [billion]. I think that is the reason why Trudeau and the government is trying to save face by saying, "We're going to do whatever it takes to build it," because now they're on the hook for the \$4.5 billion bill.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: I'd like to bring in Winona LaDuke, director of the group Honor the Earth. Your reaction to the decision of the Canadian federal court?

WINONA LADUKE: Well, first, I want to say that Canada has a problem. I mean, they don't have a plan B for their economy. You have to remember that Canada is the tar sands producer, and they're trying to figure out how to milk the tar sands in the face of, you know, everything is burning, from California to the Arctic. The other thing is, is that, you know, they are—75 percent of the world's mining corporations are Canadian. And so, Canadians—the Canadian economy is predicated on this still “let's just mine it, let's suck it out, let's ship it to someplace” staples economy. So, Canada needs an economic restructuring. That's what it needs in order for us to deal with some of the problems that we're facing, you know, across the board.

Now, of course, you know, we are all really pleased with this, because the fact is, is that these are illegal and immoral pipelines. What Eriel is talking about, the idea of free, prior and informed consent, that's a U.N. standard. That's a United Nations standard for relations between state governments and indigenous nations or First Nations. That's not being upheld by Canada, and that's certainly not being upheld by the United States. Canada's approach is pretty much gunboat diplomacy, as it is in the United States: “We will starve you until you come to an agreement to host a pipeline or host a mine.” That's how Canada operates. That's how the U.S. operates. But this court has said, “You're not going to do that. And, in fact, you're going to have to get consent from these people.” So it's a very, very important decision for all of us.

AMY GOODMAN: Winona LaDuke, you're in Mexico City right now, but you were arrested last week in Bemidji, Minnesota, as you were opposing the Enbridge Line 3 oil pipeline, the pipeline that would carry tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada, to a terminal in Superior, Wisconsin. In June, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission approved that pipeline. Can you talk about why you were arrested and how that pipeline links to this Canadian decision?

WINONA LADUKE: Yeah. I mean, the state of Minnesota has had this long process. For six years I've been facing down the barrel of the Enbridge pipelines. And every agency in the state of Minnesota and the administrative law judge, after reviewing 72,000 comments, of which 68,000 comments were opposing the pipeline, and as much additional written testimony, recommended against issuing a certificate of need and against issuing a permit for the route. In a rogue decision, unprecedented in Minnesota history, the Public Utilities Commission, five members said they felt like they had a gun to their head by Enbridge—the gun meaning that Enbridge would just let Line 3 collapse and break and leak all over northern Minnesota—therefore, they felt they had to issue this permit. We all know that that's wrong. One, you should remove the gun, because you're the regulatory agency. And you shouldn't buckle to a Canadian pipeline corporation that now wants a seventh pipeline across your territory.

Yes, you are right, I got cited last week—we call it kind of like “arrest-lite”—in downtown Bemidji with about 26 other people, mostly members of the Ojibwe Nation and church people, as well as the board chair of the Sierra Club, for opposing this line. And what we're trying to point out also is that in the final days of the final negotiations on the pipeline, right in front of us, at the Public Utilities Commission, one of the PUC commissioners turns to Enbridge and says, “Will you pay for the police required to put in this pipeline?” In other words, “Will you finance the brutalization of Minnesotans in order to get your pipeline in, Enbridge?” And Enbridge said yes. And so, we have, you know, a multiagency task force out of Bemidji now that is preparing to launch—you know, we saw an LRAD, long-range acoustic device, and MRAP heading up to

northern Minnesota. We are seeing the beginning of policing. And so, what we're pointing out is, is that thousands of people are going to get arrested in Minnesota, if they proceed with a pipeline which is immoral, and it is illegal, and goes across our territory.

You know, I also want to say, Amy, you may remember that two years ago on this day is known as the day of the dogs. That is the day, on Standing Rock, when you were charged, and the dogs were released on our people as the Energy Transfer Partners moved ahead and bulldozed sacred sites for the Dakota Access pipeline. And I think that you also know that the Enbridge Corporation owns 28 percent of that Energy Transfer Partners pipeline, the Dakota Access pipeline. And so, we are fully aware of how brutal Enbridge can be. And that's why we stood there to get arrested, to say, "You should not do that to our people. It is wrong to do."

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Eriel Deranger, I wanted to ask you about the debate among the peoples of the First Nations in Alberta in terms of the pipeline, because, obviously, also the energy industry employs a lot of folks in that area. Your sense of how the debate is going on among the First Nations?

ERIEL DERANGER: Well, you know, I think Winona hit the nail right on the head with her explanation of what it's like in the U.S. People feel as though they have a gun to their head. It's not making the best choice for your people. It's making the best choice out of a slew of options that are going to really, you know, undermine your people's rights, are going to destroy the environment, they're going to impede people's health and safety, or you have a roof over your head and food on your table, and you can like, you know, put clothes on the backs of your children. This is the reality, is our communities are put in economic hostage situations. As the number one employer in the region, our communities are forced into a corner to make really hard decisions.

And I have a lot of relatives, family members, that are employed by this industry, that also support the opposition to the Trans Mountain pipeline, that support the opposition to the continued expansion of the Alberta tar sands in our backyard. But when it comes down to leadership, our leadership has been coerced through bribery, through coercion by the government, coercion by the companies themselves, to make deals. And what we're looking to do in this region, rather than look for the consent of indigenous communities, is we're looking for what it's going to take monetarily to get communities to finally buckle under the pressure, the financial pressures that exist within our territories.

So, as far as the debate goes, it's really, really mixed. People don't know what to do anymore. They feel really locked into this economy, and they feel forced to make decisions that they don't necessarily agree with. And we're not really being given any other options. Like we're hearing about Line 3 in the region here, they're saying that we need these pipelines in order to make transportation of oil safer. It's one or the other, not a good decision for our communities to be making.

AMY GOODMAN: We want to thank you both for being with us. We're going to do [Part 2](#) and post it online at democracynow.org. Eriel Deranger, speaking to us from Alberta, Indigenous Climate Action. Winona LaDuke, Native American activist with Honor the Earth.

September 6, 2018

Why Defending Indigenous Rights Is Integral to Fighting Climate Change

By Jade Begay and Ayşe Gürsöz
Common Dreams

Even as the Trump administration rolls back regulations meant to protect Americans from pollution, the EPA recently released a [report](#) that finds that people of color are much more likely to breathe toxic air than their white counterparts. The study's basic findings—that non-whites bear a higher burden in terms of pollution that leads to a range of poor health outcomes—is supported by other [similar studies](#), and underpins the issue of environmental injustice that impacts many politically marginalized communities.

It's these communities that are hardest hit by the climate crisis—even though they are the least responsible for causing it. In addition, these communities, by design, are most imperiled by environmentally devastating extractive industries like coal mining, tar sands, fracked gas, and more. Let's be clear: Climate change isn't just a scientific issue—it's an issue of racial inequity, economic inequity and cultural genocide.

Indigenous peoples around the world are quickly becoming the generation that can no longer swim in their own waters, fish in their rivers, hunt their traditional foods or pick their traditional medicines. The climate isn't just changing the landscape—it's hurting the culture, sovereignty, health, economies and lifeways of Indigenous peoples around the world. Yet despite the immense impacts climate change and fossil fuel industries have on Indigenous cultures and ways of life, Indigenous communities are tremendously resilient.

This was strikingly clear at the [17th Protecting Mother Earth conference](#), where tribal leadership and environmental activists called for a unified front to help find solutions. Hosted by the [Indigenous Environmental Network](#), the Nisqually Indian Tribe and [Indigenous Climate Action](#), the conference provided a space for hundreds to come together to share lessons, celebrate victories, and build stronger alliances to defend and protect land, water, the climate, and Indigenous rights.

“We Native people will always be here, standing up to protect the land and water,” said Nisqually Tribal Councilman Hanford McCloud during the conference's opening ceremony. “We will always be the voice of those on the frontlines who continue to fight against the violation of Indigenous treaty rights, self-determination, environmental justice, and climate change.”

It's essential to note that Indigenous vulnerability and resilience to climate change cannot be detached from the context of colonialism, which created both the economic conditions for

climate change and the social conditions that continue to limit the capacity for Indigenous resistance and resilience. Both historically and in the present, climate change itself is thoroughly tied to colonial practices. Greenhouse gas production over the last two centuries hinged on the dispossession of Indigenous lands and resources.

Since the fracking industry began on Casey Camp-Horinek's reservation in Ponca, Oklahoma, tribal members have experienced a [spike in cancer](#). She says that since fracking began there, her small community [averages a death per week](#). The water wells on her reservation are now [too toxic to drink](#). "They need to understand that what they call resources, we call life sources. We all know that water is life. The years of fish kills related to the fracking and injection wells amount to environmental genocide."

Eriel Deranger, Executive Director of Indigenous Climate Action, expressed during a press conference that the U.S. and Canada, by further investing in dirty energy projects that infringe on Indigenous rights of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (like Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline, Energy Transfer Partners' Bayou Bridge pipeline, Enbridge's Line 3 pipeline, and TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline, to name a few) are making decisions and policies that move society further away from a climate-stable future. "They aren't adhering to international climate commitments," said Deranger, who is a member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. "This is an indication that we the people, Indigenous peoples, must be prepared to take real action on climate change and be the leaders for the protection of Mother Earth."

The conference was held in an especially significant location: Frank's Landing, named after the late Billy Frank Jr., who led the historical stronghold where the Nisqually Tribe stood up in non-violent direct action during the 1960s and '70s to defend their way of life and their inherent treaty rights to hunt, fish and gather. The Fish Wars stand today as one of the most important civil rights moments for Indigenous rights in the Pacific Northwest. "We watched our elders get beat up right here. Hauled off," said Don McCloud Jr., father of Hanford, and the oldest son of Don McCloud Sr., a central leader of the Fish Wars. "We suffered many things. But we're not here to complain. The struggle still goes on. The battle is still here. We might have won one fight, but we're here continuing the fight for Mother Earth."

The event, which ran from June 28 through July 1, included plenary sessions with key speakers and break-out sessions addressing themes ranging from Just Transition, Climate Justice, Environmental Health, Rights of Mother Earth and more. One particular session, which featured a delegation from Alaska, demonstrated just how dramatic an impact climate change is having on the landscape and traditional lifeways.

Adrienne Blatchford, a member of the Inupiaq Tribe living in Unalakleet, Alaska, said:

"The cost of development is the land. And that right there is so profound to me, because no amount of oil money can pay to relocate our villages or subsidize any kind of living in the way that we have done since time immemorial, it can't compensate for that. Indigenous people are connected to the food and to the land. Without it we get sick. It's genetic. It's something we have to have to provide for ourselves through the land. There is a spiritual connection that we have to these animals and what it provides."

According to Blatchford and her team at [Native Movement](#), climate change is drastically changing the landscape, which translates to major disruptions of deeply rooted cultural traditions. There are fewer moose, beavers and salmon, which are traditional sources of food. In the fall and winter, due to starvation, wolves began to attack dogs and people. The rapidly melting permafrost is causing trees to fall down, and fewer trees mean less shade, which causes more melting. Even flowers that are supposed to be pink and blue are now turning up white. Blatchford's colleague Misty Nickoli, a member of the Denaá and Tsimshian tribes, adds that "those details are important because it's everything. From our land to animals to our weather to our water. When all those things are upset, the people, our health, gets out of balance and we get sick too. And when we don't have our food to take in as our medicine, we stay sick and we get sicker."

Indigenous communities around the world have struggled to maintain their cultural identity and cultural practices through initial and ongoing periods of colonialism, genocide and forced assimilation. A USDA report, "[Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples: A Synthesis of Current Impacts and Experiences.](#)" notes that "this history has provided many indigenous communities with valuable adaptation experience to inform climate-change adaptation, resilience and resistance."

Once such instance is the Black Mesa Water Coalition, which first formed in 2001 to address issues of water depletion, natural resource exploitation and public health within Navajo and Hopi communities. "Our emphasis is on healing and decolonization—as individuals, communities and as our culture," said Jihan Gearon, a member of the Diné nation and Executive Director of Black Mesa Water Coalition, during a plenary presentation. "How can we transition our economy to reflect those things? We have a term 'Just Transition.' We know the situation we're in right now is bad, and we know where we want to go. Culture revitalization. Healthy communities, lands and water. Just Transition means how do we get from A to B."

Even the seemingly groundbreaking Paris Agreement neither includes human rights in its text nor acknowledges Indigenous rights—even though lands and waters stewarded by Indigenous communities make up 80 percent of the world's biodiversity. What we need is for climate policy and the overall climate movement to address problems of inequality, because climate change is just as much a social issue as it is an environmental issue.

We need to ask ourselves what kind of world we want to live in. And who is going to lead us into that world? Sadly, we cannot count on the Trump administration. We also can't look to so-called climate heroes such as California's Governor Jerry Brown, whose climate policy leans on the market-based carbon trading systems, which are widely criticized as false solutions that further exploit Indigenous lands and peoples.

From Standing Rock to the pipeline fights happening across the U.S. and Canada, Indigenous peoples are leading the resistance to extreme fossil fuels. We all need to stand with them and call for grassroots solutions that center Indigenous traditional knowledge. Our next opportunity to do this is in September during the Global Climate Action Summit, where grassroots groups from across the nation and world will host [a week of action](#) to counter the false solutions being celebrated there.

This article is part of a content partnership between Rainforest Action Network (RAN) and Earth / Food / Life, a project of the Independent Media Institute, and was originally published by EcoWatch. RAN supported travel of Indigenous representatives to attend the Protecting Mother Earth Conference as a part of Community Action Grants

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2018/09/06/why-defending-indigenous-rights-integral-fighting-climate-change>

September 7, 2018

Blessing of the Waves brings religions together this Sunday for one common love: the ocean

By Laylan Connelly
Orange County Register

Water is a bridge – a part of nature that bonds people, even if they have different beliefs.

That’s how Blessing of the Waves organizer Dave Garofalo described the multi-religious event happening Sunday, Sept. 9 on the north side of the Huntington Beach Pier, a gathering that draws an estimated 1,000 people to share traditions and give tribute to the sea.

“It brings everyone together,” Garofalo said. “It’s a reflection of how important the environment is to us, particularly in Huntington Beach. In every religion, water plays some part.”

Now in its 11th year, the event is put on by the Greater Huntington Beach Interfaith Council, which aims at joining various religious groups together to share their beliefs and to educate others on their traditions.

There are two words Garofalo uses when he thinks of the annual event:

Better together.

“There’s no doubt, everyone looks at their own religion as their own way of life,” he said. “We don’t really care what you call your god – your god is your god. We’re more better together because we believe in something. I think that’s what brings us together.”

Remembering late leaders

In addition to various religions sharing their beliefs and talking about how water and the ocean play a part in their religions, a special tribute will be made to two leaders in the religious and surfing community who passed away earlier this year.

Pastor Sumo Sato, who ran H2O in Huntington Beach and who died of colon cancer in March, and Rev. Christian Mondor of Sts. Simon & Jude Catholic Church, known as the “surfing padre”

and who died the following month, will be remembered with a bronze statue to be placed on the pier near lifeguard tower zero.

“Both of them were an integral part of our community, particularly of our surfing community,” Garofalo said.

Sato, an avid surfer from Hawaii and chaplain for Huntington’s Marine Safety Department, could be found on most day riding waves on his longboard on the north side of the Huntington pier.

Sumo spoke at the 2016 Blessing of the Waves after learning he had been diagnosed with cancer.

He talked about surrendering to God, and told a story about nearly dying in Hawaiian surf in October, at first panicking but then recognizing he was being cared for by a higher power. At that event, he thanked the crowd for their prayers as he battled cancer.

Mondor rode waves until a heart attack at age 88, but continued to be a spiritual voice in the surfing community by leading prayer at community events such as the Surfing Walk of Fame each year.

Each year at the Blessing of the Waves, Mondor would bless the crowd with rosemary branches soaked in salt water:

“We ask your blessing upon all the creatures that inhabit the sea, from the smallest plankton to the formidable sharks and humpback whales, for they all have a place in the order of your creation...

“But please keep the great whites always in their space, and not in ours,” he said, drawing a chuckle from the crowd.

Mondor would then lead a group down to the water, saying a prayer before surfers gathered for a paddle-out, where they hold hands in a circle.

He would often talk about the ocean’s beauty.

“It’s God’s great gift to us all,” Mondor said in front of the crowd in 2103. “It’s wonderful to have this opportunity to say thank you to a lovely God who has given us this great gift.”

‘Walk away smiling’

With the surf expected to be strong – in the 4-7 foot range with some larger sets – it’s unclear whether surfers will hold the paddle out in the ocean after the ceremony in the Pier Plaza.

“But it’s the weather – when is the weather ever right” Garofalo asked.

Even if the paddle-out doesn't happen, those who attend will learn much about how the ocean plays a part in various religions from around the world, he said.

“When people do that, you learn you have more in common than you have differences. I never in my life would have gone to a synagogue, a temple, a mosque – and I've been able to do that by participating in the Interfaith Council, because we visit all those places,” he said. “You walk away smiling, even if you do things differently.”

When: Sunday, Sept. 9, 8:30 a.m.

Where: North side of the Huntington Beach Pier in the Pier Plaza

More info: ghbic.org

<https://www.ocregister.com/2018/09/07/blessing-of-the-waves-brings-religions-together-for-one-common-love-the-ocean/>

September 11, 2018

Leaning Toward Interdependence: A Conversation with Mary Evelyn Tucker and Demo Rinpoche

By Lauren Griffith
Garrison Institute

During the Garrison Institute's recent symposium, [Pathways Toward Planetary Health](#), we explored the intersection of four emerging ideas – Half-Earth, an Ecological Civilization, Regenerative Economics, and Pervasive Altruism. In our fourth follow-up conversation, we sit down with Mary Evelyn Tucker and Demo Rinpoche to discuss the role of pervasive altruism and the value of connecting spirituality, ecology, and the moral life.

Mary Evelyn Tucker is a Senior Lecturer and Research Scholar at Yale University. She teaches in the joint MA program in religion and ecology and directs the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale with her husband, John Grim. Her special area of study is Asian religions. She received her Ph.D. from Columbia University in Japanese Confucianism. Her concern for the growing environmental crisis, especially in Asia, led her to organize with John Grim a series of ten conferences on World Religions and Ecology at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard (1995-1998). Ten books on World Religions and Ecology were published by Harvard from this series.

Demo Rinpoche is a reincarnated Tibetan Lama. The Dalai Lama recognized him as 11th Demo Rinpoche at the age of 5. He entered Drepung Loseling monastery and received his Geshe Lharampa degree from Gelukpa University. In 2012, he joined Gyumey monastery for tantric

studies. He is most recently studied Interfaith Engagement at Union Theological Seminary in the United States.

Lauren Griffith: I'd like to start by asking why a discussion on morals, attitudes, and the interior life is important to ecology and what promise you see.

Mary Evelyn Tucker: I think we all know that science has given us the information. Law has given us a legal focus. Economics gives us a business perspective. Technology gives us new sources of energy and so on. But the missing link for some time has been the spiritual transformation, and that is, of course, what the Garrison Institute represents very well. A sense of consciousness and conscience that the great world religions and spiritual practices offer to humans from time immemorial, if you will.

And that particular perspective also has the potential to change people ethically and morally, to take a position from the depths of their both reflections, meditation, and practice from contemplation to action.

Lauren Griffith: You've spoken a great deal in the past about the problem and promise that religion holds.

Mary Evelyn Tucker: That's such an important point because I think it's very honest to say at the beginning, we all know these religions in their institutional forms have their so-called limits, their dark sides, their distortions, and so on. So, by acknowledging that, we say with humility, religions have something to offer in dialogue with science, economics, and policy.

But the promise here is, just as in the civil rights movement, when Martin Luther King, Jr. and other religious leaders came on board and said segregation is a moral evil and we must change this. It changed the landscape of American society by holding segregation up as a moral issue around the dignity of the human. So, we've recognized the problems, but we also understand there's great promise here for the future.

Lauren Griffith: Demo Rinpoche, was there anything in particular that led you to dive deeper into this crossover of ecology and Buddhism in particular? What makes Buddhism a unique wisdom leader in this field?

Demo Rinpoche: I think Buddhism is unique in a few ways. From a Buddhist perspective, all sentient beings are equal, no matter if they are human or non-human beings. So, we see, for example, the Buddha nature in all sentient beings. And even if they are an animal in this life, they could be a human being in the next life. So, we see a similar worth in human beings and non-human beings. So, I think this is one special way Buddhism offers a unique perspective. The other way can be found in the Mahayana tradition. They really see all existing things as interdependent. Nothing is a single independent thing, so everything links to other beings. So, that means Buddhism is really important in ecological study.

We can also talk about exchanging self and the other, which is based on interdependence. It means that everybody is self, and everybody is the other. There's not such a big difference

between self and others. I think that this is important in order for us to be concerned about future generations. I think we need to understand there is no difference between the people of this generation and the future generation of people.

Mary Evelyn Tucker: I love what you've just said, Demo Rinpoche, in three wonderful points. The Buddha nature in all things, both human and natural, is a special gift of Buddhism.

And the sense that there's a Buddha-nature in plants, and in animals, in rivers, and forests, and clouds, and so on. So, I think that's a hugely important gift of Buddhism to this discussion. And then, just to pick up on interdependence, which of course your tradition, Tibetan Buddhism, has as well as Huayan Buddhism in China, and with the interdependent notion of Indra's net where all of reality is reflected through the diamonds that connect the net. And finally, I love your point that there's no difference between the self now and the self of future generations. I think that is such an important point because we haven't yet, I think, expanded our consciousness to say the children of all species are now at risk, right, unless we think about that in a more robust and careful way.

Lauren Griffith: Expanding beyond Buddhism, I'm curious to hear from both of you about some of the potential for interfaith dialogue. How can different traditions learn from each other and teach the secular world as they reshape these environmental morals and values?

Mary Evelyn Tucker: This is a very important question. They can learn from each other, clearly, and they can also learn from science. Science is beginning to take this moral and spiritual perspective much more seriously. But it's always been our view, in the Forum on Religion and Ecology, that one of the best things about this dialogue and mutual learning is that religions can overcome the defense that their tradition is best, that they know best, or they have the way. This creates a humility that can help us to work together for the planetary future.

So, we've called the religions out of their small self to their larger self, to cooperate for something that is of great urgency and gaining momentum. And in that sense, we're also learning that the languages that are used by each of these traditions have to be respected but also enhanced and grown. I think we're learning how to articulate the ecological dimension of these traditions and also to cooperate in action, moving forward.

Demo Rinpoche: I really like what you said, a small self called to a large self. I think all religions are formed from learning from other traditions. And I don't think there's such a religion that formed independently. So, even Buddhism learned a lot of things from all of the Indian traditions. And likewise, the Abrahamic religions, too.

I think religions can learn something from each other because it is wrong to think your religion is totally right and another religion is totally wrong. So, if they're honest, they should learn from each other.

Mary Evelyn Tucker: I think we have to keep in mind that interreligious dialogue is fairly new in the human community, even though, of course, it took place historically all throughout Asia,

with a great deal of syncretism and mingling of Buddhism and Confucianism and Daoism in China, for example, and so on.

But I think formally, in the modern period, when the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church in the early 1960s said there's truth in other religions, and we must be dialoguing with them. That set in motion a more formal sense of dialogue trying to understand the traditions, and be respectful, and of course tolerant. And now, we're at a second stage where it's not just stating what your religious beliefs and practices are, but it's about how can we work together for this common good and common future.

So, that's why I think the question is very important, and I know that in the Himalayan region, a number of the Buddhist monasteries are doing work on climate change, and educating monks and laity on these issues. The Karmapa is doing this in at least 30 monasteries. So, there's a lot of on-the-ground work being done, and I think more non-governmental organizations and environmental groups are now cooperating and helping to change not only environmental practices but the values behind them that are so crucial.

Demo Rinpoche: I always think about how religions also need to update, right? What we can learn from science is that science is not set in the abstract. It's set on what we can see and what's happening. It's very practical. I think religious people need to assess and understand what scientists know. We cannot ignore science from the religious perspective. Because if religious people ignore science, then that means they ignore reality. The other point is that religions are really powerful and really [protected] in many countries, even now. So, I think only a religious leader can lead people to care about the environment.

Mary Evelyn Tucker: I think that's very well said. Thank you. And I wanted to bring that back to what we're doing. We're at a school here at the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale, and we've been teaching here, my husband, John Grim and I for twelve years, and it's very clear that we need the science, and we need to be in dialogue with science. And, in fact, sometimes those people on the religious side need some humility to work with the scientists who have been way ahead on these issues for several decades now, and religious communities are coming on board more in the last ten and twenty years. But especially in the last five years, I think there's been a great growth of religiously-based environmentalism and a new opening with science. The American Association for the Advancement of Science is very interested in this perspective. The Ecological Society of America has had, in their annual meetings, panels on religion and ecology.

And I wanted to come back to one of the most promising signs, documents, if you will, that does bring together science and religion, and that is Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si*, issued a few years ago. He begins with the science of ecology and says this is where we all need to begin. And then, he brings to bear, as you said so well too, the ethical, spiritual perspectives that need to go forward. And I wanted to underscore that Bill McKibben, one of the great American environmentalists, has said he feels the encyclical is probably the most important document of the 21st century. We might say so far. But I think that's very important for all of us to keep in mind because Bill has written many books, blurbed many books, read many books. And for him to say that gives a special sense of promise and hope for the religion and ecology movement.

Clearly, that encyclical is addressed not only to Catholics and Christians but people around the planet. And every religious tradition has responded to it. So, if we can keep moving forward with that possibility of transformation of people and the planet, of ecology and justice that Pope Francis puts forward, with a call to all of the world's religions, I think we have a great possibility, as well as great challenges ahead of us.

Demo Rinpoche: I think the Pope's letter is really important, and it's really a remarkable thing in this century for a great religious leader to use science and reality and help to open people's eyes. His Holiness Dalai Lama, a long time ago, started to talk about the environment as well. But still, I think there are other many religious leaders who also need to assess what is happening right in the front of their eyes. They need to support environmental care.

Mary Evelyn Tucker: I'm so glad that you brought His Holiness the Dalai Lama into the conversation. I think the Dalai Lama was, as you said, one of the very first to understand the critical nature of our environmental crisis, to highlight the role of Buddhism, and to invite other religions onboard. So, in my view, he has been early, central, critical, and consistent on these issues. And a great leader, almost unmatched, especially in the early years. And now, as you're saying, we need more of that stature, and it's great to have the Pope and, of course, the Greek Orthodox patriarch Bartholomew, who have been speaking out on these issues for twenty-some years. More leaders are needed, as well as lay people, who can articulate with passion, conviction, and action the transformations that are needed.

Lauren Griffith is a recent graduate of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and the Yale Divinity School.

<https://www.garrisoninstitute.org/blog/leaning-toward-interdependence/>

September 11, 2018

19 more Catholic institutions divest from fossil fuel industry

By Dennis Sadowski
Crux

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and Caritas India are among 19 Catholic institutions that have decided to divest from the fossil fuel industry.

The Global Catholic Climate Movement joined other organizations in announcing the latest group of dozens of institutions to divest Sept. 10, ahead of the Global Climate Action Summit Sept. 12-14 in San Francisco.

Tomas Insua, GCCM executive director, told *Catholic News Service* the expanding divestment movement comes as the world sees the impact of fossil fuel consumption on climate change and the resulting extreme weather.

He cited the recent unprecedented floods in Kerala state in southwest India as a result of a warming planet and pointed to Caritas India's decision to fully divest as "powerful testimony" to the pressing issues posed by climate change.

In total, 122 Catholic entities have divested since the GCCM campaign began in 2016.

Bishop Lumen Monteiro of Argatala, India, chairman of Caritas India, said in a statement released by GCCM that climate change has negatively impacted the livelihood throughout India, especially in poor and marginalized communities.

"The frequency of extreme climate events has increased in the last decade, and the latest one in Kerala has taken the lives of more than 400 people and displaced more than 1 million people. It will take them a long time to overcome this tragedy," he said.

"At Caritas India, our mission is to bring the Gospel's love and compassion to people who need it, and to do that we must step away from fossil fuels that cause so much suffering," the bishop added.

The Irish bishops decided to divest during their recent general meeting and it involves divestment from the top 200 oil and gas companies as measured by reserves within five years, GCCM said.

The bishops' action came as Pope Francis prepared to attend the World Meeting of Families in Ireland Aug. 25-26. The announcement came from Bishop William Crean of Cloyne, Ireland, and chairman of Trocaire, the Irish Church's overseas development and relief agency.

"Trocaire is to the fore in terms of tackling the disruption that climate change is already causing to our living environment. ... Climate change is already leading to forced migration, separation of families and increased pressure on resources," Crean said in a statement.

"Avoiding further climate change and protecting our common home requires a major change in direction, as Pope Francis outlines in *Laudato Si'*. In particular, it requires a major shift in our energy and investment policies away from highly polluting fossil fuels toward cleaner renewable energy," he said.

Francis has supported ethical investment, most recently in June when he addressed the heads of fossil fuel companies and financial firms at the Vatican. He called on the executives to embrace a new kind of leadership that believes in building the whole human family while protecting the environment and to use fossil fuel alternatives to mitigate the effects of global warming.

Insua said the pope's stance has helped institutional leaders move forward with plans to pull funds from petroleum and natural gas interests in favor of investing in the growing renewable and alternative energy firms.

"How the pope is talking about the negative role that fossil fuel is playing has given us more of an argument for fossil fuel divestment," Insua said.

Among other institutions divesting are Franciscan Friars TOR Society in Bangladesh; Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network, the Sisters of Clarissen of Ostend and the Sister of Charity of Jesus and Mary in Belgium; Our Lady of Good Counsel Institute in Montreal; Archdiocese of Suva, Fiji; Indian Catholic Matters, an online news source; Mercy International Association in Ireland; the archdioceses of Palermo and Vercelli in Italy; Jesuit Conference of Africa, Justice and Ecology Office in Kenya; World Apostolate of Fatima in Pakistan, Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the United States; and Catholic banks in Austria and Germany.

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2018/09/11/19-more-catholic-institutions-divest-from-fossil-fuel-industry/>

September 12, 2018

World leaders, faith groups gather for Global Climate Action Summit

By Brian Roewe
National Catholic Reporter

In an effort to move beyond promises and pledges, leaders from around the world have joined the faith community and others this week in San Francisco to put on display actions under way to address the global threat of climate change, and to mobilize even more.

The three-day Global Climate Action Summit officially opened Sept. 12, and is expected to draw more than 4,000 delegates to the Bay Area. Its primary focus is showcasing the steps taken so far toward fulfilling the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement. Under that accord, 195 nations committed to limit average global temperature rise "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), and as low as 1.5 C (2.7 F).

While the summit, hosted by California Gov. Jerry Brown, will highlight achievements to date in implementing the Paris Agreement — announcements of progress and new commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by cities, regions, organizations and companies are expected throughout the three days — it also aims to push the global community to "take ambition to the next level," the gathering's theme.

As it stands, the world is lagging behind in its climate commitments.

Scientists have estimated the planet has already warmed 1 C since the late 19th century and that the initial national pledges under the Paris accord will yield an overall temperature rise of 3 C by the end of the century. In addition, [few countries are on track](#) to meet their commitments, and funding for the Green Climate Fund, to assist developing nations in implementing climate mitigation efforts, has been [slow to materialize](#).

The next round of United Nations climate talks, in Katowice, Poland, in December, will serve as the first official stock take of global progress.

"Climate change is the defining issue of our time, and we are at a defining moment," António Guterres, U.N. Secretary General, said [in a speech Monday](#) at U.N. headquarters in New York. He added that if the world doesn't change course by 2020, "we risk missing the point where we can avoid runaway climate change."

Ahead of the San Francisco climate summit's opening, environmental activists staged a series of demonstrations around the world to demand governments commit to 100-percent renewable energy and to leave fossil fuel reserves in the ground. The faith community played an active role, joining some of the estimated 900 actions in Indonesia, Australia, Nigeria and San Francisco.

"God has made the earth green and beautiful. And there is no greater threat to our 'green and beautiful' earth than the more frequent and intense droughts, floods, storms and wildfire brought by climate change, which knows no barrier," said Nana Firman, co-founder of the Global Muslim Climate Network.

The summit comes in the middle of the [Season of Creation](#), a month-long observation among Christians of prayer and celebration for God's gift of creation and humanity's duty to care for it.

On Wednesday afternoon, a multi-faith service in San Francisco's Grace Cathedral, [to be live-streamed](#), will feature messages from the Dalai Lama and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. It will also call on people of faith to commit to a sustainable lifestyle, through adopting renewable energy use and plant-based diets at home, and using sustainable transportation.

Earlier in the day, Catholic Climate Covenant executive director Dan Misleh highlighted actions taken by the U.S. Catholic Church at a forum hosted by We Are Still In — a coalition of 3,500 U.S. governors, mayors and other leaders who have promised to fulfill the U.S. commitment under the Paris Agreement despite President Donald Trump's [decision to withdraw](#) the country from the deal at the earliest opportunity.

"Catholics are still in. We still are in to care with you for our common home, our children, our vulnerable neighbors and our shared future," Misleh said.

In April, the Covenant [launched a parallel "Catholics Are Still In" campaign](#), which as of Sept. 10 has garnered 760 institutions to sign onto the Catholic Climate Declaration expressing the U.S. Catholic community's commitment to climate action. The signatories include 43 archdioceses and dioceses, 71 colleges and universities, nearly 250 religious communities, more than 150 parishes and more than a dozen healthcare systems.

In his comments at the We Are Still In forum, Misleh noted that Catholic institutions represent one-fifth of all those in the campaign. He added the Catholics Are Still In effort "adds a distinctively moral voice to the wider WASI campaign," and called it an "abdication" of responsibility and moral leadership for the U.S. to exit the Paris Agreement.

Another event, set for Friday [at the University of San Francisco](#), will further highlight what Catholics have done to reduce their environmental footprint and what steps they can take next. A portion will be [live-streamed](#).

Two days before the climate action summit's official kickoff, 19 Catholic institutions announced intentions to divest their financial resources from fossil fuels. With that latest joint divestment declaration, 122 Catholic organizations and religious communities have now publicly made the pledge to divest, according to Global Catholic Climate Movement, which has catalyzed much of the church's divestment push in the past two years.

At a divestment press conference Sept. 10, Tomas Insua, Global Catholic Climate Movement executive director, credited Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home" as having "lit the fire of Catholic fossil fuel divestment."

Among the latest is Caritas India, which continues to recover from devastating flooding in Kerala, a southwestern Indian state, that has killed more than 400 people and displaced nearly 1.3 million more.

Bishop Lumen Monteiro, chairman of Caritas India, said in a statement said it will take "a long time to overcome this tragedy." He added that the world's second-most populous country has witnessed an increase of extreme climate events like the flooding in Kerala over the past decade, and that climate change has "negatively impacted" its people, particularly the poor and marginalized.

"At Caritas India our mission is to bring the gospel's love and compassion to people who need it, and to do that we must step away from the fossil fuels that cause so much suffering," Monteiro said.

At the press conference, Fr. Paul Moonjely, Caritas India executive director, called upon other faith groups and institutions "to divest and engage in creating a new world. A world not of exploitation but compassion."

The event, organized by the Divest-Invest Network, highlighted the divestment movement's progress to date: 985 institutions, with faith-based organizations the leading segment, at 29 percent, having divested an estimated \$6.24 trillion. In an [op-ed in the Guardian](#) Sept. 10, the mayors of New York and London challenged other cities to join them in divesting from fossil fuel companies.

In terms of U.S. efforts, [a report released Sept. 11](#) indicated the country is "almost halfway" to meeting its original target under the Paris Agreement of reducing emissions by 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025. Current policies, combined with market forces, could result in a 17-percent emissions reduction by 2025, it added, with implementation of "readily available" measures driving the emissions reduction to 21 percent. The "Fulfilling America's Pledge" report also offered a roadmap to reducing emissions by at least 80 percent by 2050.

Critics, including Pope Francis, have routinely argued that the U.S. and other industrialized nations should bear the brunt of efforts to reduce emissions, as the largest sources of the historical buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Kim Pozniak, a spokesperson for Catholic Relief Services, applauded the U.N. secretary general for "sounding the alarm about climate change in front of a global audience." She said CRS in its work across the world has seen how a changing climate has brought harsh conditions and suffering on people, ironically, she added, those who have contributed the least to the problem.

"We've seen farmers lose their crops due to erratic rainfall, extremely hot temperatures and prolonged drought. We've seen families struggle to keep their homes as the water around them rises. We've seen entire communities washed away by flash floods and landslides," she said.

Federal steps on climate change in the U.S. have taken a demonstrable step back under Trump, who has made deregulating environmental protections a primary piece of his presidency.

The Environmental Protection Agency finalized a proposal this week to weaken regulations on methane, a potent greenhouse gas. That rollback of methane regulations, along with another expected from the Interior Department, follows other steps by the Trump administration in the past month to freeze emissions standards for vehicles, and to weaken regulations on carbon pollution from coal-fired power plants.

Brown, the California governor who is Catholic, has been a leading critic of Trump's environmental policies, and has been a key player in galvanizing U.S. climate action at other levels of society.

On Monday, he signed into law a landmark bill that commits California — [the world's fifth-largest economy](#) — to a carbon-free electricity grid by 2045. In addition, an executive order directs the state to become carbon neutral by that same time, while separate legislation signed last week blocks federal oil drilling expansion along the state's coasts and its public lands.

"This bill and the executive order put California on a path to meet the goals of Paris and beyond. It will not be easy. It will not be immediate. But it must be done," Brown said at the signing in the state's capitol.

<https://www.nronline.org/news/environment/world-leaders-faith-groups-gather-global-climate-action-summit>

September 14, 2018

Brown, Bloomberg (and Their Agenda) Face Protests at Climate Action Summit

By Christopher D. Cook
Common Dreams

Diverse groups say the crisis is upon us — and market-based solutions don't work and damage vulnerable communities

As Governor Jerry Brown and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg opened the Global Climate Action Summit Thursday, they were greeted by hundreds of protesters and direct action outside Moscone Center, led by the indigenous and frontline communities hit hardest by climate chaos.

For nearly three hours, protesters (two of whom were arrested) blocked summit entrances, chanted and unfurled banners stating, “Keep it in the Ground,” and “Climate Capitalism is Killing Our Planet.” As one speaker in front of Moscone Center put it, “we are the ones who are dying.”

From the mass 30,000-strong climate justice march Saturday Sept. 8, to numerous protests and educational events, the message has been loud and clear: indigenous and frontline communities are bearing the most severe, immediate brunt of climate disasters, and market-driven approaches are exacerbating and prolonging the crisis.

Indigenous activists drew a direct connection between Brown’s market-led carbon trading system and intensifying fossil fuel extraction: pollution credits in California, for instance, can be used to expand climate-wrecking emissions elsewhere.

“You can’t buy and sell the earth with your carbon trading schemes,” said Casey Camp-Horinek, an elected councilwoman for the Ponca Nation of Oklahoma. Jerry Brown, she said, “has entered the largest carbon trading scheme the world has ever seen.” She termed this market-led approach “false economy, false solutions.”

In her community in north-central Oklahoma, the toxic mix of refineries, injection wells, and fracking by Phillips 66 and other fossil-fuel extractors is producing what Camp-Horinek calls “an environmental genocide...Every single family has a member with cancer. We have averaged a funeral a week.” The intense fossil fuel production in her area is contributing to more autoimmune, cardiovascular, and respiratory diseases, she says, and even “kids being born with bone cancer.”

All of the 30 injection wells in her area are leaking methane into local tribal drinking water sources, she added.

In North Dakota, home to a fracking boom in recent years, fossil-fuel extraction has intensified as a direct result of carbon trading and offset programs pushed by Brown and others, said Kandi White, an organizer from the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara tribes in that state.

“Instead of keeping fossil fuels in the ground, they want to continue to making money off it, and it hurts us,” she said. People in her area, she said, suffer more cancers, and more babies are born with upper respiratory illnesses. “The planet is screaming at us,” she said.

White applied for credentials to the summit but wasn’t allowed access. “Those of us that are suffering the worst,” she said, are not being allowed in.

Asked about solutions to the crisis, White replied, “Scientific, commonsense, traditional understanding. Capitalism, which is the carbon market system, is the problem—so carbon markets and capitalism can’t possibly fix the problem. We need to leave the remaining fossil fuels in the ground,” where, she noted, 50-80% of what’s left lies on and in native peoples’ lands. “That’s why our voice is so prominent and should be heard. Yet we are the ones locked out, we’ve always been locked out.”

Inside the summit halls, protesters briefly disrupted Bloomberg’s speech, chanting, “our air is not for sale,” and were removed by security, NBC Bay Area reported. Bloomberg lobbed a [stunning rebuke](#) at the protesters, likening them to right-wing border wall advocates: “We’ve got environmentalists protesting an environmental conference. It reminds me of people who want to build a wall along the Mexican border to keep people out from a country we go to for vacations.”

Bloomberg and Brown may seem like climate action heroes compared with Donald Trump, but these leaders are “patting themselves on the back for insufficient action,” said David Turnbull, a spokesperson for Oil Change International. “They’re not standing up to the fossil fuel industries. Governor Brown has been very resistant to our demands to keep fossil fuels in the ground.”

While Brown has snared headlines for [signing legislation](#) to make California’s electricity supply 100 percent renewable by 2045—and signing an executive order directing state agencies to make California carbon neutral by that same year through carbon sequestration and reduction approaches—climate activists say his policies on carbon trading and maintaining fracking and fossil fuel production are causing immense harm.

As Turnbull put it, “pushing pollution around, trading pollution around, means that the most vulnerable communities bear the brunt.”

Brown’s policies “have allowed fossil fuel companies to create a living hell for Californians whose health and safety are threatened by toxic drilling operations,” Cesar G. Aguirre, an organizer with the Central California Environmental Justice Network, said. “People in California’s Central Valley are forced to breathe some of the dirtiest air in the nation, and Kern County has the worst air in the United States, because of toxic oil drilling. The climate crisis isn’t just happening in our atmosphere, it’s also happening in our bodies when we breathe this poisoned air.”

Solidarity to Solutions

As sea levels and climate chaos rise, so too are the indigenous and frontline communities. The climate justice movement, once characterized as white and middle-class, is increasingly led by communities of color and indigenous people who are suffering the most direct, severe effects of climate change.

Joining forces in the It Takes Roots Alliance, several major coalitions—The Climate Justice Alliance, Grassroots Global Justice, Indigenous Environmental Network and Right to the City—organized a week of [Solidarity to Solutions](#) actions and education.

The complexity and diversity of climate-related battles and local solutions was on full display at the “Sol 2 Sol” event in La Raza Park in the Mission District this past Tuesday. Perched on park’s top slope, Gwich’in Indian Nation leader Bernadette Demientieff told a group of young climate activists what’s at stake for her people, who have lived with the caribou in Alaska’s northeastern Arctic Circle for thousands of years.

“We’re fighting for our human rights, we’re fighting for our food security, we’re fighting for our land,” said Demientieff, executive director of the Gwich’in Steering Committee, which is also battling to protect traditional caribou herds in the Alaskan Wildlife Refuge, as new threats of oil drilling and pipelines close in around them.

In the Gwich’in’s home of northern Alaska, caribou herds have been decimated by climate change’s impacts on vegetation—plummeting by 57% since 2010, according to Demientieff. “Our future generations aren’t going to have land, water, and healthy animals to hunt if we don’t take care of them.”

Two days after an indigenous-led climate justice march roughly 30,000-people strong, and two days before the Global Climate Action Summit’s more staid, officious convening, climate justice activists from around the world gathered in La Raza Park to strategize community-based solutions to the climate disasters wreaking havoc on indigenous and other frontline communities.

Bathed in an unseasonably warm sunny afternoon this Tuesday, hundreds of activists, from Native American Alaskan tribes based in the Arctic Circle to Bay Area communities of color battling gentrification and pollution, shared the public space to tell their stories from the front lines of climate change.

Alaskan Rosemary Ahtuanguak, from the 500-person Native Village of Nuiqsut on the Arctic Ocean, said more than 75 people in her community are suffering respiratory illnesses from fast-encroaching oil industry developments by Conoco Phillips, Exxon, British Petroleum and others.

“They exempt human health protections to increase profitability,” said the community health aide. She reports more cases of heart disease, thyroid illnesses, and babies being born in respiratory distress, but, “they won’t connected to resource extraction.”

Another health and nutrition threat from climate change: their ice cellars are melting, making it harder to freeze and store meat, and ice fishing is getting tougher as people fall through thinner ice on freezing rivers.

Down the hill, Ameer Raval and Shina Robinson, organizers with the Asian-Pacific environmental network, explained that a key part of climate justice is making renewable energy accessible and affordable for low income people and communities of color. This “energy equity” requires public funding and community involvement to make these connections between low income communities and renewable energy, Raval said.

One small step in that direction: the California Public Utilities Commission now provides a 20 percent savings on solar energy to make it more accessible for lower income communities, according to Raval.

Building connections between renewable energy access and stable housing, along with community-based job creation, is key to solving this climate justice puzzle, Robinson added. “We want to make sure that the people in those buildings get to stay and enjoy these benefits” of solar access, she said. “We are mindful of every policy to make sure that job creation for communities of color is a part of it. When it comes to renewable energy jobs, she said, “is missing from those industries are folks of color and women.”

Antonio Díaz, director of People Organized to Demand Economic and Environmental Rights, which hosted the Solutions event, stressed the importance of “showcasing on-the-ground climate resilience.” He pointed to community-based solutions such as Hummingbird Farm in the Excelsior, and efforts to create a new public park in the Mission. “Reclaiming public lands is part of building climate resiliency, especially in a city where gentrification is such a crisis and our community fabric has been torn,” he explained. “Here in San Francisco, what’s being commodified and extracted is land.”

Díaz noted that while San Francisco has been aggressive in reducing waste and emissions, “there’s something contradictory in a city that says it’s committed to sustainability and at the same time it displaces people” through evictions and gentrification—leading to more long-distance commuting, more traffic congestion, and more pollution. Linking climate and economic justice issues, Díaz said San Francisco needs to “make a commitment to be a zero-waste city and a zero-displacement city.”

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2018/09/14/brown-bloomberg-and-their-agenda-face-protests-climate-action-summit>

September 17, 2018

Despite crisis, activist says Catholics "still in" on climate change fight

By Christopher White

Crux

NEW YORK - Thousands of world leaders gathered in San Francisco last week for the Global Climate Action Summit to “Take Ambition to the Next Level” in fighting climate change, and in particular, to ensure the Paris Climate Agreement remains in effect.

Among those present was Dan Misleh, founding executive director of the Catholic Climate Covenant. He spoke with *Crux* about why he believes the Church’s ongoing leadership in caring for creation remains essential, even in the face of other looming crises.

Crux: What’s been your message to the Global Climate Action Summit?

Misleh: Our primary message is that the U.S. Catholic community is “Still In.” I announced that over 750 Catholic organizations signed the Covenant’s Catholic Climate Declaration during an event sponsored by the larger We Are Still In campaign (i.e., governments, businesses, NGOs and others are still in on the Paris Agreement despite the Trump Administration’s decision to withdrawal from it in June 2017).

On Friday, there was a Catholic event at the University of San Francisco where I encouraged others to join our Catholic Climate Declaration campaign and where I shared the good news about our growing pipeline of renewable energy and energy efficiency projects through the Covenant’s Catholic Energies program.

Describe the Catholic presence on hand at the event.

Besides the Covenant, other Catholic representatives included the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, the Global Catholic Climate Movement, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, Franciscan Sisters of Mary, the California Catholic Conference, among others.

Many of the representatives presented yesterday at a faith community side event sponsored by San Francisco-based Interfaith Power and Light, Green Faith, and Grace Cathedral. The focus for these presentations have ranged from the practical - how to motivate people of faith to engage in the climate issue in their parishes, for example - to the spiritual - how do we cultivate gratitude for the gift of creation and examine personal and unsustainable consumption. Other workshops and presentations focused on climate justice-motivating the faith actors to develop programs and policies that will benefit those most impacted by our neglect, namely, the poor at home and abroad.

World leaders and activists from around the globe have been participating in this event. Have Pope Francis and *Laudato si’* been reference points throughout the summit?

In the faith events that I’ve attended and participated in, Pope Francis and *Laudato si’* have certainly been front and center. In side conversations where I self-identify as the director of the Covenant with other climate activists, I have heard repeatedly how grateful they have been for Pope Francis’s leadership on climate.

Given the current sex abuse crisis in the Church, do you believe it’s diminished the Church’s ability to speak to this issue?

The urgency of action on the climate issue has been a recurring theme in both the secular and faith contexts here in San Francisco. I think the “all hands on deck” attitude means that efforts from any and all groups, including the Catholic Church, are encouraged and supported. In addition, the Covenant not only enjoys the support of the U.S. Catholic Conference but 16 other national Catholic groups so we have tremendous latitude to work with and through our partners to encourage greater action on the climate issue.

After San Francisco, what comes next for Catholics concerned about climate change?

The Covenant will continue to build on our success with the Catholic Climate Declaration and develop new tools to help Catholic individuals and institutions live up to their commitments that are implied in the Declaration. Our Catholic Energies program is gathering momentum and helping Catholic facilities reduce energy waste and lower their costs of operating—money that can be diverted to core mission activities. We will continue to provide top-notch educational programs and work to help amplify the Catholic voice in the public square which calls for greater attention to “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor,” as Pope Francis said.

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2018/09/17/despite-crisis-activist-says-catholics-still-in-on-climate-change-fight/>

September 19, 2018

Seattle University Board Votes to Divest from Fossil Fuels

Seattle University

Dear Seattle University Community,

As we prepare to welcome all our new and returning students to campus, I am pleased to share with you a significant decision by the Seattle University Board of Trustees in solidarity with students, faculty and staff in addressing climate change.

Last Thursday, the board voted to adopt both recommendations on fossil fuel divestment from the university’s Socially Responsible Investments (SRI) Advisory Working Group. The university will now move forward firmly committed (1) “by June 30, 2023, to fully divest the marketable portion of the endowment from any investments in companies owning fossil fuel reserves,” and (2) “to achieve a 50 percent reduction in the exposure to companies owning fossil fuel reserves in the marketable portion of the endowment portfolio by December 31, 2020.” The board will do so in a responsible and prudent manner to minimize any negative impact on the endowment.

The moral imperative for action is clear. By taking this step we are acting boldly and making an important statement. Along with the university’s numerous [sustainability initiatives](#), including substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and the integration of [environmental justice programming](#) in our curriculum, this action can effect change. We join with others also at the forefront of the growing divestment movement and hope our action encourages more to do the same. Together, we can amplify our collective voice and accelerate the transition to clean, fossil-free energy sources.

As a Jesuit and Catholic university we have a special obligation to address the unfolding climate change crisis. In his encyclical *Laudato Si’*, or *Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis calls

us to view this as a social and ecological issue of grave urgency that is connected to all around us and that has especially devastating consequences for society's most vulnerable.

“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up,” Pope Francis asks. “There is a growing sensitivity to the environment and the need to protect nature, along with a growing concern, both genuine and distressing, for what is happening to our planet... Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.”

The board's action on divestment is but one part of what the university is doing in support of a more sustainable, just and humane world. I am grateful for the leadership of students, especially Sustainable Student Action (SSA), for elevating the importance of this issue and for the broad support expressed across campus through SSA, Student Government of Seattle University, Academic Assembly, the President's Committee for Sustainability and others as well as the critical and dedicated work of the SRI Advisory Working Group. I also express my appreciation to the Board of Trustees for its commitment to our mission and the way it approached this decision.

Sincerely,

Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J.
President

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the size of the university's endowment?

The endowment value on June 30, 2018 was approximately \$230 million.

How much of the endowment is in marketable asset classes?

Approximately 92.3 percent of the endowment portfolio, or \$212.4 million, is marketable. This would include comingled funds and government securities that are generally marketable on a regularly traded market.

What is the estimated amount of the endowment's exposure to fossil fuel reserves?

The most recent projection by the university's investment advisor is from June 30, 2017. At the time, the endowment portfolio had an estimated 6.7 percent, or \$13.6 million, exposure to securities of fossil fuel companies, as defined by ownership of fossil fuel reserves. These securities are owned indirectly through the university's investments in funds managed by external investment managers.

Does the board's commitment apply to the non-marketable asset classes once their specified period of time expires?

Yes, the commitment to divest from fossil fuels includes not investing in any new funds that invest in companies holding fossil fuels reserves. This applies to non-marketable asset classes once their terms end. These non-marketable funds represent the remaining approximately 7.7 percent of the overall endowment portfolio. These are private investment funds that are not marketable on a regularly traded market because they are committed to be held for a specified period of time. These commitments typically range from three to five up to 10 to 15 years.

<https://www.seattleu.edu/president/update/seattle-university-board-votes-to-divest-from-fossil-fuels.html>

September 19, 2018

Hear from people at the front lines of climate change

By Carolyn Beeler
PRI

Billions of people all over the globe are already feeling the impacts of climate change — from the deserts of Somaliland to the peat bogs of northern Canada. Here are some stories from the front lines of climate change that we gathered at the Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco in mid-September ([listen to each person talk](#)).

1. Shukri Haji Ismail, minister of the environment and rural development for Somaliland

Shukri Haji Ismail, minister of the environment and rural development for Somaliland, said climate change has impacted Somaliland in ways “you wouldn’t believe.”

“We have experienced nine episodes of drought from 1996 until 2017. It affected the livelihoods of millions of people. Thousands and thousands of livestock died, 80 percent of Somaliland’s livestock,” Ismail said. “So many people became destitute; so many people became displaced; so many people migrated from the rural areas to the urban areas.” More than 10 camps for displaced people are now in the capital of Hargeisa.

“I believe that the international community will come together. They are coming together now,” Ismail said. She’s optimistic that international funders will implement programs that can increase resilience to drought and other weather-related events in places like Somaliland. “I have to have hope because they have hope in us,” she said of displaced people in Somaliland.

2. Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation member, co-founder of Indigenous Climate Action (no audio)

Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, a member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and co-founder of [Indigenous Climate Action](#), comes from the Peace-Athabasca Delta in northern Alberta, Canada. The peat bogs there have been drying as temperatures rise and rainfall decreases, transforming the land into tinder and drying up lakes and tributaries.

“There are tributaries that used to lead to fishing or hunting grounds that no longer exist,” Deranger said. A major lake that her people used to fish in is now too shallow for a boat to pass through. “[It’s] really impeding our ability to continue cultural lifestyles ... some of these places are burial grounds, so it’s not just impacting our quality of life, it’s impacting the spiritual well-being of our people.”

Deranger is pushing for solutions to climate change that are centered in communities and Indigenous knowledge and focus on reconnecting people to their land. We need, she said, “to find ways to address not just whether or not we can purchase food at the grocery store, but address the spiritual well-being of our communities.”

3. Alicia Rivera, community organizer for Communities for a Better Environment

Alicia Rivera is a community organizer with [Communities for a Better Environment](#) in the Wilmington neighborhood of Los Angeles, California.

“The Wilmington community, they are mostly low income, so the heat waves are very detrimental because they cannot afford air-conditioning. And because they are still close to the refineries and to oil extraction, they have to shut their windows. So, the heat has impacted them, especially this year,” Rivera said.

Rivera emigrated from El Salvador to escape the civil war there in 1980, but she still has family in the country who tells her that it hasn’t been raining there. “Definitely, the impacts of climate change are being felt on the other side of the border, and right here in the United States,” she said.

4. Leo Cerda, Kichwa Indigenous group member

When asked how climate change was impacting his community, Leo Cerda, a member of the Kichwa Indigenous group in the Ecuadorian Amazon, said what he's actually most worried about is fossil fuel extraction.

"In our territories, we depend solely on our resources, our water, our rivers, our land, our territories, and we are directly impacted by climate change because the fossil fuels are being extracted from our communities," Cerda said. "I think it's about time to make policy changes, and decision-makers need to change into green, renewable energy. So, the United States just withdrew from the Paris Agreement, and I think it's a huge step back, but the United States is not the only country in the world. Small communities, small cities, states can start to do something to

stop burning fossil fuels and start to find a way in which we can all live in a better planet with better solutions, green solutions, that are not affecting our communities."

5. Jayathama Wickramanayake, UN secretary general's envoy on youth

The UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth Jayathama Wickramanayake grew up in Sri Lanka, where livelihoods are dependent on agriculture. "Over the years, the raining patterns have changed," she said, "and often on the TV, growing up, I would see news about farmers killing themselves because they couldn't produce enough crops to feed their children."

Today, part of Wickramanayake's job is to make sure young people's voices are heard in climate-related conversations at the UN. "The idea is to really get young people as equal partners," rather than beneficiaries of programs they have no input in creating, Wickramanayake said. When discussing climate change with the young people she works with, she said it's an issue that's deeply personal to many of them.

"I have not met a young person who does not believe in climate change or who does not take climate change seriously," Wickramanayake said. "I have seen young people questioning the clothes they wear, questioning the products they eat, the products they use, questioning the way they travel to work or school. So, in that sense, I think there is a strong consciousness in young people that we shouldn't leave the world the way we found it; we should make it a better place for our children or for the future generations to live."

6. Leeanne Enoch, Queensland minister for environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Quandamooka member

Leeanne Enoch, the Queensland minister for environment and the Great Barrier Reef, and also a Quandamooka woman, is the first Aboriginal woman ever elected to the Queensland Parliament in Australia.

Australia's second-largest state has seen the impact of persistent drought for many years "and of course, we've also seen back-to-back, consecutive mass-bleaching episodes of the Great Barrier Reef, which has been the most frightening thing that we've seen, not just in Australia or Queensland, but all across the world," Enoch said.

The Queensland government has been working with farmers to improve the quality of the water that runs off onto the reef, to help the coral deal better with the impacts of climate change. The regional government is also developing climate change transition and adaptation plans over the next few years.

"For me, that is our big challenge, is to find the thriving balance in a changing world, and to know our role in that," Enoch said. "I stand here with 3,000 generations behind me, understanding that we are but a speck in time, but our speck in time is absolutely critical for the 3,000 generations ahead of us."

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-09-19/hear-these-voices-front-lines-climate-change>

September 20, 2018

Keeping the faith in conservation

By Anjana Vencatesan
Mongabay

- *With an attempt to strengthen ties between religious communities and conservationists, the Society for Conservation Biology has proposed best practices for interacting with faith-based leaders and communities.*
- *Sacred sites across the world are gaining increased importance as units of biodiversity conservation and are being seen as a nucleus around which conservation can be sustained effectively.*
- *The Society for Conservation Biology is a global community of professionals dedicated to conserving biodiversity. The guidelines are the outcome of a survey of the Society's members conducted by the Religion and Conservation Biology Working Group.*

Can science and faith cooperate for conservation biology?

The prevailing and dominant notion is that science and faith are two distinct units that do not and cannot have a common meeting point. However, that reality is different and it is impossible to exist in silos is the message that the [Society for Conservation Biology](#) (SCB) is trying to convey through its recent [publication](#), “Guidelines for Interacting with Faith-Based Leaders and Communities”. The SCB is a global community of professionals dedicated to conserving biodiversity which has developed these guidelines as best practices to “strengthen the collaboration between faith traditions and conservation.”

It is important to acknowledge the presence of various forms of faith in the world and take it into account while planning conservation projects. According to a 2010 [survey](#) by Pew Research Center, 84 percent of the world's population — that is about eight in ten people — identify with a religious group. The survey also indicates that of the 16 percent that identify as religiously unaffiliated, many hold religious or spiritual beliefs such as a belief in a higher form of existence.

Sacred sites may be important for biodiversity conservation

Another reason which necessitates the need to involve faith based communities is that many “sacred natural sites” require the permission, sanction and cooperation of the community and faith leader in order to access and conduct research. Sacred sites across the world are gaining increased importance as units of biodiversity conservation and are being seen as a nucleus around which conservation can be sustained effectively.

The [Sacred Natural Sites Initiative](#) (SNSI) of the Smithsonian Institute is aimed at developing a community and custodian led conservation of sacred sites. The [Sacred Groves of Epirus](#) (SAGE)

project looks at the mountainous region of Epirus in Greece where activities are prohibited or strictly regulated by religious belief systems.

In India, the most well-known example of sacred natural sites are sacred groves that have a pan-Indian presence of varying sizes and types and are known by [local names](#) such as *deorais* in Maharashtra, *sarnas* in Bihar, *kyntangs* in Meghalaya and *oraans*, *kenkris* and *vanis* in Rajasthan.

Institutional efforts to conserve sacred sites are aimed at increasing the capacity of the local community and at sensitising researchers in approaching projects in sacred sites in addition to achieving short term conservation goals.

The [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN) constituted a specialist group, the Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas (CSVPA), which in 2008 [published](#) best practices guidelines for protected area management. The [Alliance of Religions and Conservation](#) (ARC), founded in 1995, is a secular body that links faith communities to environmental groups thus helping communities develop and implement conservation programmes.

The ARC has projects worldwide and partners with several organisations including the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The [Forum on Religion and Ecology](#) (FORE) at Yale is an international multi-religious project that explores religious views and texts to apply them in environmental conservation. The project has the objective of making the study of religion and ecology an academic field in itself.

[SCB's guidelines](#)

The Society of Conservation Biology's proposed guidelines are the outcome of a survey of the Society's members conducted by the Religion and Conservation Biology Working Group (RCBWG). The guidelines are framed as five stages — pre-engagement planning, initiating contact with faith-based community leaders, launching and implementing the project, closing the project and following up after closure — with each stage containing a series of dos and don'ts for conservationists.

The guidelines mention important aspects of project planning such as budgeting time for interacting with the community leader, understanding the community hierarchy (including gender roles) and its jurisdiction and communicating the socio-economic benefits of the conservation project in an accessible format.

The guidelines also caution against getting involved in local politics, discussing contentious issues that are contrary to the faith (such as anthropogenic causes of climate change) and deviating from the exit plan. These points are strengthened by real life examples given by the members that illustrate how to apply the guidelines on the ground and the SCB's global presence means that there are examples from far and wide such as Cambodia, Myanmar, Nigeria and Papua New Guinea to name a few, and of course India.

Kit Magellan, editor-in-chief, [Aquatic Invasions](#) and member of the RCBWG, added that the biggest role of the guidelines in her opinion is to bridge the gap between quantitative and qualitative research and to provide a tool kit for researchers to address the gap themselves.

Talking about the specific case of India, Jame Schaefer, in Religious Studies and member of the RCBWG said, “Because a variety of faiths are practiced in India, where ecological problems and threats to endangered species and their habitats persist, conservation scientists and practitioners are wise to consider interacting with leaders and members of faith-based communities for their help and advocacy of scientists’ recommendations for resolving these problems.”

Magellan added, “India is so rich and varied in terms of ecosystems, religions and cultures that conflict between these factors is almost inevitable. Conversely, Indian people have been intricately linked to the land and shown cooperation between different faiths for centuries. India thus has many opportunities to be at the forefront of efforts to align conservation and faith ideals.”

That India as a country is a mosaic of different faiths is known. In such a case where different faiths co-exist and the atmosphere may be politically charged, how does a conservationist navigate the terrain? Schaefer and Magellan list three main points to address this scenario. The first is to deal with all members across different faiths as a single group and communicate that everyone has a stake in the conservation goals. The second is to ensure that the focus always remains on the project and its benefits and does not get sidetracked into local politics. The third is to respect different views but try and reach an agreement that highlights mutual benefits, negotiating which may take more time but is essential nonetheless.

Many religions and faiths have world views that are inherently compatible with conserving biodiversity. It is also important to recognise that faith-based leaders are influential and can mobilise people for conservation efforts. One such instance where this was evident was the 2015 Conference of the Parties (CoP 21) negotiations in Paris. The run-up to the negotiations witnessed several religious leaders voice their support and express their wish to see the negotiations succeed and reach a consensus. An interfaith group of religious leaders [called](#) on civil society to unite in combating climate change and highlighted the role of industrial agriculture as a key cause.

The Dalai Lama [expressed](#) that acting on climate change is “a human responsibility” and Pope Francis [said](#) that it would be “catastrophic” if the Summit failed or was manipulated by business interests. This influence increases the need for such efforts to be informed by science and for cooperation between various stakeholders in the larger interests of conservation.

<https://india.mongabay.com/2018/09/20/keeping-the-faith-in-conservation/>

September 24, 2018

Vatican must keep up its clear, inspiring leadership in climate crisis

By Archbishop Peter Chong
National Catholic Reporter

Sheer gratitude. That is the overwhelming emotion one feels when observing the clarity of Pope Francis' vision for our common home.

All of us are familiar with his "[*Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home*](#)" encyclical, which encourages us to grow in love by protecting creation and the brothers and sisters who share it. Many of us have also been moved that the Holy Father teaches each of us to fulfill this basic Christian duty in our own way, whether [young people](#) and [families](#), or [international leaders](#) and [elected officials](#).

In this clear and inspiring vision, Francis stands on decades of teaching. As early as 1990, St. Pope John Paul II [spoke](#) about the greenhouse gas effect, and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI [asked](#) whether we would remain indifferent to the realities of climate change. Unfortunately, the climate crisis has only grown deeper, and the need to find solutions more urgent.

That's why we celebrate that so many have taken up Pope Francis' call for action.

The Vatican itself has played an important role in making the words of the encyclical reverberate in parliaments, boardrooms and living rooms around the world. This summer, for example, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development brought politicians, economists, scientists, indigenous peoples and many others [together](#) to discuss solutions to climate change before hosting [another discussion](#) with investors on how they can help finance the change we need to see.

But as we write, the cries of the suffering remind us that we cannot rest on our laurels. In our home of Oceania, rising seas driven by climate change threaten our very existence. In the nation of Fiji alone, more than 40 villages are already [moving inland](#) to escape the rising waters. This is despite our having contributed very little to the climate catastrophe.

Every day that the world takes inadequate action on climate change is a day of tragedy, a death sentence passed on us and people like us for a crime we did not commit.

This is among the reasons why we in the Catholic bishops' conferences of Oceania felt it was crucial to attend the recent conference organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. It's why the nation of Fiji was the host of the [recent U.N. climate negotiations](#).

What more can the faithful possibly do?

Two weeks ago, the Archdiocese of Suva, Fiji, announced its divestment from fossil fuels.

The announcement also included the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Archdioceses of Palermo and Vercelli in Italy, Caritas India, and others. To date, more than 120 Catholic

institutions, including large banks, international organizations, religious orders and dioceses, have put Catholic teaching into practice by [stepping away from investments](#) in fossil fuels.

We stand with our sisters and brothers across the ecumenical spectrum. The [Church of England](#) will sell shares in any fossil fuel companies that haven't aligned with the Paris Agreement goals by 2023. The World Council of Churches, the Church of Sweden, the Lutheran World Federation and many others have also divested.

Together, these leaders are demonstrating the courage, resolve and love the world hungers for. We encourage the Institute for the Works of Religion (commonly known as the Vatican bank) to consider how it, too, can play a role in the movement to divest, a movement that is giving so much hope to so many people.

As Cardinal Luis Tagle, president of Caritas Internationalis, has said, "The poor are suffering greatly from the climate crisis and fossil fuels are among the main drivers of this injustice." The people of our nations, who are fighting the effects of climate change every day, look hopefully to the Vatican for more of the clarity it has so abundantly provided.

[Archbishop Peter Chong of Suva, Fiji, is president of the Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/eco-catholic/vatican-must-keep-its-clear-inspiring-leadership-climate-crisis>

September 27, 2018

Vatican speaker: How Catholics can join pope's climate 'revolution'

By Christina Gray
Catholic San Francisco

Pope Francis is urging Catholics to join hands with others outside the church to combat climate change, said one of two Vatican priests representing the Holy Father at the Global Climate Action Summit held Sept. 10-14 in San Francisco.

"The fabulous message of 'Laudato si'" is how we can all contribute to the solution," said Father Augusto Zampini, an Argentinian theologian and official on the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development, referring to the pope's 2015 encyclical on ecology. He spoke at a thinly attended Catholic-focused event at the University of San Francisco Sept. 14 at the conclusion of the summit.

"We need to start making connections and forming partnerships with people of other churches and faiths and people of no faith in order to take action," Father Zampini said.

On the third anniversary of “Laudato si” this summer, he said, the Vatican decided to link its action plans with those that are already happening in the world.

“To the Catholic mindset, this is a revolution,” Father Zampini said. “We didn’t organize to publish something of our own.”

He also announced that the Vatican has put its “full support” behind COP24, the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. COP 24 takes place Dec. 3-14 in Katowice, Poland.

The Global Climate Action Summit was organized by California Gov. Jerry Brown as a response to the Trump administration’s decision to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement in 2017. Government leaders, business leaders, scientists, and faith leaders gathered to discuss progress and accelerate new commitments to reducing carbon emissions.

Father Zampini reminded his audience about the prophetic nature of “Laudato si.”

“I would like to emphasize that ‘Laudato si’ is not a document,” he said. “‘Laudato si’ is a prayer, Praise be to God.”

The encyclical is “a proposal to rediscover the way we live together in our common home,” not just something to read.

Father Zampini said lifestyle changes such as simply eating less meat, recycling or reducing atmospheric carbon emissions are “not really what ‘Laudato si’ is about.”

He said the encyclical is about a spiritual conversion that changes our heart in a way that motivates us to reconsider “how we produce, how we trade, how and what we buy, what we consume and what we waste.”

Father Zampini said the Vatican is a “tiny part of the church.”

“We need the full support of all of you, of all your congregations and of all your institutions, schools, parishes,” he said.

Following Father Zampini’s remarks, participants broke off into workshops on topics such as Greening Your Institution, Raising the Catholic Voice, Fossil Fuel Divestment and Liturgy and “Laudato si’.”

Father Dermot Lane, a theologian from the Archdiocese of Dublin, spoke on “eco spirituality” at a session attended by just two people, a Franciscan sister from Marquette University in Wisconsin and a Franciscan brother from Rome.

“The title of the encyclical, the opening verse of the encyclical, the final line of the encyclical and the existence of two prayers at the end indicates to me that part of the intention of Pope

Francis is that this would influence the way we pray, the way we celebrate liturgy and the way we celebrate the Eucharist,” Father Lane said. “But that’s not happening.”

In 2015 Pope Francis initiated the World Day of Prayer for Creation to open the Sept. 1-Oct. 4 ecumenical Christian “Season of Creation,” Father Lane said.

“But how many parishes have adopted the ‘Season of Creation?’” he asked. “I am here on sabbatical and have gone around to several parishes on Sunday without hearing any reference to it.”

Capuchin Brother Benedict Ayodi said that although it “is not a requirement that any parish must observe the season,” he and others hope it becomes part of the liturgical calendar.

Father Lane said that incorporating prayers for creation into the Catholic liturgy is perhaps the best way to effect the “ecological conversion” Pope Francis talks about in “Laudato si”.

He cited the Latin credo, “Lex orandi, lex credenda,” which loosely translated means how we worship reflects what we believe and how we will live.

“I think this should be our ambition,” Father Lane said.

<https://catholic-sf.org/news/vatican-speaker-how-catholics-can-join-popes-climate-revolution>

October 2, 2018

‘Guardians of the forest.’ Indigenous peoples come together to assert role in climate stability

By Justin Catanoso
Mongabay

- *A half mile from the din of the Global Climate Action Summit and its 4,000 attendees in San Francisco, indigenous peoples from around the world came together in a small space for a kind of summit of their own.*
- *They spoke different languages. They wore unique clothing. But the tenor of their voices and the expressions on their faces conveyed a similar message: They are the “guardians of the forests,” not their national governments. As such, they have a vital role to play in the battle against climate change.*
- *NGOs and human rights organizations, including the United Nations, have advocated better treatment of indigenous peoples the world over as a matter of social justice. They have recently seized on a new angle to achieve the same goals: if tropical countries are to meet their carbon-reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement, indigenous peoples can contribute significantly. But they must be better protected and given title and tenure to the lands where they have lived for centuries.*

SAN FRANCISCO – A half mile from the din of the Global Climate Action Summit and its 4,000 attendees in San Francisco, indigenous peoples from around the world came together in a small space for a kind of summit of their own.

They spoke different languages. They wore unique clothing. But the tenor of their voices and the expressions on their faces conveyed a similar message: They are the “guardians of the forests,” not their national governments. As such, they have a vital role to play in the battle against climate change.

In the days leading up to the event, which ran from September 12-14, [new studies](#) and [announcements](#) emphasized just that: If the Paris Agreement goals are to be met, deforestation must be slowed and land management improved. An effective way to achieve those goals in tropical countries is to give indigenous peoples legal ownership, and thus protected control, of the lands on which they live.

Cándido Mezúa, cultural liaison to Panama’s Emberá Nation, explained why, taking a break from the side event where tribal leaders like himself gathered.

“There is one basic principle,” he told Mongabay through a translator. “We cannot see the forest or nature as a tool for getting richer. That is something the indigenous people cannot do... We are contributing to climate stability, something we have been doing for centuries without being compensated one penny.”

Be it Brazil, Peru, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or Indonesia — countries with the largest rainforests and thus the largest storehouses of carbon — national governments there and elsewhere often see things differently: forests readily convert to riches when it comes to mining, timbering, or large-scale agriculture.

“Central governments still believe that the development of a country can only be done when you involve big companies,” Rukka Sombolinggi, general secretary of AMAN, the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago of Indonesia, told Mongabay. “This is a paradigm we have to change.”

NGOs and human rights organizations, including the United Nations, have advocated better treatment of indigenous peoples the world over as a matter of social justice. They have recently seized on a new angle to achieve the same goals: Indigenous peoples can contribute significantly to tropical countries meeting their carbon-reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement, but indigenous communities must be better protected and given title and tenure to the lands where they have lived for centuries.

“For people working in the forest space, we know the importance of working with indigenous peoples; we have plenty of anecdotes and stories,” Josefina Braña Varela, World Wildlife Fund’s senior director of forest and climate, told Mongabay at the summit. “But people in the climate space don’t understand how important indigenous peoples are to the solution [to climate mitigation]. That’s why there is a big effort to quantify the impact.”

Calculating the equations

Here's the grim reality:

Earth loses 13 million hectares, or roughly 50 football fields' worth, of rainforest every minute. That's an area the size of Greece lost every year. This deforestation, and the release of carbon stored in all those trees and other vegetation, exceeds the annual emissions of the world's entire transportation sector. Last year ranked as the [second-most calamitous year for deforestation](#).

Here's an increasingly appreciated fact touted in San Francisco:

“Natural climate solutions,” such as better land management, healthy diets, and strategies like no-till agriculture, can contribute as much as [30 percent](#) to carbon-reduction goals in the coming decades to slow the rate of global warming.

Here's the hope for both climate mitigation and social justice, highlighted in press releases and announcements just prior to the summit's first day:

Indigenous peoples and local communities in 64 tropical and subtropical countries occupy land storing nearly [300 billion metric tons of carbon](#) above- and below-ground. That's equal to 33 years of pollution, given a 2017 baseline. Where indigenous peoples live, high-tech mapping indicates, deforestation rates are dramatically lower, especially in the relatively few places where they have land ownership rights.

“We are looking at 21 countries where the NDCs [carbon emissions-reduction pledges] could be looking at land tenure as one of the solutions to reaching their Paris goals,” Caleb McClennen, vice president for global conservation at Wildlife Conservation Society, said during the summit. “That's an immediate opportunity.”

Here's what was promised in San Francisco:

Governors from 38 jurisdictions across five continents — the [Governors' Climate and Forests \(GCF\) Task Force](#) — joined indigenous leaders to announce a pioneering approach to slow deforestation and uphold native land rights. Backed by \$459 million through 2022 from nine of the world's largest philanthropies, the initiative will target rainforest protection as subnational leaders press their national governments to title millions of hectares back to indigenous people across Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

“We are doing this now in Peru, Colombia, Indonesia and Nepal,” said Braña Varela of WWF. “All our interests in forests and climate have a super-important component that includes indigenous peoples.”

The invisible coming visible

Some progress has been made. In San Francisco, the feeling among many indigenous peoples was not so much a breakthrough in their struggle for rights and recognition as a collective pep rally replete with global networking.

After all, they are enshrined in the Paris Agreement for their contributions to climate mitigation. And at the UN climate summit in Bonn in November 2017, [negotiators agreed that indigenous peoples should have “leadership roles” in climate mitigation planning](#) and that any climate action must “respect, promote and consider” the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.

Yet, like with international climate action itself, for all the progress made to date, there is a long way to go to slow the rate of global warming, just as there is a long way to go for indigenous peoples to regain their rights in their own countries.

For example, just 10 percent of indigenous lands around the world are formally recognized, according to the GCF Task Force.

And progress differs depending on where you look. For those fortunate enough, like some Native American tribes in the U.S., they could show in San Francisco an affluence to match their influence. For others in faraway places, they made clear that just being associated with the summit was uplifting in and of itself.

“What does visibility mean to countries that are invisible? It means everything,” said Loa Numeitolu, a native of Tonga whose organization represents scores of tiny island nations in the South Pacific. “We are humble people. We live in countries no one knows. And if sea-level rise takes our countries, no one will know we ever existed. We are glad to be here.”

A place of their own

At the glittery Moscone Center, governors, mayors, and CEOs from around the world proclaimed their climate-action bona fides to large, appreciative crowds during the summit. Few indigenous representatives got a turn in the spotlight.

But at 981 Mission Street, a half mile from the wide stage and high-definition screens carrying speeches by Jerry Brown, Nancy Pelosi, Al Gore, and John Kerry, indigenous peoples gathered during the summit’s three days. The event was organized by the non-profit If Not Us Then Who, which promotes global awareness of indigenous peoples and their planet-protecting contributions. Attendees were fewer than 100, but represented tribal nations numbering in the millions.

Their “summit” venue was a high-ceilinged co-working space called Covo with brick walls, exposed beams, eclectic light fixtures, and a stage big enough for just seven seated panelists. They fronted an audience of usually 30 or 40 nodding “brothers” and “sisters.”

It had the feel of a family reunion as their stage rang loudly, day and night, with cries and chants to ancestral spirits and translated words of age-old wisdom. In the undaunted optimism of both the old and the young, there was a coalescing of a diverse, far-flung group of people — from North America, Latin America, Africa, and Asia — united as one for perhaps the first time.

When I asked Mezúa of Panama what the side event at Covo meant to him, he drew a circle in the middle of a notebook page. He drew five similarly sized circles around the center circle. Then he drew a ring around all six.

“When we are the leaders of our territory, we are the leaders of one speck of forest,” he said, putting his pen in the middle circle. “But when we talk with other people in other territories and join forces, our voices can be stronger and better heard.”

Many of those at Covo said they didn’t care much for the official summit and its focus on political and Hollywood celebrities. But they all knew that the summit – however much it cost them in airfare, lodging, and meals — was the thing that made this moment possible.

To that end, there were hugs and tears and exchanges of contact information that will unite them across continents, their souls already connected by a shared experience that too often includes oppression, stolen land, and death.

On the walls of the co-working space hung framed posters of five “Indigenous Demands” connected to climate action and social justice:

- Recognition to Land, Territory, and Resources: “Only 0.6% of forest was lost inside Indigenous lands in the Brazilian Amazon between 2000 and 2012, compared with 7 percent of forest outside such lands.”
- Consent: “Indigenous peoples are the best guardians of the forest, but they are under siege from a great and growing hunger for new sources of food, fuel, mineral wealth and water.”
- Zero Violence: “There were 46 indigenous people known to be killed in 2014 for taking a stand against environmental destruction. It is likely the death toll is higher as murders often occur in remote villages or deep in jungles, where they are unreported.”
- Funding: “Investing in indigenous peoples not only conserves forests, it encourages sustainable development.”
- Ancestral Knowledge: “Appealing for the valuation and incorporation of ancestral knowledge on the policies to prevent and face climate change.”

Message in a belly button

After Loa Niumeitolu of Tonga stepped off the stage at Covo, she was embraced by a “sister” from the audience. They held each other tightly, wordlessly, for a long while as tears slid down their cheeks. Shortly after, she spoke with me about ancestral knowledge.

“Climate change is an issue we feel in our belly buttons,” Niumeitolu explained. “When we are born, our placenta is buried in the ground. That connects us to the land. I live now in the Bay Area, but my placenta, and my people, are on the island. As climate change causes the seas to rise and threatens to engulf our country, I actually feel it in my belly button.”

Sombolinggi, whose Indonesian alliance represents 70 million indigenous people, is a force of nature all her own. Her heart breaks knowing deforestation in her country is accelerating to meet the world’s bottomless demand for palm oil for food and cosmetics. It’s not sustainable, she told me. And it tramples on the rights of her people. There is a better way.

“You have to let the people live in the culture and traditions that they are used to,” she said. “One of our communities produces the best coconut oil in Indonesia for all kinds of products. They work in the forests and no trees are coming down. If they are protected by laws, it works, and we are seeing that.”

In the United States, one of the most promising examples is playing out in Northern California, involving the state’s largest tribe, the Yurok.

In February, after 10 years of planning and negotiating, the Yurok Tribe, together with the Western Rivers Conservancy, is [getting back 47,000 acres of ancestral land](#) along the Klamath River, which will enable the protection of forest ecosystems that also include a vital, struggling, cold-water salmon run.

What is essentially a \$60 million land purchase was made possible through a variety of funding tools, including lawsuit settlements, federal tax credits, and California carbon credits. The project has been called unprecedented, and a model to be followed (where financing exists): *Don’t wait for your government to return land that was once yours; raise the money and buy it.*

“The true exponential (climate) solutions that are going to have to happen must come from the indigenous communities, tribal governments and tribes themselves,” Javier Kinney, the Yurok’s director of governance, told Mongabay. “Until those rights and privileges are recognized, only then will we be able to start to move forward.”

Kinney stressed that the Yurok is a government no different than the government of California. It has a constitution, attorneys, MBAs, even public relations managers. In that regard, it has clout beyond what tribes in developing nations can imagine.

But he stressed also that the Yurok’s ancestral values and connection to the land is akin to those of his tribal brethren from around the world.

“We fix the earth, not just for us, but for everybody,” Kinney said. “What’s happening now is not a reawakening or a turning point. We have always been here and will always be here. It’s other people just realizing that they should probably listen to the stewards of this land who have been here since time immemorial.”

Justin Catanoso is a professor of journalism at Wake Forest University in North Carolina and a regular contributor. Follow him on Twitter [@jcatanoso](#).

<https://news.mongabay.com/2018/10/guardians-of-the-forest-indigenous-peoples-come-together-to-assert-role-in-climate-stability/>

October 2, 2018

Kenneth Kraft Obituary

July 16, 1949 – October 1, 2018

Kenneth Kraft, professor of Buddhist studies and Japanese religions and author of several books on contemporary Buddhism, died on October 1 at his home in Haverford, PA. He was 69.

The cause of death was cancer, his family said.

For almost 50 years, Kraft was deeply engaged in Buddhist studies. He was recognized as a brilliant scholar and a leader in his field, impacting countless readers and students in their understanding of Zen Buddhism.

Kraft's insights and writing were ahead of his time: his work in Japanese Zen and socially engaged Buddhism began in the mid-1980's. Kraft believed that Buddhism had resources that were freshly relevant in a time of ecological crisis. *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*, an anthology coedited in 2000 by Kraft and Stephanie Kaza, was an early contribution to the emerging field. Kraft's 1992 book *Eloquent Zen: Daitō and Early Japanese Zen* was selected as an "Outstanding Academic Book" by *Choice* magazine.

“With his impeccable rigor and deep experience with Zen, Ken Kraft was a true scholar-practitioner, a colleague of the highest order, valued by many for his clarity, insight, and respectful cordiality. His penetrating mind, warm heart, and sharp wit will be sorely missed.” said Stephanie Kaza, Ph.D., co-author of *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*.

Dr. Kraft received a B.A. from Harvard University in 1971, an M.A. in Asian Languages and Cultures from the University of Michigan in 1978, and a Ph.D. in East Asian Studies from Princeton University in 1984. He graduated from the Lawrenceville School in 1967.

After graduating from Harvard, Kraft skipped commencement and headed straight to the Rochester Zen Center, in New York. In 1978, Kraft entered a Ph.D. program in East Asian Studies at Princeton, and then studied and practiced in Japan for four years. He spent time as a visiting professor at the Stanford University Japan Center, and was a visiting scholar at the International Research Institute for Zen Buddhism, both in Kyoto. He also taught at the University of Pennsylvania and Swarthmore College. In 1990, he joined the Religious Studies department at Lehigh University, teaching courses on Buddhism, Japanese religions, and environmental ethics. At Lehigh, he served as chair of the department and director of the College Seminar Program. In 2005, he received a Lindback Foundation Award for distinguished teaching by a senior member of the Lehigh University faculty.

Along the way, Kraft edited and published several books and numerous articles on engaged Buddhism. His most recent book, *Zen Traces*, was published just four months before his death in

June 2018. In *Zen Traces*, Kraft explores American Zen by pairing passages from four sources: Traditional Zen, Contemporary Zen, Henry David Thoreau, and Mark Twain.

“Ken Kraft provided a unique opening for American Buddhism and American wisdom in general. He was a source of fresh and spacious new insights and enjoyments,” said Polly Young-Eisendrath, Ph.D., author of *The Present Heart: A Memoir of Love, Loss, and Discovery*.

In 1992, Kraft was featured in "The Creative Spirit," a PBS television series. In 2008, he participated in "Secrets of the Samurai Sword," a NOVA documentary, and, in 2009, "Inquiry into the Great Matter: A History of Zen Buddhism," an independent film.

Kraft has served on the advisory boards of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in Berkeley, California; the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University; the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*; the Rochester Zen Center; and the World Faiths Development Dialogue in Washington DC.

Kenneth Lewis Kraft was born in Cincinnati, OH on July 16, 1949, and grew up in Princeton, NJ. His father, Lewis Kraft, was a homebuilder in New Jersey, and his mother, Eve Kraft, was Executive Director of the Education and Research Committee of the United States Tennis Association, and a varsity tennis coach at Princeton University.

Dr. Kraft is survived by his wife, Trudy, his two daughters, Eva and Louise, son-in-law Max, grandson Daniel, brother Robert, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

October 2, 2018

Can Buddhism Help Fight Climate Change?

By Lucia Graves
Pacific Standard

Amid the golden hills near Point Reyes, California, in the sunlit main hall of the Spirit Rock Meditation Center, [Christiana Figueres](#), the architect of the [Paris climate agreement](#), is explaining how Buddhism saved her life.

Her talk is part of a daylong gathering of activists, yoga instructors, Buddhist practitioners, and meditation enthusiasts all intent on bringing more [mindfulness](#) and [loving kindness](#) to their approach to climate activism. Timed to coincide with the [Global Climate Action Summit](#) in San Francisco hosted by [Governor Jerry Brown](#), Saturday's retreat is about an hour's drive from the city—and a world away.

While the dress code at the summit in the city was "business," there are no shoes allowed here. And when I ask if I can take my purse inside instead of leaving it in an open cubby by the entrance, a custodian smiles sympathetically and says, "You *can*," before launching into a "funny story" about that time his expensive sunglasses went unmolested in a cubby here for four whole days.

I smile back at him. I take my purse.

The day's featured speakers at this famed meditation retreat include climate diplomats like Figueres, the former head of United Nations climate negotiations in Paris, but also Tibetan-Buddhist scholars and activists like [Julia Butterfly Hill](#), the woman who lived in a redwood tree for 738 days to keep it from being cut down.

Figueres is in the middle of explaining how, a few years ago, when she was working on the [pathway to Paris](#), she experienced the most difficult personal trauma of her life. "I thought, 'I wonder what would happen if I just disappeared at this point,'" she tells the seated crowd of shoe-less climate activists.

Instead of giving up, she reached out to a friend.

"I said: 'I'm suicidal. I have this responsibility. I can't do this. I have to do something,'" Figueres recalls. "He says, 'What do you want to do?' And I say, 'Buddhism.' And he goes: 'Buddhism? What do you know about Buddhism?' And I say: 'Nothing. In fact, I'm not sure I even know how to spell it correctly.'"

Her friend then turned Figueres onto the teachings of Thích Nhất Hạnh, a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk whose books have become popular in the West. "The teachings of Thích Nhất Hạnh saved my life," Figueres says, but, more importantly, "they were the guiding light" for her work on the Paris Agreement, helping her muster the strength, compassion, and focus she needed to do the job.

It wasn't just a personal salve, Figueres insists. Thinking like a Buddha, she says, could help ordinary citizens put their climate ideals into action too. "Finding strength in our pain at the individual level is what we need to do at the global level," she says.

Americans are in what one speaker calls "a moment of awakening consciousness." Specifically, with respect to climate, it's a moment of recognizing that the task of protecting the planet can't be left up to politicians. (After Donald Trump announced his intention to [withdraw the United States from the Paris climate agreement](#), it became clear that the current administration can't be counted on for much.)

Jack Kornfield, co-founder of Spirit Rock, sees this moment of awakening as in line with what Thích Nhất Hạnh has said about how "the next Buddha" might not take the form of an individual, but rather of "[a community practicing understanding and loving kindness](#)."

"What's beautiful is the empowerment of people," Kornfield says. "It's also problematic," he adds wryly, "because it means you. That's the downside. Otherwise you can offload the responsibility to the spiritual leaders or the climate leaders."

The Uses of Hope; The Uses of Fear

Figueres speaks of finding strength in her pain, but what does that actually mean?

The emotions typically associated with climate change are fear and anxiety. On the topic of climate messaging, some critics have [questioned the wisdom](#) of dwelling on the negative, and have called for more hope in how we talk about our impending doom.

And earlier that week at the Global Climate Action Summit, many of the speakers had seemed intent on splitting the difference.

"It almost puts us in a place of schizophrenia," [Johan Rockström](#), executive director of the Stockholm Resilience Centre, says of the current state of the climate crisis. "There's never been a reason to be so nervous as today based on the scientific necessity, but there's never been so much reason to be hopeful."

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti coined a term for this contradictory emotion: *anxcited*. "It's like every day, this feeling of *anxcitement*," Garcetti told a gaggle of reporters at the summit when asked about his mood. "Wow, we are finally there and we can do this. And it's getting worse simultaneously."

Political change often starts with anger, which is an animating force in activism and something Figueres called for explicitly at a kickoff event to the GCAS, saying, "We have to get to the point of public outrage."

This Saturday at Spirit Rock, though, no one appears motivated chiefly by animus, or by negative emotions more generally. One speaker even recalls being actively disgusted to hear a political operative say that their "approach is to infuriate and disgust our base so they will go out there and vote." It feels like a cheap trick, the speaker says—manipulating negative emotions (though of course it's also true that voters can be moved by a righteous and deeply justified anger).

"It's important to be able to feel our pain and grief," says Spirit Rock co-founder James Baraz. "And it's also important to, when they occur, maintain and increase those wholesome states."

The approach doesn't mean denying emotions like anger as they occur. It means not being derailed or directed by them exclusively.

And today it means trying to look at climate change as though the glass is half full.

Paraphrasing the writer Gary Snyder, Kornfield says: "If you're going to save [the world], don't save it out of fear and anxiety. Save it because you love it."

Mindfulness Goes West

Meditation as a practice has been around for thousands of years, but it has seen a striking rise in modern America, from its introduction through beatniks and hippies to the New Age movement and, more recently, the mainstreaming of yoga and meditation. The surge in interest is not just happening in California—although Californians would have you know that it was happening here first.

"California is a very powerful place because we are the trendsetters for the whole world," Tibetan Buddhist scholar Anam Thubten tells the assembled. "We have to be really careful what we do because everyone's going to follow us."

In fact, everyone's already doing so. Mindfulness techniques are now used in [schools](#) and the [military](#). Fortune 500 companies [offer them](#) to improve employee well-being and productivity. And Ohio Congressman Tim Ryan, who's [weighing a bid](#) for president and [wrote a book](#) about meditation, is saying he wants to cultivate "[the yoga vote](#)." A majority of Americans now view Buddhism favorably, according to [Pew Research Center](#) data.

Though often subsumed into a multibillion-dollar wellness industry, most mindful practices, including yoga and meditation, were at least originally intended to be free. In the West, of course, even breathing can be monetized. The popular meditation app Head Space turned "peace of mind" into a [\\$250 million business](#) last year.

Attendees of Spirit Rock's "Loving the Earth: Healing the Planet Through Mindful Engagement" today have paid between \$60 and \$200—a sliding scale at the payer's discretion, with an additional \$10 penalty for anyone failing to carpool. All proceeds are donated to the [green groups](#) that helped organize the proceedings.

The day's spiritual instructions include the advice, "Don't *should* all over yourself," a quote from Julia Butterfly Hill, who shares other lessons she learned firsthand from her [time in the tree](#).

"We look at these challenging times and think, *This is too much*," she says, of the daunting nature of the climate crisis. "But every action is changing our world, moment by moment." Awakening to that means not asking whether you can contribute, she insists, but how.

"I happen to have been well-designed to be the woman who lived in a tree for two years and eight days," Hill says. "No matter what our unique gifts are, there is a way to access them and make a difference."

Later, when we're prompted to make a personal climate commitment and say it aloud, David DeSante, the white-haired ornithologist sitting next to me, offers a refreshingly non-technical idea: "To link arms with others."

DeSante is the founder of the [Institute for Bird Populations](#) in Marin County, and will happily chat for an hour about bird brains or what he loves so much about thrushes—did you know they can produce two independent sounds at the same time, harmonizing with themselves? When it comes to climate change though, he's learned not to beat people over the head with "the club" of science, and today he says he's less interested in offering answers than in finding allies.

The Mind-Body Connection

The day's activities focus not just on the mind, or even on the heart (which is Spirit Rock's preferred organ for thinking). They also incorporate the body at every turn.

A session on "mindful movement" takes place in a nearby meadow. During lunch, we're invited to explore the retreat center's many pathways into the hills. Before eating, we're reminded to do so slowly, savoring every bite.

The tip isn't an exercise in hedonism—not strictly. [A review of research](#) from an eight-week training program developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical School found that Kabat-Zinn's [Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program](#), famous for its [mindful meditation on raisins](#), "is an effective treatment for reducing stress and anxiety" associated with daily routine and chronic illness.

The imprimatur of science often trails what's anecdotally apparent to the discerning observer—[willow bark tea](#) was popular during childbirth long before aspirin was an option—but, unlike that [\\$55 Rose Quartz egg](#) claiming to "intensify" your femininity, scientific studies confirming meditation's benefits keep rolling in. Under the right conditions, mindfulness can [reduce pain](#), [help manage stress](#), [ward off depression](#), and [slow down or even reverse neurodegeneration](#).

Can it help solve climate change though? That null hypothesis has yet to be disproven.

But Figueres, for her part, thinks it is a crucial tool—and not just as a balm for the people who, like her, run high-level climate talks.

"The Paris Agreement is not about me," she says. "It's about the emergence of this true love and solidarity and recognition that we're all here together."

<https://psmag.com/environment/can-buddhism-help-fight-climate-change>

October 4, 2018

Civil rights leader William Barber awarded MacArthur grant

By Erin Durkin
The Guardian

Organization gives 'genius' grant to Barber, saying 'he is effective at building unusually inclusive fusion coalitions'

The Rev William Barber, the [North Carolina](#) pastor, national civil rights leader and anti-poverty activist has won a 2018 MacArthur "genius" grant – one of 25 people to receive the prestigious fellowship this year, it was announced on Thursday.

The MacArthur Fellows Program, popularly known as the "genius grant", annually gives a series of \$625,000, no-strings-attached awards to people the institution finds to be extraordinarily talented and creative in different fields.

Barber is the longtime pastor of Greenleaf Christian church in Goldsboro, North Carolina, and a [leader](#) of the new Poor People's Campaign – the modern incarnation of a campaign for fairer living standards launched by Martin Luther King Jr before his death by assassination in 1968.

Barber has been hailed as a leader of the emerging, modern “religious left” – a label he rejects.

“There is no religious left and religious right,” Barber [told](#) the Guardian this spring. “There is only a moral center. And the scripture is very clear about where you have to be to be in the moral center – you have to be on the side of the poor, the working, the sick, the immigrant.”

His campaign launched weeks of civil disobedience and protest against inequality, racism, environmental devastation and militarism, while pushing for living wage laws and expanded voting rights.

He was also the leader of the [Moral Mondays](#) campaign in North Carolina, which [promoted](#) non-violent civil disobedience and backed successful legal challenges to voter suppression and racial gerrymandering after “far-right extremists took over the Grand Old Party [the Republicans] and turned it into a joyless, humorless, mean-spirited vehicle to line the pockets of the super-rich”, Barber [wrote](#) in the Guardian in 2013. After [Hurricane Florence](#) hit North Carolina last month, Barber [warned](#) of the disproportionate suffering of poor people during such crises.

Announcing the 2018 awards, the MacArthur organization wrote: “Barber approaches social justice through the lens of the ethical and moral treatment of people as laid out in the Christian Bible, the Reconstruction and civil rights movements of the South, and the US Constitution.” The program added: “He is effective at building unusually inclusive fusion coalitions that are multiracial and interfaith, reach across gender, age and class lines, and are dedicated to addressing poverty, inequality, and systemic racism.”

The awardees include poets, engineers, computer scientists, chemists, lawyers, community organizers and more.

Also winning this year's grant are Becca Heller, a human rights lawyer who runs the International Refugee Assistance Project and helped [fight](#) the US travel ban against a list of majority Muslim nations early in the Trump presidency; Deborah Estrin, a computer scientist at Cornell Tech [working on](#) apps for personal health management; and Ken Ward, an investigative journalist who has [revealed](#) the environmental and human toll of coalmining in West Virginia.

Other fellows include artist and curator Julie Ault, painter Titus Kaphar, writer John Keene and film-maker and performance [artist](#) Wu Tsang.

Pioneering scientists such as psychologist Kristina Olson, who led a study that [found](#) that transgender children who are allowed to dictate their gender identity and change their names have better mental health, and neuroscientist Doris Tsao, who [created](#) eerily perfect replicas of human faces that had been shown to monkeys just by recording the animal's brain waves, will also be awarded grants this year.

[View the full list of fellows here.](#)

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/oct/04/macarthur-grant-winners-william-barber-genius-grant-list>

October 4, 2018

At Season of Creation's end, know this: Climate change is here

By James Hug
National Catholic Reporter

As the liturgical [Season of Creation](#) for 2018 draws to a close, the serious need for prayer, study and widespread action in response to the destructive threats of climate change has never before seemed so urgent.

Through all that I have heard through the years about the dangers of climate change and ecological degradation, I have never quite been able to imagine a possible end to human life or destruction of life as we know it on the planet. Until now.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Florence and Typhoon Mangkhut, the aerial views of whole cities flooded brought back images of whole Mayan and Incan cities overgrown now by jungle, human life and developed civilizations completely and mysteriously gone. How many more "once-in-a-century" or "once-in-a-thousand-years" storm or fire disasters (that are now striking practically every year or every few years) will it take before people will no longer have the will or ability to rebuild?

This year, for the first time I can recall, scientists are [warning explicitly](#) that climate change is not a future danger we need to try to prevent. Climate change is here now and will continue to worsen. It is the new normal.

As if to underscore that reality, a recent lead-page section of a local Ohio newspaper, The Toledo Blade, included these stories about a week after Florence and Mangkhut:

- Tilapia are being used to try to control duckweed and algae overgrowth, driven by warming temperatures and farm runoff that is choking local lakes (Page 1).
- Puerto Rico marks one year since Hurricane Maria savaged the island and is still struggling to recover (Page 2).
- Floodwaters are slowly receding in the Carolinas; some rivers have not yet crested a week after the storm struck; officials are trying to head off other disasters; damage from Hurricane Florence threatens the environment (Page 3).
- Temperatures could now be sufficient, based on current temperatures and archaeological data from about 125,000 years ago, to melt a major part of the East Antarctic ice sheet in the Wilkes Subglacial Basin. This region is roughly the size of California and Texas

combined, and contains enough water to raise sea levels everywhere more than 10 feet (Page 4).

- There is a serious drop in the swarms of the most beneficial flying insects of summer that has scientists deeply concerned: native bees, moths, butterflies, ladybugs, lovebugs, mayflies and fireflies. Last year a German study found an 82-percent midsummer decline in the number and weight of bugs captured in traps in 63 nature preserves, compared with 27 years earlier. Scientists are pretty sure that around the planet there are fewer insects that are crucial to the pollination and production of 80 percent of what we eat (Page 6).
- The lead editorial raised questions about regional water, expressing concern over the importance of regional water issues to the city and surrounding region (Page 8).

Climate change is here, now, and is still worsening. Its threats to life as we know it are coming into clearer and more frightening view.

Is Earth trying to teach us in its own way what Jesus tried to teach his apostles when he told them: "I will be handed over to people who will kill me"?

This prediction of his Passion was central in the Gospels of both the third and fourth Sundays of the Season of Creation this year. Jesus promised to rise three days after his death. Still, the Twelve, led by Peter, assumed that as God's special anointed one, Jesus would be protected and would emerge from conflicts with the Jewish leaders and the Roman occupiers as victor and savior. They couldn't understand what he was trying to tell them, but they were afraid to ask.

Is the message from Earth to us this year a warning about its suffering and dying? Is it a message we don't understand and are afraid to really believe possible? Scientists are warning that we are already into the [sixth great mass extinction of life on Earth](#), the biggest since the dinosaurs 66 million years ago, and the first one caused principally by humans. From the evidence of the previous five extinctions etched in our planetary archaeology, Earth's resurrection could surely take place, but it would most likely take hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of years.

In his encyclical "*Laudato Si*, on Care for Our Common Home," Pope Francis identified the global economy — structured on competition that drives consumption and requires constant economic growth on a planet with limited resources — as obviously destructive for the planet's ecology, including the human community. The human community must stop assuming that we live on a planet with limitless resources.

On Aug. 1, less than two months ago, I wrote about [Earth Overshoot Day](#), highlighting the fact that the human community had consumed in just seven months the renewable resources that it will take the planet a full year to replenish. And Earth Overshoot Day is coming earlier every year. It is impossible for this dynamic to continue.

Those economic patterns are also the drivers of growing inequality around the planet that promises increasing social crises and conflict. When the average worker for a major U.S. corporation makes about \$28,000 a year [while its CEO makes \\$28,000 every nine seconds](#), social crisis seems inevitable. While that is an extreme example, the competitive structures of the global economy are driving global inequality, leaving more and more people in desperate need of

resources on this limited planet and aggravating what Pope Francis has described as one complex and interrelated global economic, ecological and social crisis.

It is abundantly clear: Climate change is here.

Its devastating threats are more and more apparent. It is being driven by some of the most basic social and economic systems by which we are living on Earth today. And it is perhaps [progressing much more quickly](#) than our analytic models have predicted.

Though the 2018 liturgical Season of Creation comes to a close Oct, 4, it is urgent that communities of faith around the planet carry forward the revelation, inspiration, growth in spiritual energies and global collaboration that the season has nurtured in a renewed commitment. It is essential that the human family reverse the dynamics driving climate change, ecological depletion, injustice and violent conflict as people struggle to survive. We must move into our immediate future deepened and transformed.

What might that look like? Reflecting on the Sunday liturgical texts from this year's Season of Creation, I might sum it up in this way:

Ongoing contemplation of the beauty and wonder of creation must continue to feed our appreciation, gratitude, love of and passion to take care of the planet on which we are blessed to live. We take care of what we come to appreciate, are grateful for and love.

Remembering that God did not spare Jesus from the terrible rejection, suffering and death that the religious leaders of his people condemned him to, we need to take with utmost seriousness the threats from the ecological and social crisis we are caught up in. In the words of Jesus, it is "thinking not as God does but as humans do" (Mark 8:33, [the Gospel reading](#) for the third Sunday of the Season of Creation 2018) to expect that God would somehow come in to save creation from the natural effects of our destructive activities.

We need to pray for ever-deepening trust that the awesome God behind and throughout the cosmos is accompanying us with love through all that may lie ahead — as God was faithful to Jesus through his suffering and death — holding before us the promise of resurrection.

Then we need to take up with renewed energy the call to be prophets to our time, calling everyone we can touch through word and living example into new ways of living together as one human family within the Earth community, working to evolve together the next emerging stage of the New Creation.

[Jesuit Fr. James E. Hug serves as sacramental minister for the Adrian Dominican Sisters and writes on spirituality for social transformation. His blog, "Truth that does Justice," can be found on the website for the Dominican Center: [Spirituality for Mission.](#)]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/eco-catholic/season-creations-end-know-climate-change-here-now>

October 9, 2018

Ties of blood

By Kandi White, Earth Island Journal
Nation of Change

Our deep and abiding connection with Mother Earth is what compels us to fight to protect it.

I'm a Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara woman who grew up in a small rural community in North Dakota on what is known today as the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. My Hidatsa name is Eagle Woman; my English name is Kandi (Mossett) White.

As a child, I was blessed with the freedom that comes with growing up in a rural community. I played outside all the time. During summers at my grandparents' house, I would swim in Lake Sakakawea from sunup to sundown, climb hills, and explore the Badlands. We would go chokecherry-picking with my grandma, and help her make the most delicious chokecherry jams and syrups I've ever had. My grandpa would take us out on his four-wheeler to load up on veggies from the garden. We would go fishing on the lake in his pontoon boat and then cross over to McKenzie Bay for ice cream. I thought North Dakota was the best place in the world.

My young eyes did not see the coal-fired power plants that dominate our state or the uranium mining or underground missile silos. I didn't know then that North Dakota was and still is home to the nation's only commercial-scale coal gasification plant, which, under certain conditions, can strip paint off cars parked in the wrong area. Cancers and asthmas, diabetes, and heart disease were all normal ailments to me. I didn't realize all of this was polluting the lake that I swam in everyday. All I knew for certain was that cancers and asthmas, diabetes, and heart disease were all normal ailments to me. To hear that someone had lung, brain, prostate, uterine, or breast cancer was not out of the norm.

So, I was not completely surprised when, as a 20-year-old college student, I was diagnosed with a stage-4 sarcoma tumor – an aggressive, rapidly-spreading cancer that's usually attached to muscle or bone. In my case, the tumor wasn't attached to my muscle or bone; it was right there in the subcutaneous tissue of the left side my stomach where I could see it, feel it, and watch it spread. I remember the morning I woke up and noticed that the pea-sized lump I had discovered on my tummy just a few days before had grown and was changing color. Because cancer was so common on our reservation, I knew I had to get to the doctor.

I would eventually have to go through three surgeries to deal with my cancer. I refused localized chemotherapy or radiation because I wanted to have children one day and had heard the horror stories of women not being able to conceive after chemo.

Surviving cancer changed my life. I became much more aware of just how high the cancer rates were in North Dakota and I wanted to learn more. As I began researching cancer cases in the region, I started noticing clear patterns of serious health issues in low-income and minority

communities, especially ones located near major pollution sources including coal-fired power plants, coal, oil, gas, and uranium extraction sites, and nuclear power plants.

In 2000, my now mother-in-law started a local grassroots group called the Environmental Awareness Committee of Fort Berthold. The group has evolved over the years and its name has changed several times, but its work has remained the same: protecting our people and communities from harm caused by the fossil fuel industry. We started out fighting plans for a tar sands oil refinery on our reservation and have so far managed to prevent it from being built. But the fight goes on.

Meanwhile, in 2007, around the time I joined the Indigenous Environmental Network, fracking had begun to sweep across Fort Berthold. Again, women in our communities began stepping up to oppose it whilst our all-male Tribal Council made decisions for us that were not in the best interest of the environment, future generations, or any of us alive today. We continue to be embroiled in that battle – some of us are fighting for regulations and some of us are fighting for a ban on fracking altogether.

It has often been said that the rape of Mother Earth is connected to the rape of women. I've never seen a bright side to the oil boom. When fracking came to our little communities in rural North Dakota and violence against women increased exponentially, we fully understood what that meant. As man-camps ruled the prairies, local women, children, and even men became the victims of men working grueling hours in the oil fields with little to do in their down time other than haunt the small-town bars and engage in predatory behavior. Fort Berthold became ground zero for sex trafficking.

This has often been referred to as the dark side of the oil boom, which I never understood, as I have never seen a bright side to the oil boom. Money is certainly not a bright side as it has caused jealousy, greed, and heartache among both those who have it and those who don't.

Through the US Energy Information Administration I found out that North Dakota's total energy production is six times greater than the state's energy consumption, which means others are getting the energy while we are getting the sickness and pollution and violence. I also found out from the state health department that every single bit of North Dakota's more than 11,000 miles of rivers, lakes, and streams is contaminated with mercury due to decades of coal extraction. Women in particular are told not to consume too much fish when pregnant because of the dangers posed to the unborn child by mercury exposure.

I used to love eating walleye taken fresh from the lake, battered and fried up right by the shore. I wonder now if that and other facets of my life in North Dakota led to my recent heartbreaking miscarriage, or my sister's miscarriage, or all of my cousins' miscarriages. We just live with the fact that we may never truly know or be able to prove a connection.

So here we are in 2018, Native women striving for that bright horizon which we can see just off in the distance. We have our culture with us, and we have our traditional teachings to guide us and wipe our tears as we fight back, once again.

Since the inception of our resistance movement, we've observed our grassroots leaders are predominately women. Perhaps it's because of the "warrior status" being taken away from our men due to colonization, or perhaps it goes deeper to the status of women being the keepers of the water and carriers of the next generations. I believe it's a combination of both and more.

Women have a deep and abiding tie to the land that we Indigenous people call "blood memory." It's what ties all women to our Mother Earth and gives us the instinct to care for our families and communities, just as our Mother Earth cares for and provides for all living beings. It's because of this blood memory that we can't stand our earth being ripped apart, blown up, dug up, and desecrated.

To me, the most important aspect of all of the women-led movements is the fact that we are not just pushing to stop fossil fuel projects or uranium mining projects or big dam projects or deforestation, we are also working towards that next step – towards something called a "just transition" – that would move our society, slowly, but surely, towards a decarbonized economy.

Our vision is that of large-scale community gardens, for we know that we cannot be truly sovereign unless we can feed ourselves. It includes small-scale distributed power in the form of the gifts we receive from the sun and the wind. It includes creating jobs for our men that will make them whole again as providers of their families but will not negatively impact their health or ours.

As women, as nurturers and as keepers of the water, we will not quit, we cannot quit, until we succeed in changing the current course of our future on this planet.

<https://www.nationofchange.org/2018/10/09/ties-of-blood/>

October 10, 2018

Catholics urge action as UN report forecasts climate crisis in coming decades

By Brian Roewe and Chris Herlinger
National Catholic Reporter

Halting future global crisis requires unprecedented but doable action, experts say

The global community finds itself at a "can't-fail moment," United Nations officials said with the release of a major report that foresees an ecosystem-altering climate crisis mere decades away that will impact the lives of hundreds of millions of people unless "unprecedented" transitions across society occur.

Catholics who work on the climate change issue say the world has "a moral and ethical imperative to act," with urgency and decisiveness.

"We need to be as adamant in standing up for life in addressing climate change as we are about the vocalized issue of abortion," Charity Sr. Carol De Angelo said. "Can we broaden this as a life issue?"

The [report](#), from the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, an advisory group of scientists to the international body, projected that at current rates of greenhouse gas emissions the globe will reach 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming above preindustrial levels around 2040, and as soon as a decade earlier.

Average global temperatures have already risen 1 C since preindustrial times (1850-1900), resulting in rising sea levels, declining Arctic sea ice and more extreme weather. Because warming does not occur uniformly worldwide, some regions have already experienced temperature rises above 1.5 C.

"We need to be as adamant in standing up for life in addressing climate change as we are about the vocalized issue of abortion. Can we broaden this as a life issue?"
—Charity Sr. Carol De Angelo

As temperatures rise, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report stated, the risks from climate change become worse — particularly for vulnerable populations, indigenous peoples and communities dependent on agricultural and coastal livelihoods, all at a "disproportionately higher risk of adverse consequences" — and increasingly devastating for societies and ecosystems as warming approaches 2 C (3.6 F) and beyond. The report projected "robust differences" between the two global warming trajectories.

"It's bad news," Sr. Teresa Kotturan, the U.N. representative for the [Sisters of Charity Federation](#) said of the report's findings. "It's bad because you need the political will and economic capacities to implement change. The steps we need to reduce greenhouse emissions are costly."

The seemingly small difference in degrees could mean the difference in preventing several hundred million people from falling into poverty by mid-century, the report found. In addition, it projected that limiting global warming to 1.5 C could expose 420 million fewer people to severe heatwaves, 10 million fewer to risks brought by rising seas, and limit Arctic summers without sea ice to once a century rather than once per decade with 2 C of warming.

Additionally, nearly all coral reef would be wiped out under a 2 C scenario. Avoiding temperature rise to that level would also lower the risks of heat-related morbidity and mortality and the spread of vector-borne diseases like malaria and dengue fever, and reduce the risks of flooding, infrastructure damage and saltwater intrusion to people living on small islands and low-lying coastal areas.

"A half of degree of warming makes a world of difference," said António Guterres, U.N. secretary-general, in a statement.

He called the report "an ear-splitting wake-up call to the world. It confirms that climate change is running faster than we are — and we are running out of time."

The report, released Oct. 8 in South Korea, was written by 91 scientists who reviewed more than 6,000 scientific studies. It was commissioned as part of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.

Under the accord, [195 nations agreed](#) to limit average global temperature rise "well below" 2 C and to work toward the 1.5 target. Island nations, [buoyed by support from civil society groups as well as the Vatican](#), pushed for the more stringent goal, believing that greater warming could wipe out their homes and cultures beneath rising seas.

Current pledges under the Paris Agreement would only hold global warming to 3 C; a report from the Trump administration earlier this summer [projected a 4 C rise](#) by 2100. At the next U.N. climate change conference, COP 24 in December in Katowice, Poland, nations will gauge their progress to date and potentially ramp up their commitments.

Guterres called the Katowice summit "a can't-fail moment."

The IPCC report highlights the "significant" benefits of limiting warming to 1.5 C compared to 2 C, but also the "considerable challenge" it poses for the coming years, said Veerabhadran Ramanathan, professor of atmospheric and climate sciences at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California-San Diego and a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

"It's still doable, but it's going to take Herculean efforts. And I personally [think] it will require a lot of leadership from the U.S.," he told NCR.

Under President Donald Trump, the United States, the planet's second-leading polluter, has taken a back seat on climate change. Trump said he will [withdraw the country](#) from the Paris Agreement at the earliest opportunity, and his administration has worked to roll back a number of environmental measures, including moves under President Barack Obama to [limit carbon emissions from power plants](#) and the auto industry.

In the absence of federal action, a coalition of 3,000 states, cities, businesses and organizations have pledged to continue U.S. efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, highlighted last month at the [Global Climate Action Summit](#) in San Francisco.

According to the IPCC report, capping global warming at 1.5 C would require a dramatic drop in carbon emissions in the next decade — a decline of 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030 — and then reach net-zero by 2050. The climate models also include scenarios where temperatures temporarily "overshoot" the 1.5 target before eventually falling back down.

Achieving that goal would require "rapid and far-reaching transitions" across sectors — energy, land, urban and infrastructure and industrial systems — within the next two decades, the report found. Renewable energy would need to produce 70 to 85 percent of electricity by 2050 and coal essentially eliminated as an energy source. Millions of acres of farm and public lands would need to be converted for reforestation and the production of crops for use as energy sources. In

addition, technologies either not yet invented or at scalable capacity, including mechanisms to pull carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, would need to be developed.

Such a transformation on that scale has "no documented historic precedent," the report said.

"Limiting warming to 1.5°C is possible within the laws of chemistry and physics," said Jim Skea, one of the report's authors," but doing so would require unprecedented changes."

Dan Misleh, executive director of U.S.-based Catholic Climate Covenant, said the message the report sends "is we have to get serious about tackling this issue. Much more serious than we have been so far."

Catholic sisters who represent their congregations at the United Nations and are supportive of international efforts responding to climate change said the implications of the U.N. report are worrisome.

What is particularly troubling is that the effects of climate change now stem from earlier rises in temperatures, the Charity sister Kotturan noted, meaning radical steps must be taken immediately "to reduce [greenhouse emissions] so that we can meet of challenges of 2040. We created it [the problem], now have to devise ways to stop it."

More pressure from "the grassroots" and from religious communities need to be applied to governments to act, Kotturan said, arguing the "greed is taking over the common good" throughout the world.

"Change always happens from the bottom up, from the grassroots," she said.

De Angelo, director of the Office of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation of the [Sisters of Charity of New York](#) and who works with Kotturan at the United Nations, said the report's implications for the future are stark.

She told NCR that she hopes U.S. Catholics are beginning to see the issue of climate as part of a life-based ethic. "What about our children, what kind of world are we leaving them?" she said.

In the United States, where the climate change debate has become subsumed in the country's partisan political divide, policy work is needed to promote the common good, De Angelo said.

"There is a moral and ethical imperative to act," she said, noting her own advocacy efforts to promote Pope Francis' 2015 environmental encyclical, "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home."

"I don't want it become a 'Republican-Democratic thing,' " she said. "Everything has become so partisan." Speaking of her work and the work of other sisters at the United Nations on the environment, De Angelo said the sisters are not acting from a position of political partisanship. "We're about promoting the Gospel."

Ramanathan, the climate scientist, said his peers and policymakers have to work with faith leaders to build up the collective will to take the massive steps called for in the IPCC report. Part of the solution, he said, involves better communicating the science behind climate change and future projections to those having difficulty accepting it.

"The key issue to me is unpacking climate change science from all the issues that divide. ... It's an issue of data-driven science, and an issue of huge human tragedy," said Ramanathan, who in recent years has given more than a dozen speeches to religious audiences, including in February at Creighton University, in Omaha, Nebraska.

Misleh of Catholic Climate Covenant said that while there are many hopeful signs of progress on climate action in what businesses, faith communities and other sectors are doing, the world can't rely on technology alone to bring about the necessary change. An examination of how people, particularly in developed nations, live daily must also be a part, pointing to Francis' description in *Laudato Si'* of the world facing not separate crises but "one complex crisis which is both social and environmental."

"Those of us in the wealthier countries need to be much more concerned about our lifestyle choices than we ever have been," Misleh said. "Because those choices ... have a tremendous carbon footprint."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/catholic-urge-action-un-report-forecasts-climate-crisis-coming-decades>

October 10, 2018

USU examines religion, environment with 'God and Smog' symposium

By Kevin Opsahl
Herald Journal News

At the start of the first-ever "God and Smog Symposium" at Utah State University on Wednesday, the school's director of religious studies, Ravi Gupta, asked participants to look out out the window of Huntsman Hall.

The huge windows facing Highway 89 provide sweeping views of trees with colorful autumn leaves and the Bear River Mountain range.

"Please do take a moment to marvel at this beautiful natural landscape that we are privileged to live in," Gupta said. "This vision here is bittersweet: On the one hand, it's glorious on a day like this. On the other hand, we all know, if we're locals, that there are days in winter when we can stand here and not see all that much outside ... because of the challenge of smog that we have here in Utah."

That contrast, Gupta said, set the frame for the symposium, which brought together religious leaders and scholars to talk about the challenges facing the environment and how action can be balanced with various religious perspectives.

“Too often, when we speak of the environment, we forget there are human actors who are motivated by many different factors, and few of those factors are as powerful as religion,” Gupta said. “In this conference we hope to bring together these two things: God and the natural world ... however we might think of religion ... and however we might conceive of the natural world we live in.”

Bethany Nay, a freshman majoring in history with a minor in religious studies, told *The Herald Journal* she attended the symposium for academic credit but has a genuine interest in studying all religions.

“I think it’s interesting because I’ve never really heard of environmental stuff and religion being tied together,” she said. “When heard the name of the conference, ‘God and Smog,’ I was really intrigued.”

The conference looked at Episcopalianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity (and a focus on Latter-day Saints) from academic and religious perspectives.

Before those groups spoke, Alan Matheson, executive director of the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, made a few remarks.

“I live in the world of environmental regulation ... I use a different language,” he said. “Important as regulation is in protecting our environment, the faith community has much to contribute to this dialogue.”

Matheson said faith complements environmental policies with concepts like stewardship.

The morning session of the symposium was devoted to a panel discussion of academics from different universities, each of whom specialized in the religions the symposium focused on.

One of the panelists, Sue Darlington, professor of anthropology at Hampshire College in Massachusetts, spoke about Buddhism and how its teachings are being used in Thailand by monks who work with farmers and villagers in the area.

Darlington knew a monk who became concerned about the environmental changes to the rural Thailand landscape, such as trees being cut down.

“Farmers became participants in this because the government and large seed companies, in particular, were really encouraging the farms to grow large cash crops,” Darlington said.

If farmers didn’t grow good crops, companies would extend loans, leading people to cut down more trees to expand what they were growing, according to Darlington.

“How does that have anything to do with Buddhism? The explanation these monks come up with is that they look to Buddhist principles to both explain problems and to find ways out,” she said.

One of those principles is that there are “root evils” in society, including greed.

“These kinds of root evils in society would become the motivation for continuing to seek more and more money and take advantage of the natural world,” Darlington said.

Monks decided they would listen to the farmers to understand what they were trying to do, Darlington said.

Monks would use “ritual practices to get the farmers to understand how much they depend on nature and to help them realize they can have agency to get out of this cycle of debt and environmental damage,” she said.

After Darlington and other scholars presented in the morning, the afternoon session of the God and Smog symposium included four leaders in Episcopalianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, addressing ways their religious institutions have made contributions to the environment.

One of those panel participants was Steven E. Snow, church historian and recorder for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He told The Herald Journal that there could be more opportunities for his religion and others to work together on the environment.

“The church has a lot on its plate, but if they could find time for some of these issues, there could be solutions,” Snow said. “I think ... we need to be responsible for our own actions and our own actions can make a difference in the environment. How we live and how we choose to lessen our carbon footprint in the world makes a difference. If we all make that part of our values, then it can make a big difference.”

Snow told The Herald Journal he felt the God & Smog symposium is important.

“I think we learn from each other, and we gain insights from one another that I think we can apply and help and find solutions,” Snow said.

Gupta referenced the Karl Marx quote, “Religion is the opiate of the masses,” explaining that Marx believed religion was a distraction that kept people away from action.

“We have an opportunity here, and let me ask this question: Was Karl Marx right?” Gupta said. “Today, we have an opportunity to perhaps prove him wrong in some way — to show that religion can be not just a way to keep people quiet ... which it certainly can, occasionally, but it’s also a force for action.”

https://www.hjnews.com/news/local/usu-examines-religion-environment-with-god-and-smog-symposium/article_d9c03d66-831b-5912-b8cb-e8fc37b55531.html

October 11, 2018

To Protect the Environment, Buddhist Monks Are Ordaining Trees

By August Rick
Sojourners

Traveling from several provinces across the heavily logged Cambodian landscape, two dozen Buddhist monks met at a local pagoda last October to attend a workshop held by The Alliance of Religions and Conservation. For Cambodia's emerging network of "ecology monks" working in an increasingly authoritarian climate, the meeting was a critical and rare opportunity to discuss best practices for local conservation projects. And then two cops showed up and shut it down.

"They're very wary of the monks getting together," Chantal Elkin, a program manager for The Alliance of Religions and Conservation, told Sojourners. "Forest activism is [seen as] a threat to the government."

Several of the monks were visibly upset, Elkin said.

Though traditionally revered in Cambodia's majority-Buddhist society, monks today are not immune to the government's crackdown on civil society actors. But where efforts at civic organization meet rebuke, Cambodia has seen the rise of one act of conservation — the holy ordination of trees — which originally emerged in Thailand and has risen in practice under the auspices of the Buddhist faith.

The most venerable of the group took the two officers, local cops not antagonistic to the meeting but seemingly following orders, up the hill where the group ordained a tree into the Buddhist faith, and then dispersed.

Beginning in the late 1980s, venerable Thai monks began to ordain trees as they would induct a new monk to the faith. Often choosing the oldest and largest trees, which hold domain over the forest, the monks would recite the appropriate scripture, often from the Pali Canon, garb the tree in traditional monk's robes, and read from sections of Buddhist scripture that coalesce faith, ecology, and conservation. Though the practice varied, it was understood across the board as an effort to alleviate suffering, a core commandment of Buddhist faith.

The ordained tree, garbed in orange for a monk or white for a maechi (one of several titles given to women who have dedicated their lives to the Buddhist faith), serves various conservation roles. Most immediately, the human trace left in the forest dissuades illegal loggers. To harm an ordained monk is a religious taboo and legal offense. An ordination extends this sacred status to the tree. Communities that ordain trees often patrol the forest, taking photos of illegal activity and reporting wrongdoers.

Northeastern Thailand's Nan Province was ground zero for tree ordination ceremonies in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Thailand saw an uptick in logging and a growing encroachment of

farmers on forest lands. Loss of woodland came to a head in 1988, when monsoon rains triggered landslides on a heavily logged mountainside in southern Thailand's Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, killing hundreds and devastating towns.

Through the public outcry, the contours of a modern Thai environmental movement were formed between urbanites and rural communities. They found leadership, principle, and voice in a small population of Buddhist monks engaging in ecological conservation projects. Common across much of Southeast Asia, they were known in Thailand as "ecology monks."

In 1996, an NGO in northern Thailand announced plans to ordain 50 million trees in honor of the 50th year of the reign of Thai monarch King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

"That kind of marked a shift, because it really showed how effective these things were. And so, the state began to co-op [the practice]" said Dr. Susan Darlington, a professor of anthropology and Asian studies at Hampshire college and author of *The Ordination of a Tree*.

By 2010, contestants for Miss Thailand Universe were performing tree ordinations in northeast Thailand as part of the pageant.

"Around that time, if you were a monk and you were anywhere near a forest, you were kind of expected to do a tree ordination," Darlington said. "In some cases, they weren't as effective anymore."

As the practice became more common in Thailand, its impact dulled. However, the practice had already crossed the border into Cambodia.

Elkin says she saw tree ordinations become common practice in northwestern Cambodia after Venerable Bun Saluth, the head of the Samrong Pagoda in Oddar Meanchey Province, took the practice back home in 2002, after five years of studying with ecology monks in northeastern Thailand. Both Thailand and Cambodia's Buddhist Sangha institutions are heavily influenced by the government but remain fertile grounds for voices of dissent and conversations about conservation.

The official religion of Thailand and Cambodia is Theravada Buddhism and more than 90 percent of the population in both countries identify as Buddhist. Theodore Mayer with The International Network of Engaged Buddhists, said that Buddhist practitioners bear moral authority in society. Many have found the need to adapt that morality to the modern world.

Phra Paisal Visalo, the renowned abbot of Wat Pa Sukato, contends that it's the duty of all monks to care for the environment, and while he has seen less ordinations or less high-publicity ordinations, recently, an entire body of conservation work has developed since the ordinations began.

In the Nan Province of Thailand, where Darlington does her research, corporations target farmers in predatory loan programs that incentivize growing corn, but buy it back below market cost. Deforestation results as farmers hustle to remake their investment. Tree ordinations as

community events encourage farmers to avoid the cash crop loan program and turn to community-based solutions for deforestation.

Of Thailand's neighboring countries, Cambodia has taken most quickly to tree ordination ceremonies. The authoritarian country's forested northwest is heavily logged, often illegally, and locals have little recourse and high risk.

"[Buddhist monks] use ordinations now, especially in this network, to motivate, incentivize, and get the local community on board," Elkin said. "Everybody takes part in it and feels some ownership. And that's a way to connect their religious beliefs and values to nature."

<https://sojo.net/articles/protect-environment-buddhist-monks-are-ordaining-trees>

October 17, 2018

Eco-padyatra to Buddhist sites to focus on environment

Orissa Post

Bhubaneswar: An Eco Pad Yatra will be organised to heritage sites of Buddhism in the state to create awareness about conserving the environment.

The Yatra will be organised by the Drukpa Lineage, and led by Drukpa Thuksey Rinpoche, the present Gyalwang Drukpa and the 12th incarnation of the founder of the Drukpa Lineage.

The Drukpas are best known for taking meditation off the mat and into the world, and converting compassion into action to tackle the world's challenges.

Odisha has initiated action to check the use of plastic, and plastic bags are banned in six cities from October 2. The ban is expected to be extended to more cities.

The Eco-Pad Yatra will kick off in Bhubaneswar October 24. During the eight-day Eco Pad Yatra, His Holiness, the Gyalwang Drukpa and other participants will travel 140 km by foot through the five important Buddhist sites of Bhubaneswar, Udayagiri which is also known as the city of major stupas and monasteries, Dhauli, the city of the famous Shanti Stupa, Lalitgiri, the city known for its enormous brick monasteries and Ratnagiri, a city with the remains of 300 minor stupas.

Speaking about the event, His Holiness, the Gyalwang Drukpa said, "In ancient times Buddha walked with his disciples and taught them through his actions as well as verbal expressions. Similarly, through this Eco Pad Yatra we are communing with one another through action, drawing inspiration from the Buddhist heritage of Odisha, and spreading an urgent environmental message along with it."

During the course of the Eco Pad Yatra, His Holiness and monastic and lay pilgrims will pray daily for peace and compassion, perform large scale cleaning of the terrain along the route, and will campaign about the importance of preserving nature.

The event will also promote awareness about the Buddhist heritage sites of Odisha, where cultural relics and monastic structures have been preserved for centuries.

This will be the 16th Eco Pad Yatra by Drukpa Lineage. The Eco Pad Yatra will conclude October 31 at Ratnagiri in Odisha.

The first Pad Yatra, 500 km long, was organised in 2006 by His Holiness, the Gyalwang Drukpa, in which nine Rinpoches and 180 nuns and monks took part.

<http://www.orissapost.com/eco-padyatra-to-buddhist-sites-to-focus-on-environment/>

October 17, 2018

'Literally life and death': Indigenous climate leaders critical of Canada's response to climate change report

By Justin Brake
Aboriginal Peoples Television Network

Indigenous climate leaders in Canada say parliament's emergency debate on climate change Monday evening was necessary but inadequate.

On Monday House of Commons Speaker Geoffrey Regan approved the debate following requests from the Green Party, NDP and Liberal MP Nathaniel Erksine-Smith, who were responding to the International Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Oct. 8 landmark report that outlined the dire circumstances the planet is in if it doesn't do more to limit global warming to 1.5C.

Much of the discussion focused on Canada's existing plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but the debate is "30 years overdue," according to Canada's representative on the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC).

"Inuit have been bringing warnings about global warming to the international community as far back as the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992," ICC Canada President Monica Ell-Kanayuk said in a statement released Tuesday.

The IPCC, a body of the United Nations tasked with bringing together leading scientists and researchers from around the world to file reports on the status of climate change, warned in its landmark report that failing to limit global warming to 1.5C will result in significantly increased risks of major adverse impacts like floods, droughts, food insecurity, poverty, and a mass die-off of the ocean's coral reefs by as soon as 2040, much earlier than previously anticipated.

To achieve this, the world only has 12 years, until 2030, to reduce emissions by 45 per cent below 2010 levels, the IPCC says.

The world has already warmed up about 1C compared to the mid-19th century and is experiencing the effects of that, including more violent storms, more frequent flooding, longer droughts and more forest fires.

Each 0.5 C degree of warming raises those risks significantly, with entire ecosystems possibly being eradicated, parts of the planet becoming too hot to sustain life and island nations getting drowned out entirely by rising sea levels.

To avoid the impacts of 1.5C warming, Canada would need to cut its annual emissions almost in half from current levels within 12 years to meet that goal but currently aims to cut them by a little more than 25 per cent by 2030.

The current climate plans — with carbon pricing, energy efficiencies, renewable power sources and technological innovations — don't even get Canada to the existing goal.

Environment Minister Catherine McKenna said last week her plan is to implement the existing climate framework and reach the current targets before looking at more ambitious measures.

Emergency debate lacking

Clayton Thomas-Muller, a Cree climate campaigner for 350.org, told *APTN News* Monday he welcomed the debate but was skeptical the Liberals would take adequate action.

“Justin Trudeau has been suspiciously silent for the last week,” he said, adding the government’s response is “troubling” given the magnitude of the crisis and the “current situation of geopolitics in this country” with respect to “pipeline politics and Indigenous people.

“The fact of the matter is the IPCC report has told us that we have 12 years to get this stuff right. And that means that we have to have a significant shutting down of fossil fuel development.”

Thomas-Mueller said Canada “has to stop the expansion of the Alberta tar sands, and we need to significantly invest in renewable energy.”

But the feds don't appear to be taking their own commitments seriously, Thomas-Muller added, citing the government's support for fracking and liquid natural gas development in northern British Columbia, its approval of offshore oil development in the Maritimes, and its expansion of the Alberta oil sands through its approval of Line 3 and its recent purchase of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.

“We're in this very contradictory moment right now where the government of Canada is on an international platform saying we're a climate leader, but domestically with their announcements of economic initiatives are saying we are not a climate leader, we are investing in technologies from the past.”

Eriel Deranger, from Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and Executive Director of Indigenous Climate Action, says Monday's emergency debate revealed what she calls a tendency among decision-makers "to lean in towards trying to save and buffer and pad the economy over actually trying to save the planet."

She noted Green Party leader Elizabeth May was "the only one that came out with reality" in the debate.

"You've got one chance to protect your kids' world, you've got one chance, and it's expiring in about 10-12 years, to hold global average temperature to no more than 1.5 degrees," May said Monday evening.

"If you miss that...you end up in a situation where the worst case scenario isn't bad weather, it's the collapse of our civilization and the extinction of millions of species, potentially including us."

Deranger said the federal government's approach to the climate crisis fails to address underlying causes, "the status quo of colonialism and capitalism," which she argues are also at the root of Canada's mistreatment of Indigenous peoples "under that premise of terra nullius and man's domination over nature, which is in contravention to Indigenous values and cosmologies and rights."

During the debate federal Minister of Climate Change and Environment Catherine McKenna touted the Liberals' efforts to phase out coal production, and its investments in public transit, social housing and the renewable energy sector.

She also referenced the Liberals' involvement of Indigenous communities in Canada's climate strategy.

Canada presently has five climate-related programs that involve Indigenous communities, the bulk of which deal with monitoring and mitigation, not prevention or the "bottom-up" solutions Deranger says are needed, and which Indigenous people should be a part of.

"We don't have self-determination. We're not in positions of power. We're not given any authority or autonomy or sovereignty over our lands and territories," she says.

"We're given a voice, yes...but we need to go beyond being given a voice and we need to be given actual power and control to determine what happens in our lands and territories."

McKenna deflected criticism from the NDP and Greens by pointing to the Conservatives' lack of action on climate change during their decade of governance under Stephen Harper.

Thomas-Muller and Deranger both said the conversation in parliament needs to radically shift, from party politics toward a recognition that climate justice and Indigenous rights go hand in hand and can be part of a transition to a just and sustainable economy based on clean renewable energy.

“There is eminent threat coming towards us, and we have the capacity to reallocate resources, to redistribute the way that we do things, to effectively do this in a real way to protect people and lives,” Deranger said. “And we’re not doing it.”

Thomas-Muller said Indigenous people and Canadians are paying attention to how decision-makers are responding to the crisis.

“We’ve got a big challenge ahead of us...moving forward into the 2019 election, and those running for office better take that into consideration.”

Only one of the 11 sitting Indigenous MPs spoke during Monday’s climate debate.

During his speech Liberal member for Winnipeg Centre Robert-Falcon Ouellette said the Liberals are working to implement a national carbon tax as one measure to reduce carbon emissions in Canada.

Ouellette took aim at Ontario, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, as well as the federal Conservatives, who are resisting the strategy.

The Liberals have given provinces time to come up with their own carbon tax scheme, otherwise say they will impose the tax in 2019.

Biodiversity and the Indigenous knowledge that protects it

Many on the front lines against fossil fuel development in Mi’kmaq, Secwepemc, Wet’suwet’en, Coast Salish, Anishinaabe and other territories are fighting for their inherent rights, but Deranger and Thomas-Muller say Canadians should understand they’re also fighting to preserve the sacred — Mother Earth — for everyone.

“We could quit building all the high intensity emission fossil fuel stuff today, and we would still need to preserve and nurture biodiversity to help bring our planet back to stabilization,” Deranger explains.

“And the reality is that Indigenous communities, land-based communities have literally been on the front lines of advocating for, nurturing and preserving, the biodiversity of this planet since time immemorial.

“We have literally been the reason why the planet hasn’t hit the tipping point,” she continues, pointing out that 80 percent of the world’s biodiversity is within recognized Indigenous lands and territories.

“We maintain a sacred and spiritual connection to those lands and territories that are critical for climate stabilization.

“It’s that knowledge, that understanding, that is going to be critical in connecting humanity back to nature in order for us not to continue to repeat the same mistakes over and over again.”

Thomas-Muller said he stands in solidarity with front line groups like the Unist'ot'en in northern B.C., "who are adamantly opposed to the exportation of fracked gas from Northeastern B.C. through salmon-producing rivers and streams."

The Unist'ot'en, a Wet'suwet'en clan that has established a settlement on its traditional territory in the way of multiple proposed pipeline projects, has cited the need to limit climate change as one of the primary factors for its assertion of sovereignty over its title lands.

Deranger says she doesn't want to perpetuate the idea that "all Indigenous people have some romanticized connection with land, but there are still many Indigenous peoples, knowledge holders, land users, that maintain a solid connection and understanding and intimacy with the land that has been passed down for generations. And it's that connection that is so critical," she explains.

She points out that climate scientists and others have recognized Indigenous peoples' central role in addressing the climate crisis.

But none of this factored into Monday evening's debate in the House of Commons, she says.

Instead, politicians remain silent when Indigenous people are criminalized for defending their lands and resisting fossil fuel extraction.

"When a government makes a determination that a project is not good for the country, everyone applauds. But when First Nations get up and oppose these projects... we are criminalized, we are made to look like we are breaking laws when we actually are only upholding our own laws.

"The reality is it's our communities that have been safeguarding our lands and territories and the biodiversity of this planet—not just here in Canada but globally—and it's time to recognize that when Indigenous communities are standing up for our lands and territories we need to start listening rather than criminalizing them.

"Those lands and territories are going to be critical for our survival, and it's more than just about how much money we have in our bank account. It's about whether or not we have clean water to drink, clean air to breathe, and food to nurture our minds, our bodies and our spirits.

"We are literally in the last 60 seconds of the 11th hour, and we don't have any more time to be arguing the semantics and the economics of this anymore. This is literally life and death."

Indigenous leaders in support of fossil fuel development

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Chief Allan Adam was for a long time firmly opposed to continued oil sands expansion in his people's region, but earlier this year did an about-face on the issue and has since publicly called for First Nations to take an ownership stake in pipeline projects like Trans Mountain.

Deranger, who has worked for the First Nation, said the chief's new position is "sad" and represents a sense of defeat after her people have worked hard to protect their land and territory from the harms of the fossil fuel industry.

"Colonialism and capitalism and systems of white supremacy are not just bound to white folks – they are pervasive, they are packaged and sold," she said.

"In order to be successful you need to have money and a car and a home and you need to be part of the capitalist machine. And so much so that it's been forced on a lot of communities.

"The reality is...they have literally beat us down and eroded our ability to have that connection to the land, through degradation and contamination."

Deranger says many Indigenous people have been forced to adopt an "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" mentality when it comes to fighting against harmful policies or industries that harm their communities.

"There's this pervasive attempt to continue to try to assimilate and coerce Indigenous communities," she says. "And you wonder why communities are buckling – because they don't have millions of dollars to enter into these review processes and legal cases to challenge these projects.

"It's coercion and bribery at its finest, it's another tactic of assimilation, and it's not fair that we're being used in this way because we have literally been painted into corners in our communities to accept this because is literally no other option."

<http://aptnnews.ca/2018/10/17/literally-life-and-death-indigenous-climate-leaders-critical-of-canadas-response-to-climate-change-report/>

October 19, 2018

Aboriginal Rangers Face a Sisyphean Task: Waves of Trash

By David Maurice Smith, Australia Dispatch
New York Times

YALANGBARRA, Australia — As the sun dropped below the horizon and darkness spread across the vast Northern Territory sky, the men and women scanned the terrain one last time for potential prey.

It was dinnertime for the Dhimurru Rangers, a group of mostly Indigenous Australians who had spent a long day cleaning up the polluted beaches of the continent's northern coast. Soon they would be eating freshly caught fish and seafood cooked under the stars on an open fire, as their ancestors did.

For thousands of years, the Yolngu Aboriginal people have lived in this part of Australia, hunting in its forests and fishing in its waters.

But this once unspoiled land is now polluted. Thousands of pounds of plastic garbage wash up here annually and so-called ghost nets — abandoned nylon fishing trawls — entangle and kill endangered animals including sea turtles, dugongs and sharks.

The Dhimurru Rangers are one of more than 100 Indigenous groups spread across the continent who have taken on the job of protecting the land of their forebears, combining traditional methods with contemporary conservation.

In Arnhem Land along the Gulf of Carpentaria, they are the heirs and stewards of 3,300 square miles of land and sea. They painstakingly comb the beaches by hand, picking up as much debris as possible. The task is Sisyphean as each day delivers literal waves of new trash.

For the rangers, cleaning the beaches is more than a vocation. For a people whose culture is indelibly tied to the land, protecting the environment is tantamount to preserving their history.

“Being a ranger is about protecting our own country,” said Gatha Pura Munnunggurr, 28. “If you lose your culture you’re nothing.”

On a particularly challenging day in July, the rangers worked to dispose of a gigantic ghost net. The seemingly endless net, lost or abandoned by fishermen likely from Indonesia, had become partially buried close to shore.

Even an old, torn net is still capable of ensnaring fish and wildlife. The rangers used all the tools at their disposal — power tools, a truck’s cable winch, even the tides themselves — to remove the net, which was hundreds of meters long and buried several feet under water and sand.

The rangers raced against the rising tide and setting sun, but called it quits when the waters rose above their ankles. The net would still be there tomorrow and they would try again then.

For many Aboriginal Australians, colonization forcefully broke their connection to the land generations ago. Indigenous people were displaced and their cultural practices outlawed.

Tens of thousands of years of traditional land management ended, and as a result many parts of the country now face serious degradation from invasive plant and animal species, bush fires and land mismanagement.

In recent years, the government has restored more than 20 percent of the country’s land — some of it former parks and reserves — to Indigenous owners. Since 2007, the Indigenous ranger organizations have been at work protecting this land.

Luke Playfair, one of the few non-Indigenous employees working with the rangers, said the combination of old and new techniques and an appreciation for Indigenous’ workers cultures has been critical to the program’s success.

“You are working with staff who see the world different to you so there is a much higher focus on the cultural aspects of work and life,” he said.

Rangers are given “cultural leave,” he added, if they need to visit their homelands after the death of a community member, or to make long journeys home to remote areas.

On the beach that day in July, after their unsuccessful struggle with the ghost net, the rangers lit a camp fire and stared out at the same sea and sky that had inspired their ancestors most sacred stories.

“Being a ranger is a source of confidence, you feel strong,” said Terence Wunungmurra, a senior ranger. “Here we still live on the land. The culture is still alive.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/19/world/australia/indigenous-australia-dhimurru-rangers.html>

October 20, 2018

Taiwan indigenous musician sounds clarion call for cultural, environmental well-being

Taiwan Today

Sangpuy Katatepan Mavaliyw, a musician from Taiwan’s Pinuyumayan tribe, is cleareyed about the importance of environmental conservation, making it a central theme in his latest album “Yaangad,” or “life,” in the language of the indigenous people. “If Mother Nature is destroyed, other issues we fight for and the things we cherish will no longer exist,” he said.

A collection of original songs inspired by traditional tribal melodies, the record won Album of the Year at the 2017 Golden Melody Awards—the first time an indigenous language entry claimed the coveted honor. The soul-searching production was later named best album in the world traditional music category at the 2018 Independent Music Awards in the U.S.

Described by the GMA jury as possessing “an emotive voice rooted deeply in the land of Taiwan,” Sangpuy is a fixture in local and overseas music awards and festivals since his debut “Dalan” in 2012. Largely comprising traditional Pinuyumayan tunes blended with string instrument recordings, the album earned the artist his first GMA accolade of Best Aboriginal Singer in 2013.

“Dalan’ expresses my desire to spur young people’s interest in discovering our tribal songs,” Sangpuy said, reflecting his passion from an early age for Pinuyumayan culture and language.

“Dalan,” Sangpuy’s debut album of 2012, continues to attract attention and acclaim from music lovers at home and abroad. (Courtesy of KCS)

Born and bred in the Katratripulr community of southeastern Taiwan's Taitung County, Sangpuy was initially exposed to indigenous knowledge and wisdom via the teachings of elders, as well as the tribe's time-honored education system. Pinuyumayan boys are required to join the Palakuwan, a center of youth-based learning, and girls must study with their mothers or other matriarchal figures.

According to Sangpuy, this approach ensures the tribe's language, music, oral traditions and values are passed down to the next generation. "Comprehending our language is crucial to understanding the essence of the profound Pinuyumayan culture," he said.

"Perhaps my biggest motivation for learning the language of my people is a tape recording of my grandfather singing," Sangpuy said. "I lost him at a young age and want nothing more than to honor his memory by perfecting my mother tongue and fully understanding the messages resonating in his voice."

The recording "Yaangad" by Sangpuy is the first indigenous language entry to claim the prestigious GMA prize of Album of the Year. (Courtesy of KCS)

Another motivating factor is the six years Sangpuy spent as an assistant and leader of indigenous teenagers and young adults. As both positions demanded great dedication to the public affairs of Katratripulr, it was impossible for Sangpuy to leave his hometown or get married. "This experience offered me an invaluable way of connecting with the community I grew up in, as well as the priceless lesson of always remaining humble," he said.

Through the Pinuyumayan education system, strong bonds are established among members of the tribe. This deep affection for and close link with Katratripulr remain the bedrock of Sangpuy's life, even after he left home to work in northern Taiwan's New Taipei City around the age of 27. The singer-songwriter believes a tribal saying best sums up this connection: "Unlike flies that only gather when there is something to be gained, our people are like bees and work together whenever or wherever for the welfare of the community."

Such lessons on life and broader tribal philosophies are enshrined in Sangpuy's music, especially the importance of maintaining a harmonious and respectful relationship with the environment. In "Yaangad," the song "Kumuda," or "What Happened," is made up of a series of questions about what will the world be like if the ecosystem is destroyed. "The truth is humans need Mother Nature, but Mother Nature does not need humans," Sangpuy said.

Tales told by the tribe's elder are also a great inspiration to Sangpuy. The popular song "Sadeku na senan", or "Light," is based on story shared by his 96-year-old great-aunt. Centered on a warmhearted relationship between a god from the Moon and a mortal woman, the tale gave rise to a Sangpuy creation combining the familiarity of moonlight with an expression of gratitude for those who helped him in the course of his life.

With the well-being of the Earth and the tribe at the forefront of his mind, Sangpuy is irrepresible in sharing his music, life blessings, and delivering a message of care and concern

for the environment. “Producing an album is like making wine; something to share with the world,” he said. “If someone is invigorated or moved by the taste, there is no finer compliment.”

As Sangpuy’s late father told him, sharing is the most noble of actions. This maxim, which has shaped his existence to date, is also helping the tribal talent remain true to his love for Mother Nature and roots while experimenting with new musical forms. (E) (By Chiang Pei-ying)

Write to Taiwan Today at ttonline@mofa.gov.tw

(This article is adapted from “[Tribal Melodies](#)” in the [September/October 2018](#) issue of Taiwan Review. The Taiwan Review [archives](#) dating to 1951 are available online.)

<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3556804>

October 22, 2018

Pennsylvania order asks Supreme Court to uphold its religious rights

By Dennis Sadowski, Catholic News Service
Global Sisters Report

The Adorers of the Blood of Christ have asked the U.S. Supreme Court to decide whether their religious freedom rights were violated by the construction and pending use of a natural gas pipeline through its land.

In a filing with the court Oct. 19, attorney Dwight Yoder, representing the congregation, argued that the sisters' rights under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act were disregarded by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit.

The petition to the Supreme Court asks the justices to determine how widely government agencies must regard claims under RFRA and whether a circuit court's review of an agency's order satisfy the religious freedom guarantees under the law.

Yoder said outside the court Oct. 22 during a media conference announcing the filing that the appeals court decision guts the intent of RFRA.

In July, a three-judge appeals court panel agreed with a lower court ruling that the congregation had not made their religious objections known during the federal administrative process that led to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approval of the 183-mile Atlantic Sunrise pipeline.

Yoder explained that forcing the Adorers to make such arguments during administrative hearings on the project would have placed an unnecessary burden on them under the law.

"The Supreme Court has made it very clear that the way Congress enacted it (the law) and what they wrote, it would have to be applied above every other federal law and to the broadest extent

possible to protect religious liberty. Think about that. This (3rd circuit) decision did the exact opposite," he said.

"It applied it in a way to strip religious protections from the Adorers. They tried to file the lawsuit and the judge kicked it out and said, 'You know what? You should have raised these objections with FERC and FERC would have decided it.' The Religious Freedom Restoration Act said nothing about going to the very agency that you're allowed to sue," Yoder said.

The Adorers have opposed the pipeline since July 2017. Then, the sisters allowed the local organization Lancaster Against Pipelines to construct a symbolic chapel on property the congregation owned in Columbia, Pennsylvania, adjacent to the project's route.

Peaceful protests and prayer vigils have taken place regularly on the Adorers' land for the last 15 months. The group Lancaster Against Pipelines has coordinated similar demonstrations along the pipeline route.

The Adorers have long maintained that allowing construction through their land would run contrary to the congregation's Land Ethic. Adopted in 2005, the document upholds the sacredness of creation, reverences the earth as a "sanctuary where all life is protected," and treasures the earth's beauty and sustenance that must be protected for future generations.

"The interesting thing is this isn't a liberal/conservative issue," Yoder said during the media briefing. "This isn't about left and right. ... The issue here is much, much bigger than just the Adorers and their piece of property. What's at stake here is really the scope of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act."

Adorer Sr. Sara Dwyer said during the briefing that members of her congregation around the U.S. were to be asked to meet with members of Congress when they are in their home districts to discuss the issues surrounding the pipeline and the country's dependence on fossil fuels.

<https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/environment/pennsylvania-order-asks-supreme-court-uphold-its-religious-rights-55535>

October 23, 2018

A path to resilience amid climate change

By Marvelous L. Misolas
Global Sisters Report

I have been thinking about how faith-based organizations go back centuries in their mission of seeking sustainability and development to alleviate human suffering. One war after another, women and men missionaries have responded by living with people and helping them rebuild out of the rubble of war, by providing modern education, skill building and reconciliation through faith.

In 2015, the United Nations launched the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), setting an ambitious 17 [sustainable development goals](#). These goals are interrelated and achievable, and provide a blueprint for states and governments to attain the "common good" for the planet, its inhabitants and for future generations.

I am proud that my community, the [Maryknoll Sisters](#), is participating in the attainment of the goals. For the past four years, I have been working in the Philippines to address climate change (sustainable development goal No. 13) as such, but also helping implement the other goals to help build peoples' awareness, knowledge and "capacity" (that's a U.N. word for "ability"), and resilience to its impacts. The goals we were working on there were:

- 1 — no poverty;
- 2 — zero hunger;
- 4 — quality education;
- 5 — reduced inequalities;
- 13 — climate action.

One family's story

I first met James P. and his family while giving a training on "Climate Change Adaptation and Environmental Leadership" in a collaborative project with the Philippine Jesuits' apostolate [Simbahang Lingkod ng Bayan](#). The collaborative project was designed to help the 2013 [Typhoon Haiyan](#) victims' rehabilitation and community-based adaptation and resilience program in the remote village of Concepcion, Arteche, Eastern Samar, in the Philippines. This area is highly susceptible to flooding.

We noticed that James, along with some other kids, would regularly play around the area where most of the trainings were held, and wondered why James was not in school. Visiting his family, we learned they were in a vulnerable situation. In the absence of their parents, James and his siblings are being raised by their grandparents. We also confirmed that most of the family members are suffering from tuberculosis. Without resources and help in getting a TB screening, the family could not get medical help.

After another visit to the area in 2016, at the recommendation of the Simbahang Lingkod ng Bayan team, I decided to help the family, and applied for a grant from the Maryknoll Sisters' Health and Education Fund to cover health and school fees. Soon after, James was taken to the provincial hospital for the TB test; he tested positive and finally the family could get medicine from the local health office.

The three siblings were able to attend school. The grandparents, hoping to improve their livelihood, asked for help starting a small piggery in their backyard. So in 2017, under our supervision, the grandparents purchased male and female piglets. This year, the piggery produced 10 piglets and the grandfather sold them for cash.

The grandfather, Mr. Venbinido, told us that the income from the livelihood project has been a big help to cover the food, medical and educational expenses of the children.

In addition, the family was able to save some for emergency expenses and pig feed to augment the natural food harvested from the farm. The family plans to continue raising pigs for their livelihood.

When sharing about their experiences, they reported that their livelihood helped reduce their poverty. It gave them the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience in managing a small piggery and helped them realize that they are able to sustain it on their own. One story they enjoyed telling was how they had assisted the pregnant sow in her delivery!

They also learned important decision-making skills by selling the piglets, so they can sustain their livelihood in the future. This July, they had one piglet and one adult female pig in their backyard piggery, and they are hoping to replicate what they did. They are planning to mate the sow in August and fatten the remaining piglet for their meat and protein needs. So far, this family project has been the most successful compared to other projects we have done.

The family felt empowered to manage their own livelihood, to address their hunger and poverty, and in the process to build their resiliency for times of disaster. They are thankful for the trust and the start-up capital provided for them. Our disaster and risk management team thinks the success of James' family could be replicated with other families in the village, one at a time.

Helping people to prepare for sudden climate-induced disasters is in reality a daunting and slow process. I realized that even though the task is to train individuals and communities to enhance resiliency and the capacity to cope with impacts of a changing climate, one must address the deeper cause of vulnerabilities, such as situations of extreme poverty, hunger and lack of social protection.

Developing countries like the Philippines are trying to alleviate poverty with a very minimal social protection program called [Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program](#) (Four Ps — Bridging Program for the Pilipino Family), a form of cash transfers to families. With nine out of 10 Filipino families [falling below](#) the 42,000-pesos-per-month (around \$790) "decent income" level, the program barely makes a dent.

Poverty reduction must be addressed, but also "resiliency." Resiliency is achieved by moving out of one's vulnerability and risking through partnership and collaboration. James' family is a wonderful example from which governments can learn, and the sustainable development goals give impetus to achieve the common good, a life with dignity and the realization of human potential.

And as for me, I learned that one begins with listening closely to peoples' stories of suffering and hope. A missionary's portion is to trust and — when she can — to provide opportunities, helping individual and communities realize their potential to harness their capacity to hope and to become their own agents of change.

My gratitude to the sustainable development goals team with whom I worked: Oscar Daguro, Ella Licuanan, Ernie Taeza, Xavier Alvaran and Bernie Aton. *Mabuhay kayo!*

[Maryknoll Sr. Marvie Misolas is the nongovernmental representative of the Maryknoll Sisters, part of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns at the United Nations; she is now based at the Maryknoll Sisters Center in Ossining, New York.]

<https://www.globalsistersreport.org/column/ministry-environment/path-resilience-amid-climate-change-55537>

October 23, 2018

Forum on Religion and Ecology turns 20

By Kenniston Byron
Yale Divinity School

When Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim began thinking seriously about the important role religion could play in addressing the world's mounting environmental problems, they met few like-minded people.

But that did not discourage them. Now, thanks in significant part to the work of the [Forum on Religion and Ecology \(link is external\)](#) that they started 20 years ago this month, they have the satisfaction of seeing how much has changed.

Today, there are academic positions in religion and ecology, and the number of courses offered on the topic has increased, including at Yale University. The Divinity School now has [an M.A.R. on this topic](#), which includes courses such as the Doctrine of Creation and Christian Environmental Ethics. The network of scholars and environmentalists who Tucker and Grim involved when they started numbered about 800—but the Forum's monthly newsletter now reaches over 12,000 people.

Looking back, Tucker and Grim can take pride in realizing that their work in collaboration with a growing body of academics, religious leaders, and activists has created a new field of study bridging religion and the environment—one that is now officially recognized by the American Academy of Religion.

“It takes time to get people on board,” Grim says. “But we have seen a deepening awareness of the ethical and spiritual aspects of environmental concerns.”

A married couple, Tucker and Grim are senior lecturers and research scholars with appointments in the Divinity School, the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and Religious Studies. The forum's 20th anniversary is providing an occasion for amplifying their message that there are moral dimensions to the problems of climate change and environmental degradation, in addition to the more familiar dimensions such as science and policy.

For example, social and ecological justice are important concepts and are gaining recognition as such, as evidenced by Tucker's and Grim's membership on the advisory board of [the ecology](#)

[and justice series at Orbis Books \(link is external\)](#) for 20 years. As Grim observes, “Marginalized peoples are the most vulnerable to environmental problems, suffering from toxicity and pollution as we see in Flint Michigan or on many American Indian reservations.”

Both have spent their careers as religious scholars, Tucker specializing in Confucianism and Grim in Native American and indigenous religions. They share a decades-long interest in the environment and a deep regard for the work of [Thomas Berry \(link is external\)](#), a historian of religions whose books they have edited and whose biography they have written for Columbia University Press—a book to be published this spring.

Driving their work has been a crucial question, Tucker says: “How can we contribute to the growing global effort to address the environmental crisis? We are not scientists or policy people. But we do know something about what has been the missing link: the moral force of the world’s religions. When we started there were just a few theologians who recognized this as a problem, such as Joseph Sittler, John Cobb, Rosemary Ruether, and Sallie McFaugue. We have built on their work and broadened it to include the world’s religions.”

Tucker and Grim brought the Forum to Yale 13 years ago when the University hired them to teach in a joint master’s program with its Divinity and Forestry schools. The Forum as an international, multi-religion project has organized some 30 conferences, and Tucker and Grim have traveled to many parts of the world to speak on this topic including China, India, Korea, Indonesia, Iran, South Africa, and Latin America. They are currently [giving lectures at the University of Oslo \(link is external\)](#) and will return for a symposium they have organized in Virginia on the “[Living Earth Community.](#)” [\(link is external\)](#) This summer they will hold a conference in Morocco on the Abrahamic religions and ecology.

The Forum was launched at a day-long conference at the United Nations, which culminated a series of 10 conferences on religion and ecology that Tucker and Grim organized from 1996 to 1998 at Harvard’s Center for the Study of World Religions. The findings of those conferences were published in a 10-volume series, which showed ecological dimensions in texts, traditions, and practices of the world’s religions. Many have recognized the Harvard conferences and books as pathbreaking. “They helped to create a field within academia but also a force in the larger society,” Tucker says.

The Forum as public resource

A public face of the Forum is [its website \(link is external\)](#)—a comprehensive resource that includes a listing of academic job openings and opportunities for students, a calendar of events around the country, links to news articles and other current publications, and videos. A section of the website is devoted to [Laudato Si, the papal encyclical on the environment \(link is external\)](#) that Pope Francis issued in 2015. Tucker calls the encyclical an important development in getting more people engaged with environmental issues, especially because there are over two billion Christians in the world. Eco-justice is a centerpiece of this teaching document.

Another part of the Forum’s website is an overview of books and other published material on the environment-religion nexus—including Tucker’s and Grim’s own book, [Ecology and Religion](#)

[\(link is external\)](#), published in 2014. The website also has sections devoted to 10 major world religions, along with indigenous traditions and interfaith efforts focused on the environment. Each section gives an annotated bibliography of books and scholarly articles.

The Forum is working to spread teaching of religion and ecology to colleges and high schools around the country. To help the effort, the website includes resource material for educators.

“Journey of the Universe”

Outreach is a crucial piece of Tucker’s and Grim’s work, and one of the most visible pieces of that effort is a multi-media project, “Journey of the Universe.” This consists of a film, a book, a series of conversations, and online classes. Released in 2011, the [hour-long documentary \(link is external\)](#) traces the origin and development of the universe, the Earth and humans. The film was shown on PBS and won an Emmy

The film is a complement to but distinct from the Forum, Tucker says. “How do we involve more people in caring for environment? Religions are one huge doorway, but for many people it is the awe, wonder, and beauty of nature that speaks to them, and they are almost naturally environmentalists. There are many for whom science is the gateway. The film came out of a notion that we need a new story that brings science and the humanities together.”

Along with Brian Thomas Swimme, the film’s narrator and a professor at the California Institute of Integral Studies, Tucker wrote a book to accompany the movie that was published by Yale. She and Grim organized a series of conferences focused on “Journey of the Universe,” including [one at Chautauqua that focused on the response of the world religions \(link is external\)](#).

In addition, Tucker and Grim created three free online courses based on the “Journey of the Universe” that [Yale offers through Coursera \(link is external\)](#). Over 22,000 people have participated in the courses to date.

Extending the project’s reach even further, a content-rich [“Journey of the Universe” website \(link is external\)](#) was updated in step with the Forum’s 20th anniversary this month. Devin O’Dea, a digital marketing consultant in San Francisco who led work on the site, says the time has never been more propitious for scholarly and popular exploration of religion and ecology.

Indeed, he notes that for his generation just turning thirty, “Journey of the Universe” and the Forum on Religion and Ecology provide sources of inspiration for the work still to be done for the flourishing of life systems for people and the planet.

Ken Byron is a freelance writer living in Connecticut with a special interest in academia and liberal arts education. Ken also had a lengthy career in newspaper journalism, including at the Hartford Courant. Follow Ken on Twitter at @kenbyron.

<https://divinity.yale.edu/news/forum-religion-and-ecology-turns-20>

October 27, 2018

Bishops from all continents urge 'ambitious' action on climate change

By Claire Giangravè
Crux

ROME - As a month-long summit of bishops on young people gets set to close, Church leaders from every continent signed a petition Friday asking for “ambitious and urgent climate action,” looking ahead to the next gathering of bishops in 2019 where climate change and its repercussions are expected to take center stage.

“This is a right of present and future generations ... we have the obligation of protecting nature so that the future can be safeguarded,” said Indian Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Mumbai and president of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, during a press event at Vatican Radio Oct. 26.

The conference began with an appeal to politicians to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees and to work toward the implementation of the Paris Agreement ahead of the COP24 climate summit hosted by the UN this December in Poland.

The appeal was signed by Italian Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, President of the European Bishops’ Conference; Archbishop Peter Loy Chong of Fijii, President of the Federation of Catholic Bishops’ Conferences of Oceania; Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxemburg, President of the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community; Archbishop Gabriel Mbilingi of Angola, President of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar and Gracias.

While bishops convening for the Synod of Bishops on young people, faith and vocational discernment have been discussing how to reach out to new generations, Gracias said, “it is criminal on our part, and on the part of society, if we do not make the earth habitable for them.”

“Not everybody is fully on board,” the cardinal added, but said the bishops have been met with “solidarity across the world [in calling] for us to collaborate with nature and not to combat, challenge nature.”

Gracias stressed that often it’s the weakest in society who suffer the brunt of the consequences of climate change.

The signed document, written in partnership with the international alliance of Catholic development agencies CIDSE, Caritas Internationalis and the Global Catholic Climate Movement, urges “rapid and radical changes while resisting the temptation to look for quick technological fixes.”

“Church leaders from Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Europe are jointly calling on governments to take concrete measures to shift towards a fair share of resources and responsibilities, where the ‘big emitters take political accountability and meet their climate finance commitments,’” reads the press release.

Speaking at the event, Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxemburg emphasized that it’s essential to look at the money flows in order to understand how to address climate change, proudly stating that his own diocese has divested from fossil fuels.

“If we don’t look at the money flows, then we will just have nice ways of speaking but things will not really happen,” Hollerich said, “and things have to happen.”

As head of the European bishops, he called the European Union to be more active and not rely on technology and instead look for solutions that benefit the entire planet. Hollerich underlined that migration, which is already challenging European countries, will only get worse when faced with ecological catastrophes.

“It’s the Church’s role to lightly, gently remind people of this responsibility,” he said.

Coming from what he called “the other side of the world,” climate activist and synod auditor Joseph Moeono-Kolio from Samoa praised the Vatican’s engagement and expressed the hope that bishops and Catholic communities around the world mobilize.

“For us in the Pacific, this document is a huge symbolic step, a symbol of hope,” he said. “Because we do need the Church to rise and engage this issue since it is critical to our very ability to prosper and live in dignity.”

“Young people bear the brunt of a lot of bad decisions, and we want to end it here,” he added.

He said that in the Pacific islands, people “live at the mercy of a very quiet but very ongoing persecution,” since they are on the frontlines of climate change that threatens their land and identity. The erosion of burial sites by the sea and the exodus of its young people are only some examples of the reality caused by the global warming they face every day.

Quoting a fellow synod delegate from his country, he said that “one day we’ll be rootless and with only a passport to call home.”

He drew on the image of people in the islands running to the concrete churches for refuge during the ever more frequent cyclones to appeal to the global Catholic community.

“The Church now should be a haven of safety, especially for young people, that protects us from this kind of thing,” he said.

Gracias said he spoke to bishops from the United States, which retreated from the Paris Accords under the Trump administration, saying the contribution from North America on climate change remains critical.

Concerning the Chinese bishops, who for the first time ever took part in the synod this month following an historic Sino-Vatican deal, Gracias said climate change did not come up in conversation but he looks forward to addressing it further at the next bishops' gathering.

In 2019, the Vatican will host a synod on the Pan-Amazonian region and Gracias said that "climate will be one of the key elements of discussion."

Hollerich confirmed that commissions in charge of preparing the event "have done wonderful work already," looking at the multifaceted aspects of climate change and how it effects people.

"I have great expectations of the synod [on the Amazon]," he said, "I am looking forward to the discussions and result of it."

From Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's appeal in his encyclical *Caritas in veritate* to Pope Francis's *Laudato Si*, the Catholic Church has been strongly involved in supporting the theological and spiritual argument for the care of creation, with this petition being the latest of many efforts to encourage sustainability for future generations.

As Moeono-Kolio said, "climate change is more than science, politics and ideology. I think sometimes we can get bogged down, so there's no action."

"May I remind you that there is a human face to climate change, you are looking at it," he said. "We will all become the face of climate change if we don't do something."

<https://cruxnow.com/synod-of-bishops-on-youth/2018/10/27/bishops-from-all-continents-urge-ambitious-action-on-climate-change/>

October 30, 2018

Learning from Indigenous Knowledges and Lifeways

By Terri Hansen
Earth Island Journal

In Review: The Archipelago of Hope

Gleb Raygorodetsky's book [*The Archipelago of Hope: Wisdom and Resilience from the Edge of Climate Change*](#) respectfully shares Indigenous Peoples' insights, wisdom, and practical knowledge as their collective gift to humanity at a time of unprecedented change. Given the precarious state of our environment, and [recent warnings](#) about just how little time we have to act if we are to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, it couldn't be of more value.

The traditional knowledges and lifeways of Indigenous peoples hold solutions for adaptation and resilience in meeting the physical, ecological, and social challenges of climate change. It's their timeless stewardship of the land — based on respect, reciprocity, restraint, and reverence — that

to this day continues to nourish their communities and cultures, sustain biodiversity, and preserve life-giving ecosystems, from the depths of the Ecuadorian forests in the Amazon to the freezing Arctic tundra. We need to heed their message.

I became familiar with Raygorodetsky's work at the 2009 United Nations climate summit in Copenhagen, Denmark. On display in its Indigenous Pavilion was a multi-media exhibition from a project he co-founded, [Conversations with the Earth](#). Raygorodetsky and his partners had given video cameras to Indigenous communities around the world to record their own interviews and document the many ways in which climate disruption was affecting their peoples, communities, and cultures. Through this project, for example, the [Cree/Den'e/Metis peoples](#) in the Boreal forests of Canada documented the destructive effects of tar sands mining.

The Archipelago of Hope picks up where this project left off. It is engaging storytelling at its best, part respectful ethnographic narrative, part travel diary, and part scientific exploration, all in beautifully written, descriptive prose. Raygorodetsky takes us on a cultural journey across the globe, to the Arctic to meet the Nenets, the reindeer herders of Russian Yamal and Skolts of Finnish Lapland. Spend time with the Sapara in the Ecuadorian rainforest, and with the Altai, guardians of the sacred sites in the Golden Mountains of Altai. Visit the coastal Tla-o-qui-aht salmon peoples of Canada. Meet the Karen peoples in Myanmar. He invites us to learn from the Sami people in the Arctic — their knowledge of snow and ice conditions is already helping weather and climate forecasters. He delves into traditional knowledge about which food plants can withstand various weather conditions, information that is essential for adapting to unpredictable weather.

He doesn't romanticize the lifeways of Indigenous peoples. Nor does he believe that somehow "we must all be magicked back into the 'ancestral ways' to solve our current problems." His motivation to explore Native knowledge and lessons is rational and pragmatic, and stems from his two decades of scholarly and community-based learning, observation, and participation through which he has come to understand that it is the Indigenous peoples who are the true stewards of global biocultural heritage. We have much to learn.

Indigenous peoples' track record of maintaining intimate relationships with the natural world over the millennia has nourished their communities and sustained their cultures, without devouring the life-giving environment. They continuously strive to maintain this relationship with the Earth, despite formidable odds, including fierce opposition from the "developed" world in the form of deforestation, industrial agriculture, large-scale fossil fuel extraction, massive mining and dam projects, and so much more on their ancestral lands. The "accomplishments" of our own "modern" society, however, are a lot more recent, paltry by comparison, and have had much more destructive consequences for life on Earth.

Raygorodetsky is uniquely qualified to tell these stories of Indigenous solutions and resistance. That the narratives are included on the pages of his book means that Indigenous peoples have entrusted their stories to him — a rarity. They've given their blessing to have him share their wisdom with the world.

This trust is likely rooted in his remarkable 20-plus year history of service to Indigenous peoples. In the book's forward, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, the UN special rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples, describes how she has worked closely with Raygorodetsky for many of those years. "I was impressed," she writes, "with his extensive knowledge ... and enthusiastic support for Indigenous peoples on the front lines of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. [His] book provides a very refreshing and authentic insight into the contributions Indigenous peoples provide and the challenges they face as they assert their right to maintain, control, and develop their traditional knowledge — and live their way of life."

As an environmental journalist and an Indigenous American, I have heard some of the stories included in *The Archipelago of Hope* firsthand. I knew climate scientists were turning to Indigenous peoples to inform their work, with particular interest in their resilience as a key to climate adaptation planning. I thought many times, *if only someone could weave their stories together*. Finally, a book that does.

All proceeds from the sale of *The Archipelago of Hope* benefit, "[The Archipelago of Hope Indigenous Resilience Fund](#)," established through [Land is Life](#), which will support the communities profiled in the book.

Terri Hansen, a Winnebago tribal member, covers science and the environment with a focus on climate change, culture, tribal nations, and Indigenous peoples. She is currently writing a book about tribal nations in the US and climate change. Youth of all ages with climate anxiety can chat with her on Twitter [@TerriHansen](#).

http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/articles/entry/indigenous_knowledges_lifeways_climate_change

October 31, 2018

Painting with climate change message takes shape at MacEwan University's Indigenous centre

By Phil Heidenreich
Global News

A pair of renowned Indigenous artists are working on a large painting that will grace a wall at [MacEwan University's kihêw waciston Indigenous Centre](#).

Even though it will live in the heart of oil country, the piece is aimed at sending a blunt message about [climate change](#) and the threat to our environment.

"I don't think there's a way to soften the message," Métis artist Christi Belcourt — one of the two people working on the painting — said on Tuesday. "The message is that we need water for life, that the tar sands expansion is one of the worst ecological disasters on the planet."

“It is contributing to global warming, it’s contributing to the death of our species and all other species and we need to stop that.”

Belcourt is working on the painting with Anishinaabe artist Isaac Murdoch, and they expect to finish on Thursday.

“Within Indigenous language and within Indigenous knowledge, it contains how to live in perfect balance with this planet,” Beclourt said.

“There are people all over the world saying, ‘Look, we need to look to Indigenous knowledge, to learn how to live in this balance, because otherwise we’re all going to go over the waterfalls together.’”

Murdoch said while the piece is meant to evoke reflection on the threat climate change poses, he also wants to send an uplifting message.

“This isn’t an Indian thing,” he said. “This is not about race. This is really about building bridges with everybody and saying look, we’ve got serious problems.

“Let’s put the cowboy and Indian stuff aside and let’s do something really amazing.”

Belcourt describes the painting as “some soft, muted turquoise colours with two very strong images, in silhouette — kind of black — of Thunderbird Woman and Thunderbird Mom.”

“It’s important for our new space to display art from various Indigenous artists who tell an important story that will create educational learning opportunities for our students,” Terri Suntjens, MacEwan University’s director of Indigenous initiatives, said in a news release.

“This piece will open conversations that speak to the importance of land and water protection and our role and responsibility as we have to ensure we take care of Mother Earth as our ancestors have done before us.”

But Belcourt and Murdoch aren’t only raising awareness about the environment. The two are touring across Canada and raising money through their art, which will go to support a language and culture camp for Indigenous youth in northern Ontario.

“The elders live there [and] we have young people that live there so they can, of course, exchange knowledge and it’s an amazing thing,” Murdoch said of the camp near Ompa Lake, Ont. “The people work hard and, you know, the language is really precious to us.”

Belcourt suggested while the two are trying to raise broad awareness about climate change and the threat to our environment in general, pipelines carrying oilsands resources is also a personal issue for her and Murdoch.

“[The oil] pumps through Line 3, turns into Line 5 and runs right by where we live and Isaac’s traditional territory and in my daughter’s traditional territory,” she said, adding that she worries about potential spills and the impact they could have on waterways.

“We need to stop resource extraction and moving towards something that’s sustainable and there is no negotiating or softening that kind of message.”

The two have created pieces of art in other places across Canada, including the one pictured below in Saskatoon.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/4614284/macewan-university-indigenous-climate-change-painting/>

November 1, 2018

Indigenous poets read urgent climate message on a melting glacier

By Jon Letman
Grist

As Greenland’s glaciers melt and flow into the sea, Pacific island nations are on the receiving end of some of that water. It’s a familiar story about climate change: One nation crumbles into the ocean; others risk drowning under rising sea levels.

It’s also the backdrop for a unique artistic collaboration between two indigenous poets from opposite ends of the earth. Last summer, these women — who had met for the first time days earlier — stood side by side, one dressed in black, the other in white, reciting a poem they’d written together:

Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner traveled from the Marshall Islands in Micronesia to Greenland’s capital city Nuuk where she met Inuk poet Aka Niviâna. Together, they embarked with a small film crew to a remote spot on southern Greenland’s ice sheet where they recited their poem “Rise” on top of a crevasse-scarred melting glacier.

With dramatic orchestration and mournful cries sounding urgently in the film’s background, the poets tell of the lands of their respective ancestors, the sunken volcanoes and hidden icebergs. They speak of angry seas, evoking the legends of sisters turned to stone, and Sassuma Arnaa, Mother of the Sea.

Addressing one another as “sister of ice and snow” and “sister of ocean and sand,” Niviâna and Jetnil-Kijiner ceremoniously exchange gifts of shells and stones in a story that is cinematically beautiful, but whose message is stark:

*Let me show you
airports underwater
bulldozed reefs, blasted sands*

*and plans to build new atolls
forcing land
from an ancient, rising sea*

Filming on top of a melting glacier wasn't physically easy, Jetnil-Kijiner said. And yet, when she found herself face-to-face with a physical body that threatens to submerge her ancestral homeland, she felt reverence, not anger.

"It just felt like I was meeting an elder," she recalled. "I was just in awe of the ice, of how large it was, how expansive, how beautiful."

Niviâna, who is from Greenland's far north, was also visiting the southern ice sheet for the first time. She was struck by the change in landscape. She described the shock of seeing a boulder fall near their campsite after it was dislodged by melting ice.

"It was a huge rock," Niviâna said. "It was really overwhelming to see how rapidly the ice was melting."

That melting ice is a reality — not something that can be denied. But the film was not made for climate deniers. "I'm not here to convince someone else of my humanity or the reality of our situation," Jetnil-Kijiner said. "I'm just trying to create a different sort of experience that speaks more truth to my own."

For Dan Lin, the director of the film *Rise*, the underlying science behind the story is important. But at its core, he says it's a project about climate change as viewed through the eyes of two indigenous female poets. Together, they weave a story of beautiful yet fragile landscapes and of resilient peoples in the face of injustice.

Lin hopes the collaboration will build an awareness of the connections between seemingly disparate communities.

The idea for the video grew out of a conversation Jetnil-Kijiner had with 350.org founder Bill McKibben at a climate change conference. McKibben (who is a Grist board member) suggested she recite a poem on a glacier. Jetnil-Kijiner liked the idea, but was uncomfortable using another country's landscape and climate crisis as a backdrop for her own story.

McKibben put Jetnil-Kijiner in touch with glaciologist Jason Box who introduced her to Niviâna. Despite the distances that separated them, the poets began an online correspondence which led to their creative partnership.

It wasn't until the poets finally met in person, by which time the poem was mostly finished, that they really got to know each other.

This unlikely sisterhood, conceived of in water and ice, evolved on paper and by email. More poetically, Jetnil-Kijiner reflected, "It felt like we wrote our relationship into being."

November 2, 2018

Jane Goodall Isn't Giving Up

By Dorothy Woodend
The Tyee

Faced with mass species die-offs and presidential horrors, the dazzling doctor still finds hope in resiliency. A Tyee interview.

Does Jane Goodall ever get mad?

For someone who started her career with the intention of studying animals, the woman has spent an inordinate amount of time with people. And lord knows humans can be annoying — and wantonly destructive. A [study](#) released this week revealed that since 1970 humans have destroyed more than 60 per cent of animal species on Earth.

How do you hold out hope for humanity?

But that's exactly what the good Dr. Goodall is doing. The renowned primatologist was recently here to speak at the Vancouver International Film Festival, in concert with a screening of the documentary *Jane* about her life. We met, and talked about a wide array of subjects, everything from what she calls the Kavanaugh situation — “his behaviour in court, all staged for effect” — to Heinrich Himmler and the SS. Coming out on the street afterwards, I thought: the woman is 84. If she can keep on trucking, so can you.

Despite a travel and speaking schedule that would break most people she is resolutely cheerful, dressed in a soft pink sweater with a silver pendant in the shape of the African continent around her neck. As the interview starts, I get a little star-struck and start to babble insanely. After it ends, I look at my scrawled notes and think, “What the hell was I was talking about?”

But I'm sure this is not the first time Goodall has experienced people losing their proverbial shit in her presence. There's actually a term for it — The Jane Effect. When people first meet her they often burst into tears or, as in my case, can't stop talking.

I imagine this must be trying, but Goodall said in her festival talk her mission is to spread the message about biodiversity, and this often requires being subjected to batteries of weeping, babbling human beings. Dr. Goodall travels more than 300 days a year, balancing the requirements of more than 25 chapters of the Jane Goodall Institute and the demands of staff, students, sponsors, media types and the occasional documentary filmmaker.

Jane, the recent film about her life directed by Brett Morgen, chronicles Goodall's love affair with Hugo van Lawick, her first husband and the father of her son, and her passion for the

chimpanzees and the forests of Tanzania. Having watched the film a number of times I am still struck by the immediacy of the experience, captured in gloriously saturated 16-mm celluloid.

Goodall says Morgen's film "takes me right back into my 26-year-old skin." There she is, with wheat-coloured hair, sun freckles, and long legs. It's little wonder that the world took one look at her and fell immediately in love, as did van Lawick, a wildlife photographer assigned by National Geographic to document her research. Almost six decades later you can see why men, from Leonardo DiCaprio to Brett Morgen, go a little cuckoo around her. She is exactly what you expect from the legions of books, films and photo essays — calm, thoughtful, passionate and very funny, and still with that fine pair of legs.

But the scale and scope of the issues Goodall faces have grown monstrous since she first journeyed to Gombe National Park in 1960. As the recent study showed, we are in the midst of a major extinction event brought on by human activity. How does one keep going on in the face of such unremitting bleakness?

I try not to ask these questions for fear of wailing like a lost child. But in speaking about her work, Goodall often talks about parents and children. The [Jane Goodall Institute of Canada](#), founded in 1994,* is dedicated not only to the preservation of animals, but also to the betterment of the human species, starting with its youngest members. Since its start with some 12 Tanzanian high school students, the [Roots & Shoots](#) program has expanded around the globe and currently includes chapters in more than 80 countries with 150,000 members. Grassroots action, all precipitated by this slender reed of a woman who saw in chimpanzees a shared kinship.

As she says in the documentary: "They, like us, needed friendly contact and reassurance... Staring into the eyes of a chimpanzee, I saw a thinking, reasoning personality, looking back."

Even as a Donald Trump or a [Jair Bolsonaro](#), can wreak unprecedented havoc, a George Monbiot or a Jane Goodall can singlehandedly change the environment for the better.

Goodall had originally been assigned to study the chimpanzees by Dr. Louis Leakey, who wanted to use animal studies to learn more about early humans. (Humans and great apes share 97 per cent of their DNA.) In Goodall's case, although she lacked a degree or much experience in the field, she was young, eager, and open to new ways of looking at animals.

In light of this, I'm curious to know if she thinks women approach science differently. When she first started her work the roles of men and women were prescribed and hidebound. "I expected to be married," she says. "To do my PhD." The idea of a young single woman setting off for Africa to study animals in the wild was almost inconceivable. The initial trip to Gombe required the presence of Goodall's mother, who acted as helper, chaperone and companion.

What emerged from Goodall's fieldwork took everyone by surprise. The conflation of human consciousness and the animal mind caused uproar in the scientific community and in the media, and the concept of sentience among animal beings continues to be a difficult, perhaps even impossible, thing to address. To admit that animals have emotions, and suffer pain, means changing everything from farming practices to conservation.

Goodall says that things like factory farming pose a huge challenge, especially when humans insist on treating some animals like friends (dogs) and others as food (pigs). But change begins with empathy and emotion. We talk about the mother killer whale that spent 17 days nudging her dead baby to the ocean's surface. It was almost unbearably painful to witness, but also seemed a signal from the animal to the human world about the emotional pain that animals endure, as well as the dire circumstances they face with a dwindling habitat.

In spite of the grim news for the environment from the U.S., and now Brazil, where a newly elected presidential nightmare threatens to sell off the Amazon rainforest and jettison all Indigenous land rights, Goodall argues that there is ample reason for hope.

“There is a great deal of optimism, and so many great projects, kindness to animals, people devoting their lives to eradicating poverty, environmental design. It's important not to give up.”

In this culture also plays a critical role. The film *Jane* pays attention to the literary heroes of Goodall's youth, from *Dr. Doolittle* to *Tarzan of the Apes*. Although books may seem a slight weapon to wield against the onslaught of global devastation, a pen against a howitzer, the effects can be long lasting, affecting generations after generations. I ask Goodall which writers, artists and activists continue to inspire her.

“Graham Greene, George Orwell, Rachel Carson, who wrote *Silent Spring*. I've read a lot about the Holocaust,” she says. “Animals are not capable of real evil. Real evil is planned out in cold blood.” She recounts a recent visit to the Berlin Holocaust museum and talks about being struck by figures such as Heinrich Himmler, whose exacting plans informed the beginning of the Holocaust.

In the face of atrocities committed by humans on each other as well as on the rest of the natural world, I wonder how she manages not only to keep on her own punishing schedule but also to inspire the generations who have grown up venerating her. Surely such relentless attention, not to mention responsibility must become unbearable sometimes.

“Do you find being around people just exhausting?” I ask, but she just gives me a gentle gaze like I've asked a rather dumb question.

After all, much of her work consists of simply being herself, allowing people's attraction to her to morph into a greater dedication to doing good. Even something like social media can be an extremely useful tool, breaking down isolation and bringing about change on an unprecedented scale.

Goodall describes how pressure can be brought to bear in multiple ways, from the products we buy to the choices we make.

But it often comes down to the indomitable human spirit, she says, citing Terry Fox and [Chris Koch](#) as examples of kindness and perseverance. In the animal world, the return of the Vancouver Island marmot, once reduced to tiny numbers, as well as the resurgence of the

whooping crane, a species that was once considered emblematic of extinction, are powerful indicators of nature's resiliency.

Where there is life, there is hope. But can humans ever really give up their sense of superiority?

"We've come to understand the intelligence of the octopus, of bumblebees. My greatest childhood teacher was my dog," Goodall says. She is passionate about the current moment, and in particular the spectre of climate change, as bleak as things currently seem.

"There is this window of time around the world in the U.S., Australia, and the U.K. for turning things around," she says. "Profit diminishes the way we look at the world," Goodall adds, but she has a "renewed sense of hope that human beings can learn to live in harmony in our own daily lives."

In Goodall's talk at the film festival, one statement leapt out. She was asked how she keeps going despite the challenges.

"It's almost as though I was put here for a purpose, and that there was a mission. Going through my life, and I've often done this, there were points along the journey where all I had to do was make the right decision, and I think, looking back, I did make the right decision, but what kept me going was determination and obstinacy."

The endless work of saving the world goes on, and Goodall offers important lessons. Kind, forthright, and stubbornly refusing to accept any limitations, Goodall offers another path.

First and foremost, hers is a love story. Not simply with other creatures — child, husband, chimpanzees — but with the planet itself. Love is a transformational force, and it carries with it the seeds of ongoing, unrelenting change, stubborn as a dandelion.

<https://thetyee.ca/Culture/2018/11/02/ane-Goodall-Not-Giving-Up/>

November 2, 2018

Indigenous spirituality key part of Parliament of World Religions

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

When Indigenous people from across Canada and beyond took centre stage, conducting the first of two opening ceremonies Nov. 1 at the Parliament of World Religions in Toronto, it was far more than a token appearance.

Indigenous spirituality and traditional wisdom are woven throughout the week of interfaith study and dialogue that has brought close to 10,000 people to Toronto's downtown convention centre to discuss religion's place in the world.

Though officially just one of 10 themes woven throughout 900 workshops, musical performances, art exhibitions and plenary sessions, the Indigenous people's program is the secret sauce spread liberally throughout the seven-day event which has drawn delegates from over 70 countries, said Toronto co-chair of the Parliament Rev. John Joseph Mastandrea.

Acknowledging the original inhabitants of the land beneath North America's fourth largest city isn't about guilt. "It's about the grace of truth," Mastandrea told *The Catholic Register* just before ceremonies got underway. "It's about helping people rediscover who they are.... It matters simply to understand who First Nations people are."

"We live in the great spiritual Indigenous revival," Anishnawbek elder Kevin Deer told a couple of hundred delegates who braved a constant cold rain to take part in the Indigenous opening ceremonies for the Parliament of World Religions. "When we look at what's happening, those future generations are in danger because the Indigenous, sacred knowledge — knowledge of this land — has been forgotten."

Because native spirituality is so connected to the land, it becomes ever more important in an age of climate change as the environment shifts underneath us, Indigenous working group co-chair Bob Goulais told the gathering around a sacred fire that will burn in Olympic Park for the duration of the Parliament of World Religions. The sacred fire and Indigenous opening ceremonies were sponsored by the University of St. Michael's College.

The Anishinaabe people want to see the "Eighth Fire Prophecy" come true at the [Parliament of World Religions](#), Goulais said. The prophecy foresees a time when the Anishinaabe will share their traditional spirituality and knowledge about the environment with the rest of the world, according to Goulais.

Delegates to the Parliament of World Religions who attend some of over 60 Indigenous-developed-and-led workshops, panels, film screenings and other events, plus attend an eight-hour intensive program, can earn a "Certificate in Indigenous Cultural Awareness" from the First Nations Technical Institute while at the week-long conference. The FNTI is based on Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory halfway between Belleville and Kingston, Ont.

Elder Isaac Day took out one of the booths in the trade-show portion of the sprawling Metro Toronto Convention Centre to promote his Giizhigat Maple Products from Serpent River First Nation. But he is also at the Parliament of World Religions because he believes interfaith dialogue is "very important."

Day argues that climate change requires a spiritual response.

"When you change the environment, you change your mental state — your spiritual state," he said.

Grade 8 Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School student Nora McLeod is one of a small band of student volunteers who are watching the Sacred Fire in Olympic Park behind the convention centre full of delegates from around the world.

“Is it important? Yes,” McLeod told *The Catholic Register*. “Keeping the fire going is important.”

A couple of hours later McLeod was listening as Dene Suline elder Francois Paulette brought greetings from the Athabasca region.

“I come from a place that is suffering right now,” Paulette told the crowd. “It’s the last territory in this part of the world that is vast... The river that flows by me is polluted. You have to think about the tar sands. It produces one third of Canada’s greenhouse gases, but concentrated in one place.”

Scientific knowledge about what’s happening to the environment isn’t complete without spiritual knowledge, Paulette argued.

“These people who do not understand Mother Earth, who do not know fire, who do not know water, we need to teach them. I encourage you (Indigenous) to colonize them,” he said. “I’m here to assimilate a few white people.”

<https://www.catholicregister.org/item/28348-indigenous-spirituality-key-part-of-parliament-of-world-religions>

November 4, 2018

Iran to nominate Islamic capital of environment and sustainable development

Tehran Times

TEHRAN – Iran is making plans for nominating a city as the Islamic capital of environment and sustainable development at the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the deputy education minister for international affairs has said.

The possible inclusion of an Iranian city in ISESCO list will make the cities environmentally friendly in line with achieving sustainable development goals, Gholamreza Karimi who is also a secretary general at ISESCO national commission and a member of ISESCO executive council explained.

The ISESCO plans to announce three cities in three parts of the Muslim world (Asia, the Arab region, and Africa), as the Islamic capital of environment and sustainable development each year from 2019 to 2027, Mehr news agency quoted Karimi as saying on Sunday.

Each country must propose a city to ISESCO which should live up to the standards declared by the organization with a 20-page report attachment which provides the information about the chosen city, its environmental condition, waste management plans, soil and air pollution condition, transport development plans as well as other environmental standards, Karimi further explained.

He also added that steps that have been taken so far and what will be done for the next 10 years and the year the city is supposed to be the capital of the environment must also be included in the report.

The city which succeed in winning the position, will host over 70 international events and occasions during the year, Karimi stated.

“We will definitely choose a city to be nominated for the capital, given that we tend to promote environmental standards in the cities of the country, as well as environmental culture,” he highlighted.

The candidate city is not yet chosen, while the Department of Environment is currently carrying out assessments to help find the proper candidate, Karimi concluded.

ISESCO, the largest international Islamic organizations, was founded by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in May 1979. With 52 member states, ISESCO headquarters are in Rabat, Morocco.

According to the OIC, ISESCO's objectives are to strengthen and promote cooperation among the Member States in the fields of education, science culture and communication; consolidate understanding among peoples inside and outside Member State; contribute to world peace and security through various means; publicize the true image of Islam and Islamic culture; promote dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions; encourage cultural interaction and foster cultural diversity in the Member States, while preserving cultural identity and intellectual integrity.

In November 2017, the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers adopts various documents and projects aiming to give substance to environmental protection and promote sustainable development in Islamic world.

Progress report on the creation of the OIC water council and its terms of reference, the creation of the Islamic academy for the environment and sustainable development, honoring the best environmentally friendly Islamic city, guidance document on green cities and their role in achieving sustainable development goals, the creation of an OIC joint commission for sustainable development (OIC-CSD), along with the programme on the celebration of Islamic capitals of environment and sustainable development are among the various documents adopted in this session.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/429232/Iran-to-nominate-Islamic-capital-of-environment-and-sustainable>

November 6, 2018

On Election Day, let us renew our care for creation, common good

By Alex Mikulich
National Catholic Reporter

As the nation votes today, our entire way of life is killing us and the planet. The profound disconnection between the imperative for infinite growth of current economic logic and the finite resources of the earth threaten all of life as we know it. We need a whole new way of thinking about faithful citizenship that is directed to the common good of planet Earth.

Old ways of social, political and economic thinking, including maximizing consumption and decision-making driven by special-interest groups, explain business management scholars Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer, have "led us into a state of organized irresponsibility, collectively creating results that nobody wants."

And yet, in today's election, the most fundamental of all life issues — the environment — does not rank even in the top five concerns of voters, according to the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) election tracking. While it is encouraging that health care is the leading concern of voters, national discourse tends to obscure how human health is dependent upon clean water, air and land.

Intimate interconnections between human health and clean ecosystems, tragically, are being torn asunder by a White House administration that is [gutting](#) the most important clean air, water, and land standards established over the past 50 years.

This is nothing less than an assault on truth and every form of life. It is an assault that is consistent with this president's often violent language against migrants, refugees, women, people of color and people who are disabled, poor and vulnerable. The president's rhetoric eviscerates civility because it is joined to actions by every department — whether the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education, or Department of Justice, that blatantly pervert the truth, justice, democratic norms and the common good.

This is what St. John Paul II and Pope Francis name as a culture of death. Being pro-life is far more than supporting unborn human life; being authentically pro-life means a transformation of lifestyle, attitudes and habits that promote the integrity of the whole of creation.

There is another way. In his prophetic 2015 encyclical "[Laudato Si'](#), On Care for Our Common Home," Francis invited Catholics and all people of goodwill to a conversion from an egocentric to an eco-centric moral imagination.

Francis is calling people of faith to a profound reorientation of our entire way of living personally and collectively to an "integral ecology" that truly cares for, and celebrates, the intimacy of the whole of God's creation.

That call to conversion and the moral imagination that inspires it could not be more timely. As Francis emphasizes, climate is a global common good "belonging to all and meant for all"

because it is a "complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life." Francis underscored how we are "witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system."

A landmark [study](#) issued in October by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change finds the planet in an even more dire predicament than that described by the pope. The IPCC, an international group of scientists convened by the United Nations to guide policymakers, found that in order to avoid catastrophic damage the global economy must undergo changes in speed and scale that has "no documented historic precedent."

In other words, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is "telling us that we need to reverse emissions trends and turn the world economy on a dime," said Myles Allen, a physicist at Oxford University and one of the authors of the report.

The urgency to turn the world economy on a dime is underscored by other ongoing scientific studies. For example, consider the World Wildlife Fund's [Living Planet Report 2018](#) that details a 60 percent decline in the size of populations of mammals, birds, fish and amphibians in just over 40 years.

Or contemplate how the Living Planet Report calculates that 20 percent of the Amazon has disappeared in just 50 years. Tropical rainforests like the Amazon are "cradles of biodiversity." While rainforest cover only 6 percent of the earth, they are home to over half of the earth's biodiversity. The Amazon is considered one of the "lungs of the planet," yet deforestation and resource extraction may eliminate this "lung" by the end of this century.

And consider that the world's oceans cover nearly 70 percent of the earth. Hidden underneath the surface are mountain ranges and canyons that rival any on land. If we could venture below with scientists we would find the earth's largest habitat, home to billions of plants and animals — the vast majority of living things on the planet.

As Maurice Tamman and Matthew Green [report](#), oceans are critical for regulating the earth's temperatures because they soak up human-generated heat and carbon dioxide. Yet in the past few decades, as Tamman and Green report, "oceans have undergone unprecedented warming" that have shifted currents and habitats. While these changes are mostly invisible from land, "this hidden climate change has had disturbing impact on marine life — if effect, creating an epic underwater refugee crisis."

While we need to lament these crises, we need not despair. There is hope, John Paul II reminds us in [Centesimus Annus](#), because humanity receives from God its essential dignity and capacity to "transcend every social order so as to move towards truth and goodness."

Francis invites hope grounded in the Gospel that all of us can express through mutual expressions of social and political love that nurture authentic human and ecological development. This includes building new cooperative economic arrangements that are ecologically and economically sustainable for the earth.

Laudato Si' invites us to "regain the conviction that we need one another" and "that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it."

There is hope because we can nurture shared responsibility by building connections across seemingly distant and disparate communities. Two indigenous women poets recently celebrated intimate interconnections across the face of the earth as they lamented humanity's disregard for the most sacred sources of life.

[As reported at Grist](#), Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner traveled from the Marshall Islands in Micronesia to Greenland's capital city Nuuk where she met Inuk poet Aka Niviana. I encourage readers to reflect upon, contemplate, and pray with these poets as they recite their poem "[Rise](#)" on top of a crevasse-scarred, melting glacier.

May all of us take a moment this Election Day to notice our breathing and air pressure expanding our lungs. May we notice that our breathing, indeed our lives, are intimately connected to the life and well-being of vast rainforests and oceans, as well as the tiniest creatures.

In gratitude for God's gifts of breathing, life and love, may we nurture new forms of social, political, economic and ecological love that renew the face of the earth.

[Alex Mikulich is a Catholic social ethicist.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/election-day-let-us-renew-our-care-creation-common-good>

November 9, 2018

Judge Blocks Keystone XL Pipeline, Says Climate Impact Can't Be Ignored

By Phil McKenna
Inside Climate News

A federal judge in Montana on Thursday blocked all further work on the Keystone XL pipeline, saying the Trump administration had failed to justify its decision to reverse a prior decision by the Obama administration and to approve the tar sands oil delivery project.

It was a striking victory for environmental advocates who have spent over a decade fighting the project to carry tar sands oil from Canada to markets in the United States and had turned the KXL line into a litmus test for climate action.

Environmental advocates, landowners along the pipeline's route and indigenous rights groups hailed the [ruling](#). They called it a major setback—if not a permanent defeat—for the long-contested crude oil pipeline. The Obama administration had determined that the pipeline was not in the national interest, and President Barack Obama had cited its potential climate impact in [rejecting it](#).

The Trump administration, determined to make the project an [early example](#) of its no-holds-barred policy of exploiting fossil fuel resources without regard for climate consequences, had made only a perfunctory review in its quick decision to speed the work along. A full-blown review can take more than a year to complete; several were done in the past decade, producing mainly controversy and delay while sharpening the climate argument against a line that was first disputed because of the risks of spills in sensitive ecosystems.

Environmentalists challenged Trump's hurried approval in court, noting many new factors: the passage of time, the mounting climate crisis, the risks of spills and the changes in oil markets since the project's debut a decade ago.

The Trump administration "simply discarded prior factual findings related to climate change to support its course reversal," wrote Judge Brian Morris of the United States District Court for Montana.

Judge: Government Failed to Follow U.S. Law

The judge's decision underscored the value of the landmark National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as a tool for environmentalists at a time when the Trump administration is seeking a wholesale reversal of regulations that limit the use of fossil fuels or reduce the pollution they produce.

The law calls for a full environmental impact analysis of any major federal action, taking into account its cumulative pollution burdens and encompassing the full sweep of its implications, which in recent decades has increasingly meant looking at the resulting buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Without doing that, the Trump administration in 2017 simply overturned the Obama administration's refusal to approve a permit to cross the U.S.-Canadian border, greasing the skids for the 1,179-mile pipeline. Even so, the pipeline project has been held up by court battles, and work has not commenced on its northern section. A southern section, not needing a border permit, was completed years ago.

The Trump administration failed to take a "hard look" at factors including the current, low price of oil, the cumulative effects of greenhouse gas emissions from Keystone and the Alberta Clipper pipeline, a survey of potential cultural resources along the route, and an updated assessment of potential oil spills, the judge ruled.

President Trump on Friday morning [called the ruling](#) "a political decision made by a judge. I think it's a disgrace." Trump added that the case will likely be appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and "we're slowly putting new judges in the Ninth Circuit."

TransCanada: Still Committed to Building Keystone XL

"This decision vindicates what we have been saying all along: Trump's approval of this pipeline was illegal, violated environmental laws and was based upon fake facts," said Tom Goldtooth,

executive director for the Indigenous Environmental Network, one of several organizations who filed the suit against the U.S. government in 2017.

Terry Cunha, a spokesperson for the pipeline's developer, TransCanada Corp., said the company is reviewing the ruling but plans to continue moving forward on the project. "We remain committed to building this important energy infrastructure project," Cunha said.

Dena Hoff, a Montana farmer and member-leader of the Northern Plains Resource Council, called the judge's latest ruling "a victory for common sense stewardship of the land and water."

"All Americans should be proud that our system of checks and balances can still function even in the face of enormous strains," Hoff said.

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/09112018/keystone-xl-pipeline-climate-change-impact-court-blocked-trump-nepa-environment-review>

November 12, 2018

Without traditional knowledge, there is no climate change solution

By Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim
Conservation International Blog

The world is [waking up](#) to the reality of climate change.

But for me — and for the millions of indigenous peoples around the world — climate change isn't a revelation. It's life.

For all indigenous peoples, whether we come from the mountain or the forest, the desert or the ice, our lives and livelihoods are linked to the environment. We are dependent on the land, and because of climate change, that land — and our futures — are in danger.

The latest report on global warming, released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, paints a bleak picture of what will happen if we let Earth's temperature rise past 1.5 degrees Celsius. The problem: The current targets adopted by countries party to the [Paris Agreement](#) aim to limit warming to 2 degrees — and that half a degree could have [catastrophic impacts](#).

Faced with this future, I say it's time we turn to the past.

Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge is the key to helping not only the world's indigenous peoples, but all of humanity, adapt and mitigate to climate change. By combining this knowledge with science and technology, by [grounding innovation in nature](#), we have the greatest chance to meet these ambitious new carbon targets.

Climate science relies on modern tools and sophisticated forecasting and modeling systems. [In my community](#), we collect information from nature and use this data to inform our decisions. We observe trees, fruits, bird migrations, wind direction and the positions of the stars to predict the weather and to help us adapt to changes. We also use participatory 3D modeling to map our land and better manage our natural resources. This is where traditional knowledge and science meet.

Whether I am meeting with a community leader or a head of state, I am continuously struck by the same idea: Until we recognize the value of this knowledge, of the contributions of indigenous peoples to the fight against climate change and ecological destruction, we don't have a hope. Fundamentally, this is a question of justice — of climate justice. Having one indigenous voice on a panel, or in a working group, or at the negotiating table is not enough; instead, we must be decision-makers. Too often, our rights and our resources are forgotten. True climate justice must start with finding the balance between conserving these resources and valuing our rights to them.

My role is to link my community's experiences, [traditional knowledge](#) and [nature-based solutions to climate change](#) with international bodies such as the United Nations. I have a duty to inform the world and to report back to my community in order to help them become more resilient and to ensure future generations will be around to keep our identity and our knowledge alive. My role with Conservation International as an indigenous fellow will help me, my community and all indigenous peoples gain access to a new platform and audience to share our experiences and help the world benefit from our knowledge, innovation and ways of conservation.

In the coming months, I will be attending many international conventions to advocate for my indigenous sisters and brothers, including the [Convention of Biological Diversity](#) and the [United Nations Climate Change Conference](#). I will inform decision-makers of the reality that our lives are constantly changing because of climate change, and reinforce the idea that we must be involved in the decision-making process.

Without indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge, and without indigenous peoples' involvement in decision-making, we can't help implement climate solutions. And right now, the planet needs all the help it can get.

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim is [Conservation International's Senior Indigenous Fellow](#) and a [National Geographic Emerging Explorer](#). She is also a former co-chair of the [International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change](#). She is a member of the Mbororo pastoralist community of Chad.

<https://blog.conservation.org/2018/11/without-traditional-knowledge-there-is-no-climate-change-solution/>

November 13, 2018

In global climate, see the forest and trees

By Joan Brown
Global Sisters Report

As thousands of people met, planned, discussed and took part in happy hours in San Francisco on Sept. 12 at the beginning of the [Global Climate Action Summit](#), I sat in the vaulted sanctuary of Grace Episcopal Cathedral with hundreds of people for two and a half hours of prayer.

The Global Climate Action Summit's "Multi-Faith Service of Wondering and Commitment" was the most impactful and crystalizing event for me from the Global Climate Action Summit. This is not to diminish the important work and announcements of the mayors, companies, governors and others committing to specific emissions reduction goals, and the highlights of technologies and tools.

Nor does this neglect the voices of indigenous and other people protesting outside of the official convention center to demand that rich nations address the disastrous policies and business trajectories they have in place to profit from fossil fuels.

In 2009, I attended the U.N. international climate meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, which was disheartening to say the least. In 2015, I took part in the [Paris climate meeting](#), where Christiana Figueres, then executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, led 195 nations to a Paris climate agreement. Both were worldview-altering experiences. I welcomed this California event in light of our country's federal neglect of the most critical issue of our time.

I just experienced an intense summer of drought, forest closures and daily smoke from fires in New Mexico and other parts of the West. I have been reading the news of disastrous and unprecedented floods in India. Even during the Global Climate Action Summit, Mother Earth has been sending us wake-up calls of typhoons in the Philippines and Hurricane Florence in the Carolinas.

We have been working tirelessly with so many ordinary people of faith and conscience to defend methane pollution rules for oil and gas extraction, to educate and act to limit fossil fuels while expanding renewable energy. And at the same time, we have been experiencing the daily dismantling of ecological protections by our government — I needed to reflect with others on this spiritual climate crisis!

I spent Sept. 12-14 at the Global Action Climate Summit Faith-Rooted Affiliated Workshops organized by Interfaith Power and Light, the Episcopal Diocese of California and Green Faith, and at a special Friday afternoon session at the University of San Francisco, organized for Catholics by the [Global Catholic Climate Movement](#).

Aptly, the Jewish new year (Rosh Hashanah) — a time to take account of failings, commit to conversion and begin again — coincided with the climate summit. I was reminded of St. Francis of Assisi's comment near the end of his life when he viewed the disarray of his community and a

world gone awry. "Let us begin now to follow God. Up until now we have done little or nothing."

All of us are in the global climate crisis together. Up until now we have done little or nothing. [Consider](#): Using 2015 numbers from Oxfam, the economically top 10 percent people on the planet (730 million) are responsible for 50 percent of greenhouse gases, while the poorest 3.5 billion people account for just 10 percent of the emissions. Ours is a St. Francis and Yom Kippur (atonement) conversion moment to love in action.

The multi-faith service Sept. 12 surrounded me with music, chant, prayer, dance and practical commitments from diverse cultural faith expressions in the call to love, wonder and action. The world visited us through culture and religious expressions of Christians, Jewish, Indigenous, Buddhist, Sikh and Muslim faiths. As green leaves fell from the "heavens" of gothic arches above, I wondered at this moment and this greatest call in our time to give our hearts and lives for the future of life on Earth.

But the images that scratch at my soul were the mystical green stilt-walking human trees, waving their leafy arm branches, leading processions and appearing at various moments as a "shuttle" weaving the entire service together.

The phrase, "We can't see the forest for the trees," echoes in me. Climate change is so large. There are so many pieces. The cries of the poor and the Earth are so engulfing some days. Our lifestyle and institutional changes, prayers and policy advocacy feel like a blur of a forest that is somehow distant and not real. "I can't see the forest for the trees."

Maybe *I* need to become the tree. Maybe *we* need to realize that we are not looking from the outside in — *we are* the trees within a sacred forest. We are the trees that see over and through cacophonies of denial and inaction. Maybe we need to know that we are a vowel or note within the cry of the poor; and we are a feather, bone or leaf in the cry of the Earth. At the same moment, we are more than the tears in which we find ourselves washed. We are the beauty and part of the expressions of wonder, awe and love that move our collective heart to radical revolutionary action.

At the deepest level I believe the ecological crisis is a spiritual, soul, and ethical crisis. [Laudato Si'](#): "On Care for our Common Home" quotes Pope Benedict XVI as saying: "The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast."

We all need to be part of the solutions addressing climate change, the greatest issue of our time. But every part of us needs to be part of the solutions. The answers do not lie only in technology or renewable energy or efficient cars — only part of the solution. The foundation to the solutions lies within a spiritual conversion that shifts and expands worldview, while deepening the roots of our soul view.

Fr. Augusto Zampini Davies, who works at the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development from the Vatican, spoke at the meeting and emphasized common action that integrates networking, actions and interfaith work to redefine how we live. Referring to *Laudato*

Si', he said it is not a document, but a prayer that can educate a new creative narrative through critical thinking and imagination toward a cultural revolution. "Without a cultural revolution, there will be disaster."

Near the end of the multi-faith service, Patricia Espinosa, current executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change challenged those gathered: "Climate change is the defining issue of our time," she said. "We have one choice and it is either yes or no. We must do it together."

[Joan Brown is a Franciscan Sister from the Rochester, Minnesota, community and the executive director of [New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light](#) working on creation care and climate justice.]

<https://www.globalsistersreport.org/column/capital-e-earth/environment/global-climate-see-forest-and-trees-55611>

November 16, 2018

Indigenous peoples defend Earth's biodiversity—but they're in danger

By Gleb Raygorodetsky
National Geographic Society

Comprising less than 5% of the world's population, indigenous people protect 80% of global biodiversity. Their role is under discussion by world leaders this week.

ORIENTE REGION, ECUADOR - Pushed forward by a chugging long-tail motor, an old dugout canoe carries us down the languorous Conambo River, a tributary of the [Amazon](#), at the western edge of Ecuador's Oriente region. We spend the day on the river, sometimes baking in the sun, other times getting drenched by cloudbursts of rain.

We are followed by a screeching pandemonium of scarlet and green-winged macaws, chased by flocks of prattling parakeets, monitored by stealthy guans, and surveyed by the occasional toucan. A harpy eagle swoops above us, looking for its lunch, most likely a woolly or howler monkey that we have heard chattering and whooping in the canopy.

Once in a while, our skipper pulls the boat up along a shady bank to snag some *barbudo*, a foot-long catfish, for dinner. Every time he lands one—the fish's long barbels wriggling like giant earthworms—he expertly slaps his catch on the side of the boat, snapping off its spiky dorsal and pectoral fins to avoid getting stabbed by its sharp barbs.

In the afternoon, we come ashore to explore a large oxbow lake—a meander that got cut off from the main channel of the river. As we examine the birdlike tapir tracks imprinted in the bank, a large freshwater stingray glides past us through the murky waters. Back in the boat, our guide shares a foot-long, thumb-thick *guaba* seedpod called “ice-cream beans” for the sweet vanilla flavor of the cotton candy-like white pulp surrounding the large black beans. Sucking on the

sweet flesh, I watch a giant blue morpho butterfly flicker in and out of the deep jade shadows of the [rain forest](#).

We are in one of the most biodiverse places on Earth—the Napo moist tropical forest in northeastern Ecuador, made famous by [Yasuni National Park](#). According to [Kelly Swing](#), the director of the Tiputini Biodiversity Station, there are about 600 species of birds, 200 species of mammals, 500 species of fish, and 150 species of frogs in the park. “One hectare of Yasuni forest may contain up to 600 species of trees and over 100,000 species of insects,” says Swing. “Microbial diversity is overwhelming.”

Its estimated a million species, most still undiscovered, live in the New Hampshire-sized Yasuni, making it an icon of biodiversity. By way of comparison, only about 1.5 million species inhabiting our planet have been documented by science.

But, we are not in Yasuni. We are about 80 miles south of its boundary, on the traditional territory of the Sápara people or, as they call themselves, children of *Aritiaku*, the red howler monkey. “Both the Yasuni park and Sápara territory are located at the intersection between the Andean uplands and the Amazonian lowlands, and this transitional zone creates an astounding abundance of distinct life-forms,” explains Swing.

“The indigenous peoples of the Amazon have proven to be the best guardians of their traditional territories,” Swing adds. “The fact that the Amazon ecosystems are as rich as they are today is proof of how successful these cultures have been, in living in balance with their environment.”

About 200 Sápara live in Ecuador, with approximately the same number across the border in Peru. Together, they are all that remain of a once thriving nation that totaled between 20,000 to 30,000 and comprised more than 200 peaceful tribes, who differed in name, but shared a common tongue. Following the Spanish conquest of the 16th century, the Sápara, like other indigenous groups in the region, were decimated by epidemics of measles, smallpox, and yellow fever, among other European “gifts.” At one point considered extinct, the Sápara were officially recognized by the Ecuadorian government in the 1990s. This included setting aside over 320,000 hectares of the Sápara’s sacred *Naku*, or rain forest—a mere eight percent of their historical range—as the Traditional Sápara Settlement Area. In 2001, UNESCO recognized the endangered Sápara language as an [“Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.”](#)

Such recognition, however, has done little to acknowledge the Sápara’s role in biodiversity conservation and reduce the growing external threats to their ancestral territory, according to Kevin Koeing, climate and energy director of [Amazon Watch](#), an environmental NGO working with indigenous peoples to protect the Amazon. “The government of Ecuador continues to view peoples as an obstacle to economic growth,” says Koeing. “It is pushing for oil development in the region by [auctioning off blocks of the Sápara’s Naku](#) that it considers under-populated and under-utilized wilderness that must be tamed. It is time to flip this dominant narrative and acknowledge the role of the Sápara and other indigenous peoples in doing the most critical thing that could be done under the imminent threat of biodiversity loss and climate change—and that is looking after their sacred Naku.”

The story of the Sápara is not unique. Around the world, indigenous peoples have been displaced from their traditional territories in the name of ecotourism, like the [Maasai in Tanzania](#), as well as conservation, [as were the Sengwer and Ogiek peoples in Kenya](#). Indigenous peoples have had to abandon their livelihoods and ancestral lands because of large-scale development projects, such as [Gibe III dam along Ethiopia's Omo River](#); and, more recently, they have become climate refugees, like the [Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe](#) in Louisiana or the [Inupiaq whaling community of Kivalina](#).

But as our collective understanding of the imperiled state of our planet grows—the [6th extinction](#), escalating [climate change](#), and exceeding [planetary boundaries](#)—the global discourse and actions are shifting toward a greater acknowledgement of the role of indigenous peoples and local communities and their traditional territories in biodiversity conservation and climate change resilience. [Recent research](#) demonstrates that while the world's 370 million indigenous peoples make up less than five percent of the total human population, they manage or hold tenure over 25 percent of the world's land surface and [support about 80 percent of the global biodiversity](#).

This week, world leaders have an opportunity to tackle these issues head on. The [Fourteenth Conference of the Parties \(COP14\) to the Convention on Biodiversity](#), held between 17-29 November in Egypt, gives leaders a chance to further assert the role of indigenous peoples. Among other issues, COP14 will assess global progress toward achieving the [Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#). In particular, Aichi Target 11 sets expectations for national governments to reach at least 17 percent of terrestrial and 10 percent of coastal and marine areas to be conserved through protected areas and other conservation measures by 2020. And experts say indigenous stewardship may be a critical way to meet those goals.

[A perfect storm](#)

The evolution in thinking about the role of indigenous peoples as stewards of the Earth is the culmination of a number of trends. For one, the increasing sophistication of spatial analytical tools, such as the Global Platform of Indigenous and Community Lands or [LandMark](#), the [Protected Planet](#) database, and the [Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas Registry](#), has enabled a better documentation of the extent, as well as biodiversity and carbon storage values, of indigenous lands.

Indigenous rights to self-determination, well-being, traditional knowledge, and a healthy environment—as articulated in the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)—have also been increasingly recognized by national governments and the conservation community. Philanthropic and development organizations are also increasingly supporting [indigenous conservation projects](#), in part because they often see them as a win-win to help people and the planet.

In Australia and Namibia, countries with legally binding mechanisms to recognize indigenous peoples' and local communities' rights in managing natural resources, [the contribution of those groups to conservation is considered equivalent to other types of protected areas](#).

Successful examples around the world

[Patrick O’Leary](#), senior officer of the Pew Charitable Trusts’ Outback to Oceans Program, applauds the recent decision by the Australian government to extend its support for [Indigenous Protected Areas \(IPAs\)](#) and the [Indigenous Rangers](#) programs through 2023 and 2021, to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to continue managing existing and creating new IPAs. Established in 1997, the IPA Program has contributed significantly to Australia’s efforts to protect and conserve its biodiversity, notes O’Leary. Currently, 75 IPAs cover approximately 68 million hectares, representing over 45 percent of Australia’s National Reserve System. Moreover, Australia’s IPAs provide many cultural, social, health, and economic benefits to local people, says O’Leary.

In Namibia, the recognition of community-based natural resource management under the [Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996](#) has resulted in the establishment of 82 conservancies and 32 community forests. Today, conservancies cover about 20 percent of the country’s surface area. Some animal populations have been restored, others are recovering, while living conditions for local people continue to improve.

In Canada, the recent federal recognition of the [Edézhíe Protected Area](#) in the country’s northwest and support for the [Indigenous Guardianship Program](#)—in which indigenous communities are empowered to manage their territories according to traditional laws—are recent steps towards the acknowledgment of indigenous stewardship. “These important developments advance national biodiversity conservation goals,” says [Eli Enns](#), co-chair of Canada’s Indigenous Circle of Experts. “This builds on the nearly three decades of indigenous-led efforts to assert their [constitutionally protected rights](#) to look after their traditional territories, beginning with the recognition of [Gwaii Haanas](#) and [Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks](#) in the 1980s.”

In Europe, this shift has led to the recognition of the [Havukkavaara forest in North Karelia](#) in Finland. For Tero Mustonen, director of the advocacy group [Snowchange Cooperative](#), Havukkavaara is an example of “a new style of community-based conservation that includes culture, history, and people to help sustain traditional lifeways and conserve the last vestiges of the old-growth forests south of the Arctic Circle in Finland.”

Defining indigenous stewardship on the global stage

Despite their rising profile, the precise role of indigenous territories in the Convention on Biological Diversity remains unclear—although that could change after the meeting in Egypt this week. In order to help meet the global biodiversity targets, leaders are arguing that qualifying lands under the convention need to be expanded to include “a geographically defined area, other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem services and cultural and spiritual values.”

In other words, many leaders hope to clarify that the global biodiversity goals be met not only with traditional protected areas like parks—which have conservation as the primary objective of management—but also with areas that show conservation outcomes, rather than objectives.

These latter areas would include indigenous-managed territories, such as the Sápara lands in Ecuador.

However, experts warn that recognizing the contributions of indigenous peoples is not as simple as drawing polygons on maps. It means going beyond traditional “fortress conservation,” of walling people away from nature. To work, such partnerships need to value holistic indigenous knowledge systems and ways of life.

As [Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), states in her report “[Cornered by Protected Areas](#),” it means adopting rights-based approaches to conservation that bring justice for indigenous peoples and local communities, while enabling biodiversity conservation and climate action.

“The future of our planet lies in indigenous ways of living on the Earth,” says Jon Waterhouse, Indigenous Peoples Scholar at the Oregon Health and Science University and a [National Geographic Education Fellow Emeritus and Explorer](#). “As a global community, we have lost our way; we forgot what it means to have a relationship with the land.”

To find it again, we have great guides, says Waterhouse. “Indigenous peoples have mastered the art of living on the Earth without destroying it. They continue to teach and lead by example, from the restoration of [eel grass](#) and [salmon by the Samish Nation](#), to [the bison reintroduction by the Kainai Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy](#), to the restoration of [traditional 800-year old Hawaiian fish ponds](#). We must heed these lessons and take on this challenging task, if we want our grandchildren to have a future.”

Gleb Raygorodetsky [previously wrote about the Nenets, traditional reindeer herders](#), for *National Geographic* magazine. In his award-winning book, [The Archipelago of Hope: Wisdom and Resilience from the Edge of Climate Change](#), he documents how the inextricable relationship between indigenous cultures and their territories forms the foundation for climate change resilience around the world. Gleb also works with the provincial government of Alberta on the intersection of indigenous knowledge and environmental issues. Follow @ArchipelagoHope on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2018/11/can-indigenous-land-stewardship-protect-biodiversity-/>

November 19, 2018

Spotlight: China shows wisdom of biodiversity conservation on UN conference

Xinhua

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt -- When the delegates look at the schedule of the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 14), they will find Chinese wisdom to the global biodiversity conservation.

The UN CBD COP 14, which runs from Nov. 17 to 29 in the Red Sea resort city of Sharm El-Sheikh, attracts delegates from more than 190 countries. It aims to step up efforts to halt the biodiversity loss and protect the ecosystems that support food and water security and health for billions of people.

Over the past years, China has made solid efforts in biodiversity conservation, as the country understands the importance of it and regards it as an important part of development.

GOVERNMENT LEAD

As one of the countries with the greatest biodiversity and the first to join the Convention, the Chinese government has always attached great importance to the biodiversity conservation. It has also been incorporated into the relevant plans of local governments as an important part of the construction of ecological civilization.

Chinese Vice Minister of Environmental Protection Huang Runqiu told Xinhua that the Chinese government regarded ecological civilization as a significant part of good governance.

Huang said the past several years mark the era while China conducted the most strenuous efforts and undertook the most substantial measures in ecological and environmental protection with the fastest progress and best outcomes achieved.

In October, the southwestern province of Yunnan has passed a regulation protecting local biodiversity. This is the first local regulation on biodiversity protection in China and it will be put into effect on Jan. 1, 2019.

Yunnan is a Chinese province with a variety of animals and plants and one of the 34 areas in the world where biodiversity is threatened. The regulation stipulates a government-guided system to protect biodiversity in ecosystems, species and genes.

Almost at the same time, China's cabinet released a guideline to improve aquatic life protection and ecological rehabilitation in the Yangtze River.

The Yangtze River, the longest river in China, has been damaged by human activities including dam building, water pollution and over-fishing, resulting in deteriorating biodiversity and arduous tasks of ecological restoration.

According to the guideline, fishing on major waters of the river will be banned throughout the year and more conservation areas will be built and better supervised before 2020.

So far, China has land conservation areas of over 1.7 million square km, accounting for 18 percent of the total land area, ahead of the schedule of reaching 17 percent by 2020 required by the CBD.

BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

Huang Runqiu told Xinhua that China is committed to promoting business participation in biodiversity conservation, regarding it as an integral part of the domestic implementation of the convention.

The side event on progress of China's business engaging in biodiversity on Sunday attracted more than 60 delegates to join, discussing the importance of the business to biodiversity conservation.

"Only by protecting biodiversity can we have the sustainable development of the world and the long-term health of enterprises," Zhang Jianqiu, the CEO of a leading Chinese dairy company Inner Mongolia Yili Industrial Group Co., Ltd told Xinhua.

At the end of 2016, Yili became the first Chinese enterprise to sign the Cancun Business and Biodiversity Pledge of 2016 COP CBD. Considering the unique features of Yili's industry chain, they extended the CBD requirements to their upstream and downstream partners so that to make the whole industry chain become eco-friendly.

Cristiana Pasca Palmer, executive secretary of the UN CBD, noted that businesses play a decisive role in biodiversity conservation.

Business operations depend on biodiversity and ecosystem services while transforming the economic model by moving towards sustainable consumption and production can also generate significant benefits to businesses, Palmer said.

In the context of the convention, more and more businesses are committing to delivering such contributions, as reflected in the global Business and Biodiversity Pledge opened for signature at the Global Business and Biodiversity Forum in Cancun, Mexico, in 2016.

"We should promote green development in all links of industry chain through sustainable modes, also the implementation of sustainable development goals through shared values created by enterprises and the society," Zhang added.

TECHNOLOGICAL ASSIST

The practice of biodiversity conservation is inseparable from the guarantee and assistance of science and technology.

Last month, the Global Biodiversity and Health Big Data Alliance, an international alliance to promote biodiversity and health big data sharing, was established in Beijing.

Based at the Beijing Institute of Genomics under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), the organization is under a framework initiated by the International Union of Biological Sciences, aiming to construct a world-class biodiversity and health big data center that are publicly accessible to worldwide communities.

According to Chinese Science Daily, Chinese research institutions has launched a project to conduct water and biodiversity research under climate change in the Pan-Third Pole.

The project, featuring 16 institutions, will study the mechanism between water, typical ecosystems and climate change, as well as conduct continuous monitoring and evaluation research on water and biodiversity.

Huang said that China will strengthen biodiversity conservation supervision and biodiversity research to protect important natural ecosystems and wildlife.

China will seek ways to achieve biodiversity through technological cooperation, funding and strengthening the capacity of developing countries.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-11/19/c_137617491.htm

November 20, 2018

Earth Charter Panel at the Parliament of the World's Religions, Toronto, Canada

Earth Charter Initiative

On 4 November 2018, a keynote Earth Charter Panel took place at **the Parliament of the World's Religions** with the purpose of exploring the significance of the Charter as a civil society document that represents inclusivity and interdependence and to look at how the vision of the Earth Charter is being realized in both theory and practice. The panel was convened by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, Co-directors of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, and included rich reflections from panelists on how the Earth Charter contributes to a sense of a shared future. The panel was very well attended with several hundred participants.

Among the key ideas raised was that the Earth Charter remains a vibrant and useful document—a timeless gift to humankind. Its educational value remains undiminished. The Parliament provided a large and critically important audience for the Earth Charter. The setting of our responsibilities within the universe story continues to be profoundly compelling. The Earth Charter was, and still is, ahead of its time.

Peter Corcoran, one of the panelists, closed his remarks by saying, “Finally, one of the many sources of hope is, I think, particularly appropriate to the Parliament of the World's Religions' aspiration for unity and this panel's aim to contribute to a sense of a shared future. This is the Earth Charter as a vision of our highest ideals. We may not realize our ideals of democracy, non-violence, and peace; of social and economic justice; of ecological integrity; and of respect and care for the community of life; but they are like the stars, and currents, and landmarks by which we can navigate our journey. We need such a vision. Steven C. Rockefeller, Chair of the Earth Charter Drafting Committee, has written, ‘The Earth Charter sets forth a world affirming spirituality rooted in reverence for the mystery of being and reverence for life that finds meaning

and joy in caring relationships with all that is.’ This reverence, these caring relationships are our hope.”

The programme was as follows:

Chair and Facilitator:

John Grim, Co-Director, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology

John Grim is a Senior Lecturer teaching in the joint MA program in religion and ecology at Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and Yale Divinity School. Together with Mary Evelyn Tucker, he co-directed in the 1990s a ten-conference series and book project at Harvard University on “World Religions and Ecology.”

Panelists:

Mary Evelyn Tucker, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology

Topic: The Earth Charter and the World’s Religions

Mary Evelyn Tucker is co-director of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale where she teaches in an MA program between the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies and the Divinity School.

Tu Weiming, Director, Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies, Beijing University

Topic: Spiritual Humanism and the Earth Charter

Tu Weiming is a preeminent Chinese scholar, a representative figure of contemporary Neo-Confucianism, and a crucial practitioner on the research and transmission of Confucian culture.

Heather Eaton, Professor, Conflict Studies, Saint Paul’s University, Ottawa

Topic: What Role Can the Earth Charter Play in Conflict Resolution

Heather Eaton received an interdisciplinary doctorate in theology, feminism and ecology at the University of Toronto.

Peter Blaze Corcoran, Research Fellow, Earth Charter Center for Education for Sustainable Development, University for Peace, San Jose, Costa Rica

Topic: The Earth Charter in Action: Education and Sustainability

Peter Blaze Corcoran is Professor Emeritus of Environmental Studies and Environmental Education at Florida Gulf Coast University. He is a leading scholar of the Earth Charter—editor of two books and dozens of journal articles in Earth Charter research. He has been a visiting professor in Australia, The Netherlands, Malaysia, Kenya, and Fiji.

Kekashan Basu, Youth Ambassador World Future Council

Topic: Youth Empowerment through the Lens of the Earth Charter

Winner of the 2016 International Children’s Peace Prize, 18-year-old Kekashan Basu, has been impacting the global fraternity with her grass roots level work on environmental conservation through youth empowerment. She is the Founder President of Green Hope Foundation, which engages and empowers thousands of youth, especially girls.

In addition, in a Panel on **Religious Pluralism**, Dr. Mark Hathaway made a presentation on the Earth Charter in which he related it to some fairly universal religious values.

Click [here](#) for more information on the Conference.

<http://earthcharter.org/news-post/earth-charter-panel-parliament-worlds-religions-toronto-canada/>

November 26, 2018

How Extreme Weather Is Shrinking the Planet

By Bill McKibben
The New Yorker

With wildfires, heat waves, and rising sea levels, large tracts of the earth are at risk of becoming uninhabitable. But the fossil-fuel industry continues its assault on the facts.

Listen to the audio version of this article here:

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/11/26/how-extreme-weather-is-shrinking-the-planet>

Thirty years ago, this magazine published “The End of Nature,” a long article about what we then called the greenhouse effect. I was in my twenties when I wrote it, and out on an intellectual limb: climate science was still young. But the data were persuasive, and freighted with sadness. We were spewing so much carbon into the atmosphere that nature was no longer a force beyond our influence—and humanity, with its capacity for industry and heedlessness, had come to affect every cubic metre of the planet’s air, every inch of its surface, every drop of its water. Scientists underlined this notion a decade later when they began referring to our era as the Anthropocene, the world made by man.

I was frightened by my reporting, but, at the time, it seemed likely that we’d try as a society to prevent the worst from happening. In 1988, George H. W. Bush, running for President, promised that he would fight “the greenhouse effect with the White House effect.” He did not, nor did his successors, nor did their peers in seats of power around the world, and so in the intervening decades what was a theoretical threat has become a fierce daily reality. As this essay goes to press, California is ablaze. A big fire near Los Angeles forced the evacuation of Malibu, and an even larger fire, in the Sierra Nevada foothills, has become the most destructive in California’s history. After a summer of unprecedented high temperatures and a fall “rainy season” with less than half the usual precipitation, the northern firestorm turned a city called Paradise into an inferno within an hour, razing more than ten thousand buildings and killing at least sixty-three people; more than six hundred others are missing. The authorities brought in cadaver dogs, a lab to match evacuees’ DNA with swabs taken from the dead, and anthropologists from California State University at Chico to advise on how to identify bodies from charred bone fragments.

For the past few years, a tide of optimistic thinking has held that conditions for human beings around the globe have been improving. Wars are scarcer, poverty and hunger are less severe, and there are better prospects for wide-scale literacy and education. But there are newer signs that

human progress has begun to flag. In the face of our environmental deterioration, it's now reasonable to ask whether the human game has begun to falter—perhaps even to play itself out. Late in 2017, a United Nations agency announced that the number of chronically malnourished people in the world, after a decade of decline, had started to grow again—by thirty-eight million, to a total of eight hundred and fifteen million, “largely due to the proliferation of violent conflicts and climate-related shocks.” In June, 2018, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N. found that child labor, after years of falling, was growing, “driven in part by an increase in conflicts and climate-induced disasters.”

In 2015, at the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Paris, the world's governments, noting that the earth has so far warmed a little more than one degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels, set a goal of holding the increase this century to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), with a fallback target of two degrees (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit). This past October, the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published a special report stating that global warming “is likely to reach 1.5 C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate.” We will have drawn a line in the sand and then watched a rising tide erase it. The report did not mention that, in Paris, countries' initial pledges would cut emissions only enough to limit warming to 3.5 degrees Celsius (about 6.3 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century, a scale and pace of change so profound as to call into question whether our current societies could survive it.

Scientists have warned for decades that climate change would lead to extreme weather. Shortly before the I.P.C.C. report was published, Hurricane Michael, the strongest hurricane ever to hit the Florida Panhandle, inflicted thirty billion dollars' worth of material damage and killed forty-five people. President Trump, who has argued that global warming is “a total, and very expensive, hoax,” visited Florida to survey the wreckage, but told reporters that the storm had not caused him to rethink his decision to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate accords. He expressed no interest in the I.P. C.C. report beyond asking “who drew it.” (The answer is ninety-one researchers from forty countries.) He later claimed that his “natural instinct” for science made him confident that the climate would soon “change back.” A month later, Trump blamed the fires in California on “gross mismanagement of forests.”

Human beings have always experienced wars and truces, crashes and recoveries, famines and terrorism. We've endured tyrants and outlasted perverse ideologies. Climate change is different. As a team of scientists recently pointed out in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, the physical shifts we're inflicting on the planet will “extend longer than the entire history of human civilization thus far.”

The poorest and most vulnerable will pay the highest price. But already, even in the most affluent areas, many of us hesitate to walk across a grassy meadow because of the proliferation of ticks bearing Lyme disease which have come with the hot weather; we have found ourselves unable to swim off beaches, because jellyfish, which thrive as warming seas kill off other marine life, have taken over the water. The planet's diameter will remain eight thousand miles, and its surface will still cover two hundred million square miles. But the earth, for humans, has begun to shrink, under our feet and in our minds.

“Climate change,” like “urban sprawl” or “gun violence,” has become such a familiar term that we tend to read past it. But exactly what we’ve been up to should fill us with awe. During the past two hundred years, we have burned immense quantities of coal and gas and oil—in car motors, basement furnaces, power plants, steel mills—and, as we have done so, carbon atoms have combined with oxygen atoms in the air to produce carbon dioxide. This, along with other gases like methane, has trapped heat that would otherwise have radiated back out to space.

There are at least four other episodes in the earth’s half-billion-year history of animal life when CO₂ has poured into the atmosphere in greater volumes, but perhaps never at greater speeds. Even at the end of the Permian Age, when huge injections of CO₂ from volcanoes burning through coal deposits culminated in “The Great Dying,” the CO₂ content of the atmosphere grew at perhaps a tenth of the current pace. Two centuries ago, the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere was two hundred and seventy-five parts per million; it has now topped four hundred parts per million and is rising more than two parts per million each year. The extra heat that we trap near the planet every day is equivalent to the heat from four hundred thousand bombs the size of the one that was dropped on Hiroshima.

As a result, in the past thirty years we’ve seen all twenty of the hottest years ever recorded. The melting of ice caps and glaciers and the rising levels of our oceans and seas, initially predicted for the end of the century, have occurred decades early. “I’ve never been at . . . a climate conference where people say ‘that happened slower than I thought it would,’ ” Christina Hulbe, a New Zealand climatologist, told a reporter for *Grist* last year. This past May, a team of scientists from the University of Illinois reported that there was a thirty-five-per-cent chance that, because of unexpectedly high economic growth rates, the U.N.’s “worst-case scenario” for global warming was too optimistic. “We are now truly in uncharted territory,” David Carlson, the former director of the World Meteorological Organization’s climate-research division, said in the spring of 2017, after data showed that the previous year had broken global heat records.

We are off the literal charts as well. In August, I visited Greenland, where, one day, with a small group of scientists and activists, I took a boat from the village of Narsaq to a glacier on a nearby fjord. As we made our way across a broad bay, I glanced up at the electronic chart above the captain’s wheel, where a blinking icon showed that we were a mile inland. The captain explained that the chart was from five years ago, when the water around us was still ice. The American glaciologist Jason Box, who organized the trip, chose our landing site. “We called this place the Eagle Glacier because of its shape,” he said. The name, too, was five years old. “The head and the wings of the bird have melted away. I don’t know what we should call it now, but the eagle is dead.”

There were two poets among the crew, Aka Niviana, who is Greenlandic, and Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, from the low-lying Marshall Islands, in the Pacific, where “king tides” recently washed through living rooms and unearched graveyards. A small lens of fresh water has supported life on the Marshall Islands’ atolls for millennia, but, as salt water intrudes, breadfruit trees and banana palms wilt and die. As the Greenlandic ice we were gazing at continues to melt, the water will drown Jetnil-Kijiner’s homeland. About a third of the carbon responsible for these changes has come from the United States.

A few days after the boat trip, the two poets and I accompanied the scientists to another fjord, where they needed to change the memory card on a camera that tracks the retreat of the ice sheet. As we took off for the flight home over the snout of a giant glacier, an eight-story chunk calved off the face and crashed into the ocean. I'd never seen anything quite like it for sheer power—the waves rose twenty feet as it plunged into the dark water. You could imagine the same waves washing through the Marshalls. You could almost sense the ice elevating the ocean by a sliver—along the seafront in Mumbai, which already floods on a stormy day, and at the Battery in Manhattan, where the seawall rises just a few feet above the water.

When I say the world has begun to shrink, this is what I mean. Until now, human beings have been spreading, from our beginnings in Africa, out across the globe—slowly at first, and then much faster. But a period of contraction is setting in as we lose parts of the habitable earth. Sometimes our retreat will be hasty and violent; the effort to evacuate the blazing California towns along narrow roads was so chaotic that many people died in their cars. But most of the pullback will be slower, starting along the world's coastlines. Each year, another twenty-four thousand people abandon Vietnam's sublimely fertile Mekong Delta as crop fields are polluted with salt. As sea ice melts along the Alaskan coast, there is nothing to protect towns, cities, and native villages from the waves. In Mexico Beach, Florida, which was all but eradicated by Hurricane Michael, a resident told the *Washington Post*, "The older people can't rebuild; it's too late in their lives. Who is going to be left? Who is going to care?"

In one week at the end of last year, I read accounts from Louisiana, where government officials were finalizing a plan to relocate thousands of people threatened by the rising Gulf ("Not everybody is going to live where they are now and continue their way of life, and that is a terrible, and emotional, reality to face," one state official said); from Hawaii, where, according to a new study, thirty-eight miles of coastal roads will become impassable in the next few decades; and from Jakarta, a city with a population of ten million, where a rising Java Sea had flooded the streets. In the first days of 2018, a nor'easter flooded downtown Boston; dumpsters and cars floated through the financial district. "If anyone wants to question global warming, just see where the flood zones are," Marty Walsh, the mayor of Boston, told reporters. "Some of those zones did not flood thirty years ago."

According to a study from the United Kingdom's National Oceanography Centre last summer, the damage caused by rising sea levels will cost the world as much as fourteen trillion dollars a year by 2100, if the U.N. targets aren't met. "Like it or not, we will retreat from most of the world's non-urban shorelines in the not very distant future," Orrin Pilkey, an expert on sea levels at Duke University, wrote in his book "Retreat from a Rising Sea." "We can plan now and retreat in a strategic and calculated fashion, or we can worry about it later and retreat in tactical disarray in response to devastating storms. In other words, we can walk away methodically, or we can flee in panic."

But it's not clear where to go. As with the rising seas, rising temperatures have begun to narrow the margins of our inhabitation, this time in the hot continental interiors. Nine of the ten deadliest heat waves in human history have occurred since 2000. In India, the rise in temperature since 1960 (about one degree Fahrenheit) has increased the chance of mass heat-related deaths by a hundred and fifty per cent. The summer of 2018 was the hottest ever measured in certain areas.

For a couple of days in June, temperatures in cities in Pakistan and Iran peaked at slightly above a hundred and twenty-nine degrees Fahrenheit, the highest reliably recorded temperatures ever measured. The same heat wave, nearer the shore of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, combined triple-digit temperatures with soaring humidity levels to produce a heat index of more than a hundred and forty degrees Fahrenheit. June 26th was the warmest night in history, with the mercury in one Omani city remaining above a hundred and nine degrees Fahrenheit until morning. In July, a heat wave in Montreal killed more than seventy people, and Death Valley, which often sets American records, registered the hottest month ever seen on our planet. Africa recorded its highest temperature in June, the Korean Peninsula in July, and Europe in August. The *Times* reported that, in Algeria, employees at a petroleum plant walked off the job as the temperature neared a hundred and twenty-four degrees. “We couldn’t keep up,” one worker told the reporter. “It was impossible to do the work.”

This was no illusion; some of the world is becoming too hot for humans. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, increased heat and humidity have reduced the amount of work people can do outdoors by ten per cent, a figure that is predicted to double by 2050. About a decade ago, Australian and American researchers, setting out to determine the highest survivable so-called “wet-bulb” temperature, concluded that when temperatures passed thirty-five degrees Celsius (ninety-five degrees Fahrenheit) and the humidity was higher than ninety per cent, even in “well-ventilated shaded conditions,” sweating slows down, and humans can survive only “for a few hours, the exact length of time being determined by individual physiology.”

As the planet warms, a crescent-shaped area encompassing parts of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the North China Plain, where about 1.5 billion people (a fifth of humanity) live, is at high risk of such temperatures in the next half century. Across this belt, extreme heat waves that currently happen once every generation could, by the end of the century, become “annual events with temperatures close to the threshold for several weeks each year, which could lead to famine and mass migration.” By 2070, tropical regions that now get one day of truly oppressive humid heat a year can expect between a hundred and two hundred and fifty days, if the current levels of greenhouse-gas emissions continue. According to Radley Horton, a climate scientist at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, most people would “run into terrible problems” before then. The effects, he added, will be “transformative for all areas of human endeavor—economy, agriculture, military, recreation.”

Humans share the planet with many other creatures, of course. We have already managed to kill off sixty per cent of the world’s wildlife since 1970 by destroying their habitats, and now higher temperatures are starting to take their toll. A new study found that peak-dwelling birds were going extinct; as temperatures climb, the birds can no longer find relief on higher terrain. Coral reefs, rich in biodiversity, may soon be a tenth of their current size.

As some people flee humidity and rising sea levels, others will be forced to relocate in order to find enough water to survive. In late 2017, a study led by Manoj Joshi, of the University of East Anglia, found that, by 2050, if temperatures rise by two degrees a quarter of the earth will experience serious drought and desertification. The early signs are clear: São Paulo came within days of running out of water last year, as did Cape Town this spring. In the fall, a record drought

in Germany lowered the level of the Elbe to below twenty inches and reduced the corn harvest by forty per cent. The Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research concluded in a recent study that, as the number of days that reach eighty-six degrees Fahrenheit or higher increases, corn and soybean yields across the U.S. grain belt could fall by between twenty-two and forty-nine per cent. We've already overpumped the aquifers that lie beneath most of the world's breadbaskets; without the means to irrigate, we may encounter a repeat of the nineteen-thirties, when droughts and deep plowing led to the Dust Bowl—this time with no way of fixing the problem. Back then, the Okies fled to California, but California is no longer a green oasis. A hundred million trees died in the record drought that gripped the Golden State for much of this decade. The dead limbs helped spread the waves of fire, as scientists earlier this year warned that they could.

Thirty years ago, some believed that warmer temperatures would expand the field of play, turning the Arctic into the new Midwest. As Rex Tillerson, then the C.E.O. of Exxon, cheerfully put it in 2012, "Changes to weather patterns that move crop production areas around—we'll adapt to that." But there is no rich topsoil in the far North; instead, the ground is underlaid with permafrost, which can be found beneath a fifth of the Northern Hemisphere. As the permafrost melts, it releases more carbon into the atmosphere. The thawing layer cracks roads, tilts houses, and uproots trees to create what scientists call "drunken forests." Ninety scientists who released a joint report in 2017 concluded that economic losses from a warming Arctic could approach ninety trillion dollars in the course of the century, considerably outweighing whatever savings may have resulted from shorter shipping routes as the Northwest Passage unfreezes.

Churchill, Manitoba, on the edge of the Hudson Bay, in Canada, is connected to the rest of the country by a single rail line. In the spring of 2017, record floods washed away much of the track. OmniTrax, which owns the line, tried to cancel its contract with the government, declaring what lawyers call a "force majeure," an unforeseen event beyond its responsibility. "To fix things in this era of climate change—well, it's fixed, but you don't count on it being the fix forever," an engineer for the company explained at a media briefing in July. This summer, the Canadian government reopened the rail at a cost of a hundred and seventeen million dollars—about a hundred and ninety thousand dollars per Churchill resident. There is no reason to think the fix will last, and every reason to believe that our world will keep contracting.

All this has played out more or less as scientists warned, albeit faster. What has defied expectations is the slowness of the response. The climatologist James Hansen testified before Congress about the dangers of human-caused climate change thirty years ago. Since then, carbon emissions have increased with each year except 2009 (the height of the global recession) and the newest data show that 2018 will set another record. Simple inertia and the human tendency to prioritize short-term gains have played a role, but the fossil-fuel industry's contribution has been by far the most damaging. Alex Steffen, an environmental writer, coined the term "predatory delay" to describe "the blocking or slowing of needed change, in order to make money off unsustainable, unjust systems in the meantime." The behavior of the oil companies, which have pulled off perhaps the most consequential deception in mankind's history, is a prime example.

As journalists at InsideClimate News and the Los Angeles *Times* have revealed since 2015, Exxon, the world's largest oil company, understood that its product was contributing to climate change a decade before Hansen testified. In July, 1977, James F. Black, one of Exxon's senior

scientists, addressed many of the company's top leaders in New York, explaining the earliest research on the greenhouse effect. "There is general scientific agreement that the most likely manner in which mankind is influencing the global climate is through carbon-dioxide release from the burning of fossil fuels," he said, according to a written version of the speech which was later recorded, and which was obtained by InsideClimate News. In 1978, speaking to the company's executives, Black estimated that a doubling of the carbon-dioxide concentration in the atmosphere would increase average global temperatures by between two and three degrees Celsius (5.4 degrees Fahrenheit), and as much as ten degrees Celsius (eighteen degrees Fahrenheit) at the poles.

Exxon spent millions of dollars researching the problem. It outfitted an oil tanker, the Esso Atlantic, with CO₂ detectors to measure how fast the oceans could absorb excess carbon, and hired mathematicians to build sophisticated climate models. By 1982, they had concluded that even the company's earlier estimates were probably too low. In a private corporate primer, they wrote that heading off global warming and "potentially catastrophic events" would "require major reductions in fossil fuel combustion."

An investigation by the *L.A. Times* revealed that Exxon executives took these warnings seriously. Ken Croasdale, a senior researcher for the company's Canadian subsidiary, led a team that investigated the positive and negative effects of warming on Exxon's Arctic operations. In 1991, he found that greenhouse gases were rising due to the burning of fossil fuels. "Nobody disputes this fact," he said. The following year, he wrote that "global warming can only help lower exploration and development costs" in the Beaufort Sea. Drilling season in the Arctic, he correctly predicted, would increase from two months to as many as five months. At the same time, he said, the rise in the sea level could threaten onshore infrastructure and create bigger waves that would damage offshore drilling structures. Thawing permafrost could make the earth buckle and slide under buildings and pipelines. As a result of these findings, Exxon and other major oil companies began laying plans to move into the Arctic, and started to build their new drilling platforms with higher decks, to compensate for the anticipated rises in sea level.

The implications of the exposés were startling. Not only did Exxon and other companies know that scientists like Hansen were right; they used his *NASA* climate models to figure out how low their drilling costs in the Arctic would eventually fall. Had Exxon and its peers passed on what they knew to the public, geological history would look very different today. The problem of climate change would not be solved, but the crisis would, most likely, now be receding. In 1989, an international ban on chlorine-containing man-made chemicals that had been eroding the earth's ozone layer went into effect. Last month, researchers reported that the ozone layer was on track to fully heal by 2060. But that was a relatively easy fight, because the chemicals in question were not central to the world's economy, and the manufacturers had readily available substitutes to sell. In the case of global warming, the culprit is fossil fuel, the most lucrative commodity on earth, and so the companies responsible took a different tack.

A document uncovered by the *L.A. Times* showed that, a month after Hansen's testimony, in 1988, an unnamed Exxon "public affairs manager" issued an internal memo recommending that the company "emphasize the uncertainty" in the scientific data about climate change. Within a few years, Exxon, Chevron, Shell, Amoco, and others had joined the Global Climate Coalition,

“to coordinate business participation in the international policy debate” on global warming. The G.C.C. coordinated with the National Coal Association and the American Petroleum Institute on a campaign, via letters and telephone calls, to prevent a tax on fossil fuels, and produced a video in which the agency insisted that more carbon dioxide would “end world hunger” by promoting plant growth. With such efforts, it ginned up opposition to the Kyoto Protocol, the first global initiative to address climate change.

In October, 1997, two months before the Kyoto meeting, Lee Raymond, Exxon’s president and C.E.O., who had overseen the science department that in the nineteen-eighties produced the findings about climate change, gave a speech in Beijing to the World Petroleum Congress, in which he maintained that the earth was actually cooling. The idea that cutting fossil-fuel emissions could have an effect on the climate, he said, defied common sense. “It is highly unlikely that the temperature in the middle of the next century will be affected whether policies are enacted now, or twenty years from now,” he went on. Exxon’s own scientists had already shown each of these premises to be wrong.

On a December morning in 1997 at the Kyoto Convention Center, after a long night of negotiation, the developed nations reached a tentative accord on climate change. Exhausted delegates lay slumped on couches in the corridor, or on the floor in their suits, but most of them were grinning. Imperfect and limited though the agreement was, it seemed that momentum had gathered behind fighting climate change. But as I watched the delegates cheering and clapping, an American lobbyist, who had been coordinating much of the opposition to the accord, turned to me and said, “I can’t wait to get back to Washington, where we’ve got this under control.”

He was right. On January 29, 2001, nine days after George W. Bush was inaugurated, Lee Raymond visited his old friend Vice-President Dick Cheney, who had just stepped down as the C.E.O. of the oil-drilling giant Halliburton. Cheney helped persuade Bush to abandon his campaign promise to treat carbon dioxide as a pollutant. Within the year, Frank Luntz, a Republican consultant for Bush, had produced an internal memo that made a doctrine of the strategy that the G.C.C. had hit on a decade earlier. “Voters believe that there is no consensus about global warming within the scientific community,” Luntz wrote in the memo, which was obtained by the Environmental Working Group, a Washington-based organization. “Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled, their views about global warming will change accordingly. Therefore, you need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue in the debate.”

The strategy of muddling the public’s impression of climate science has proved to be highly effective. In 2017, polls found that almost ninety per cent of Americans did not know that there was a scientific consensus on global warming. Raymond retired in 2006, after the company posted the biggest corporate profits in history, and his final annual salary was four hundred million dollars. His successor, Rex Tillerson, signed a five-hundred-billion-dollar deal to explore for oil in the rapidly thawing Russian Arctic, and in 2012 was awarded the Russian Order of Friendship. In 2016, Tillerson, at his last shareholder meeting before he briefly joined the Trump Administration as Secretary of State, said, “The world is going to have to continue using fossil fuels, whether they like it or not.”

It's by no means clear whether Exxon's deception and obfuscation are illegal. The company has long maintained that it "has tracked the scientific consensus on climate change, and its research on the issue has been published in publicly available peer-reviewed journals." The First Amendment preserves one's right to lie, although, in October, New York State Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood filed suit against Exxon for lying to investors, which *is* a crime. What is certain is that the industry's campaign cost us the efforts of the human generation that might have made the crucial difference in the climate fight.

Exxon's behavior is shocking, but not entirely surprising. Philip Morris lied about the effects of cigarette smoking before the government stood up to Big Tobacco. The mystery that historians will have to unravel is what went so wrong in our governance and our culture that we have done, essentially, nothing to stand up to the fossil-fuel industry.

There are undoubtedly myriad intellectual, psychological, and political sources for our inaction, but I cannot help thinking that the influence of Ayn Rand, the Russian émigré novelist, may have played a role. Rand's disquisitions on the "virtue of selfishness" and unbridled capitalism are admired by many American politicians and economists—Paul Ryan, Tillerson, Mike Pompeo, Andrew Puzder, and Donald Trump, among them. Trump, who has called "The Fountainhead" his favorite book, said that the novel "relates to business and beauty and life and inner emotions. That book relates to . . . everything." Long after Rand's death, in 1982, the libertarian gospel of the novel continues to sway our politics: Government is bad. Solidarity is a trap. Taxes are theft. The Koch brothers, whose enormous fortune derives in large part from the mining and refining of oil and gas, have peddled a similar message, broadening the efforts that Exxon-funded groups like the Global Climate Coalition spearheaded in the late nineteen-eighties.

Fossil-fuel companies and electric utilities, often led by Koch-linked groups, have put up fierce resistance to change. In Kansas, Koch allies helped turn mandated targets for renewable energy into voluntary commitments. In Wisconsin, Scott Walker's administration prohibited state land officials from talking about climate change. In North Carolina, the state legislature, in conjunction with real-estate interests, effectively banned policymakers from using scientific estimates of sea-level rise in the coastal-planning process. Earlier this year, Americans for Prosperity, the most important Koch front group, waged a campaign against new bus routes and light-rail service in Tennessee, invoking human liberty. "If someone has the freedom to go where they want, do what they want, they're not going to choose public transit," a spokeswoman for the group explained. In Florida, an anti-renewable-subsidy ballot measure invoked the "Rights of Electricity Consumers Regarding Solar Energy Choice."

Such efforts help explain why, in 2017, the growth of American residential solar installations came to a halt even before March, 2018, when President Trump imposed a thirty-per-cent tariff on solar panels, and why the number of solar jobs fell in the U.S. for the first time since the industry's great expansion began, a decade earlier. In February, at the Department of Energy, Rick Perry—who once skipped his own arraignment on two felony charges, which were eventually dismissed, in order to attend a Koch brothers event—issued a new projection in which he announced that the U.S. would go on emitting carbon at current levels through 2050; this means that our nation would use up all the planet's remaining carbon budget if we plan on

meeting the 1.5-degree target. Skepticism about the scientific consensus, Perry told the media in 2017, is a sign of a “wise, intellectually engaged person.”

Of all the environmental reversals made by the Trump Administration, the most devastating was its decision, last year, to withdraw from the Paris accords, making the U.S., the largest single historical source of carbon, the only nation not engaged in international efforts to control it. As the *Washington Post* reported, the withdrawal was the result of a collaborative venture. Among the anti-government ideologues and fossil-fuel lobbyists responsible was Myron Ebell, who was at Trump’s side in the Rose Garden during the withdrawal announcement, and who, at Frontiers of Freedom, had helped run a “complex influence campaign” in support of the tobacco industry. Ebell is a director of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, which was founded in 1984 to advance “the principles of limited government, free enterprise, and individual liberty,” and which funds the Cooler Heads Coalition, “an informal and ad-hoc group focused on dispelling the myths of global warming,” of which Ebell is the chairman. Also instrumental were the Heartland Institute and the Koch brothers’ Americans for Prosperity. After Trump’s election, these groups sent a letter reminding him of his campaign pledge to pull America out. The C.E.I. ran a TV spot: “Mr. President, don’t listen to the swamp. Keep your promise.” And, despite the objections of most of his advisers, he did. The coalition had used its power to slow us down precisely at the moment when we needed to speed up. As a result, the particular politics of one country for one half-century will have changed the geological history of the earth.

We are on a path to self-destruction, and yet there is nothing inevitable about our fate. Solar panels and wind turbines are now among the least expensive ways to produce energy. Storage batteries are cheaper and more efficient than ever. We could move quickly if we chose to, but we’d need to opt for solidarity and coordination on a global scale. The chances of that look slim. In Russia, the second-largest petrostate after the U.S., Vladimir Putin believes that “climate change could be tied to some global cycles on Earth or even of planetary significance.” Saudi Arabia, the third-largest petrostate, tried to water down the recent I.P.C.C. report. Jair Bolsonaro, the newly elected President of Brazil, has vowed to institute policies that would dramatically accelerate the deforestation of the Amazon, the world’s largest rain forest. Meanwhile, Exxon recently announced a plan to spend a million dollars—about a hundredth of what the company spends each month in search of new oil and gas—to back the fight for a carbon tax of forty dollars a ton. At a press conference, some of the I.P.C.C.’s authors laughed out loud at the idea that such a tax would, this late in the game, have sufficient impact.

The possibility of swift change lies in people coming together in movements large enough to shift the Zeitgeist. In recent years, despairing at the slow progress, I’ve been one of many to protest pipelines and to call attention to Big Oil’s deceptions. The movement is growing. Since 2015, when four hundred thousand people marched in the streets of New York before the Paris climate talks, activists—often led by indigenous groups and communities living on the front lines of climate change—have blocked pipelines, forced the cancellation of new coal mines, helped keep the major oil companies out of the American Arctic, and persuaded dozens of cities to commit to one-hundred-per-cent renewable energy.

Each of these efforts has played out in the shadow of the industry’s unflagging campaign to maximize profits and prevent change. Voters in Washington State were initially supportive of a

measure on last month's ballot which would have imposed the nation's first carbon tax—a modest fee that won support from such figures as Bill Gates. But the major oil companies spent record sums to defeat it. In Colorado, a similarly modest referendum that would have forced frackers to move their rigs away from houses and schools went down after the oil industry outspent citizen groups forty to one. This fall, California's legislators committed to using only renewable energy by 2045, which was a great victory in the world's fifth-largest economy. But the governor refused to stop signing new permits for oil wells, even in the middle of the state's largest cities, where asthma rates are high.

New kinds of activism keep springing up. In Sweden this fall, a one-person school boycott by a fifteen-year-old girl named Greta Thunberg helped galvanize attention across Scandinavia. At the end of October, a new British group, Extinction Rebellion—its name both a reflection of the dire science and a potentially feisty response—announced plans for a campaign of civil disobedience. Last week, fifty-one young people were arrested in Nancy Pelosi's office for staging a sit-in, demanding that the Democrats embrace a “Green New Deal” that would address the global climate crisis with policies to create jobs in renewable energy. They may have picked a winning issue: several polls have shown that even Republicans favor more government support for solar panels. This battle is epic and undecided. If we miss the two-degree target, we will fight to prevent a rise of three degrees, and then four. It's a long escalator down to Hell.

Last June, I went to Cape Canaveral to watch Elon Musk's Falcon 9 rocket lift off. When the moment came, it was as I'd always imagined: the clouds of steam venting in the minutes before launch, the immensely bright column of flame erupting. With remarkable slowness, the rocket began to rise, the grip of gravity yielding to the force of its engines. It is the most awesome technological spectacle human beings have produced.

Musk, Jeff Bezos, and Richard Branson are among the billionaires who have spent some of their fortunes on space travel—a last-ditch effort to expand the human zone of habitability. In November, 2016, Stephen Hawking gave humanity a deadline of a thousand years to leave Earth. Six months later, he revised the timetable to a century. In June, 2017, he told an audience that “spreading out may be the only thing that saves us from ourselves.” He continued, “Earth is under threat from so many areas that it is difficult for me to be positive.”

But escaping the wreckage is, almost certainly, a fantasy. Even if astronauts did cross the thirty-four million miles to Mars, they'd need to go underground to survive there. To what end? The multimillion-dollar attempts at building a “biosphere” in the Southwestern desert in 1991 ended in abject failure. Kim Stanley Robinson, the author of a trilogy of novels about the colonization of Mars, recently called such projects a “moral hazard.” “People think if we fuck up here on Earth we can always go to Mars or the stars,” he said. “It's pernicious.”

The dream of interplanetary colonization also distracts us from acknowledging the unbearable beauty of the planet we already inhabit. The day before the launch, I went on a tour of the vast grounds of the Kennedy Space Center with NASA's public-affairs officer, Greg Harland, and the biologist Don Dankert. I'd been warned beforehand by other NASA officials not to broach the topic of global warming; in any event, NASA's predicament became obvious as soon as we climbed up on a dune overlooking Launch Complex 39, from which the Apollo missions left for

the moon, and where any future Mars mission would likely begin. The launchpad is a quarter of a mile from the ocean—a perfect location, in the sense that, if something goes wrong, the rockets will fall into the sea, but not so perfect, since that sea is now rising. *NASA* started worrying about this sometime after the turn of the century, and formed a Dune Vulnerability Team.

In 2012, Hurricane Sandy, even at a distance of a couple of hundred miles, churned up waves strong enough to break through the barrier of dunes along the Atlantic shoreline of the Space Center and very nearly swamped the launch complexes. Dankert had millions of cubic yards of sand excavated from a nearby Air Force base, and saw to it that a hundred and eighty thousand native shrubs were planted to hold the sand in place. So far, the new dunes have yielded little ground to storms and hurricanes. But what impressed me more than the dunes was the men's deep appreciation of their landscape. "Kennedy Space Center shares real estate with the Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge," Harland said. "We use less than ten per cent for our industrial purposes."

"When you look at the beach, it's like eighteen-seventies Florida—the longest undisturbed stretch on the Atlantic Coast," Dankert said. "We launch people into space from the middle of a wildlife refuge. That's amazing."

The two men talked for a long time about their favorite local species—the brown pelicans that were skimming the ocean, the Florida scrub jays. While rebuilding the dunes, they carefully bucket-trapped and relocated dozens of gopher tortoises. Before I left, they drove me half an hour across the swamp to a pond near the Space Center's headquarters building, just to show me some alligators. Menacing snouts were visible beneath the water, but I was more interested in the sign that had been posted at each corner of the pond explaining that the alligators were native species, not pets. "Putting any food in the water for any reason will cause them to become accustomed to people and possibly dangerous," it went on, adding that, if that should happen, "they must be removed and destroyed."

Something about the sign moved me tremendously. It would have been easy enough to poison the pond, just as it would have been easy enough to bulldoze the dunes without a thought for the tortoises. But *NASA* hadn't done so, because of a long series of laws that draw on an emerging understanding of who we are. In 1867, John Muir, one of the first Western environmentalists, walked from Louisville, Kentucky, to Florida, a trip that inspired his first heretical thoughts about the meaning of being human. "The world, we are told, was made especially for man—a presumption not supported by all the facts," Muir wrote in his diary. "A numerous class of men are painfully astonished whenever they find anything, living or dead, in all God's universe, which they cannot eat or render in some way what they call useful to themselves." Muir's proof that this self-centeredness was misguided was the alligator, which he could hear roaring in the Florida swamp as he camped nearby, and which clearly caused man mostly trouble. But these animals were wonderful nonetheless, Muir decided—remarkable creatures perfectly adapted to their landscape. "I have better thoughts of those alligators now that I've seen them at home," he wrote. In his diary, he addressed the creatures directly: "Honorable representatives of the great saurian of an older creation, may you long enjoy your lilies and rushes, and be blessed now and then with a mouthful of terror-stricken man by way of dainty."

That evening, Harland and Dankert drew a crude map to help me find the beach, north of Patrick Air Force Base and south of the spot where, in 1965, Barbara Eden emerged from her bottle to greet her astronaut at the start of the TV series “I Dream of Jeannie.” There, they said, I could wait out the hours until the pre-dawn rocket launch and perhaps spot a loggerhead sea turtle coming ashore to lay her eggs. And so I sat on the sand. The beach was deserted, and under a near-full moon I watched as a turtle trundled from the sea and lumbered deliberately to a spot near the dune, where she used her powerful legs to excavate a pit. She spent an hour laying eggs, and even from thirty yards away you could hear her heavy breathing in between the whispers of the waves. And then, having covered her clutch, she tracked back to the ocean, in the fashion of others like her for the past hundred and twenty million years.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/11/26/how-extreme-weather-is-shrinking-the-planet>

November 28, 2018

Northwest Tribal Leaders Testify in Opposition to Canadian Pipeline Expansion

Earthjustice

WASHINGTON - Opposition to the Trans Mountain pipeline from Coast Salish Tribes on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border continued today with indigenous people of the Salish Sea region testifying before the Canadian National Energy Board. Four U.S. Coast Salish Tribes — the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Tulalip Tribes, Lummi Nation, and Suquamish Tribe — shared their concerns alongside Canadian First Nations as part of a Canadian federal government review of the proposed pipeline expansion.

The Trans Mountain pipeline expansion would dramatically increase the number of oil tankers moving crude oil shipments through the Salish Sea, greatly increasing the risk of oil spills. An oil tanker disaster would unleash toxic pollution into a sensitive marine environment and devastate struggling Southern Resident Killer Whales, which hold great cultural significance for Tribes. The project also threatens to violate Tribal communities’ treaty-reserved fishing and shellfishing practices.

“The Suquamish people have shared the waters of the Salish Sea for thousands of years,” said Suquamish Chairman Leonard Forsman. “We have an obligation to protect our people from increasing threats of vessel traffic and oil spills that may irreparably damage orcas, salmon, shellfish, and our cultural lifeways. It is our duty as stewards to maintain clean water and a healthy ecosystem by opposing the Trans Mountain pipeline.”

“The Coast Salish people are separated by an international boundary, but the reality is that our people have lived as a connected whole throughout the waterways of the Salish Sea since time immemorial. Our waters are sacred to us, and our culture is dependent on the integrity of these waters. The Trans Mountain pipeline is a threat to our future,” said Marie Zackuse, Tulalip Tribes Chairwoman.

The killer whales of the Salish Sea and the Indigenous Coast Salish cultures have a common bond. “Our connection to the killer whale is personal, is relational, and goes back countless generations,” according to Lummi Chairman Jay Julius. “Our name for them, qwe ‘lhol mechen, means our relations below the waves.”

Lummi Nation hereditary Chief Bill James (“Tsilixw”) offered testimony at the hearing. “We all saw the grieving killer whale mother carrying her dead calf,” Chief James said. “These are messages from our relatives below the waves. It is our Xa Xalh Xechnging (sacred obligation) to listen and learn from them, and honor them.”

“Our Coast Salish way of life, economies, culture, and values are intertwined throughout the Salish Sea. Our Coast Salish people share bloodlines, cultures, and heritage, and like the water, salmon, and her resources, it recognizes no border,” said Swinomish Tribal Chairman Brian Cladoosby. “In my 34 years of serving at Swinomish Senate and in my lifetime as a fisherman, I see a fatal future ahead of us. Unless we address the elephant in the room together as governments and citizens, that the reality is the Salish Sea is dying, she has too much pressure from growth, pollution, and vessel traffic, and we need to take bold action together. Just as the salmon and killer whales don’t recognize a border, neither will a fatal oil spill.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, stated, “We are absolutely grateful to our relatives for making the trip north today to stand with First Nations in B.C. in support of Salish Sea killer whales, whose continued existence will be greatly threatened if the Trans Mountain pipeline is expanded. We have a responsibility to do everything in our power to protect these whales, and we will continue to do so, no matter what it takes.”

BACKGROUND

The proposed expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline would be built alongside the existing line, connecting Alberta tar sands oil fields to an oil-shipping terminal in Burnaby, B.C. The project would roughly triple the volume of oil delivered via pipeline, from 300,000 barrels per day to 890,000 barrels per day. The tar sands crude would be placed on oil tankers and shipped through the Salish Sea, running through the U.S.-Canada maritime border.

Earlier this year, the Canadian Federal Court of Appeal overturned prior approval of the crude oil pipeline expansion, finding that the Canadian government had failed to adequately consult with and address the concerns of First Nations opposed to the project. The Court also faulted the National Energy Board for ignoring the impacts of marine vessel traffic, including undisputed and grave threats to imperiled southern resident killer whales (protected as endangered species in both the U.S. and Canada). The proposed project is now owned by the Canadian government, after a purchase from Kinder Morgan. The National Energy Board will make a recommendation to approve or reject the pipeline in the spring of 2019; the final project decision lies with the Canadian federal government and the Trudeau Administration.

###

[Earthjustice](#) is a non-profit public interest law firm dedicated to protecting the magnificent places, natural resources, and wildlife of this earth, and to defending the right of all people to a healthy environment. We bring about far-reaching change by enforcing and strengthening environmental laws on behalf of hundreds of organizations, coalitions and communities.

Contact:

Leonard Forsman, Suquamish Chairman, 360-340-0986, lforsman@suquamish.nsn.us
Tony Hillaire, Lummi Nation Chief of Staff, 360-393-0890, AnthonyH@Lummi-nsn.gov
Debra Lekanoff, Swinomish Governmental Affairs, 360-391-5296, dlekanoff@swinomish.nsn.us
Francesca Hillery, Tulalip Tribes, 206-395-4048, fhillery@frogfootcommunications.com
Rebecca Bowe, Earthjustice, 415-217-2093, rbowe@earthjustice.org

<https://www.commondreams.org/newswire/2018/11/28/northwest-tribal-leaders-testify-opposition-canadian-pipeline-expansion>

November 28, 2018

Matri Bhumi Eco-Learning Centre Opens in Bodh Gaya, India

By Raymond Lam
Buddhistdoor Global

The Matri Bhumi Eco-Learning Centre opened in Bodh Gaya this month with an inauguration on 14 November that was attended by Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, Nangzey Dorje of the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee, and Sister Shobha of Pragya Vihar School.

International and local guests attended the inauguration, including young women and schoolchildren who will benefit from the activities and education programs the center will provide.

The center is a project by the Sacred Earth Trust (SET), a Bihar-based non-profit focused on education and sustainability in the heartland of Buddhism. The SET has engaged in teacher training, permaculture courses, women's empowerment sewing projects, building toilets for women in the poor villages, and tree planting around the Bodh Gaya area. Since its founding in 2009, its major objective has been to focus on reducing plastic pollution through teaching sustainability and up-cycling.

Throughout its decade of educational activities, outreach projects, and the development of the Matri Bhumi Eco-Learning Centre, the SET has been supported by various individuals and organizations like the UN Development Program, Global Environmental Facility, and Centre for Environmental Education in New Delhi.

SET founder Lillian Sum told Buddhistdoor Global: “The attendees were asked to reflect and write their aspirations for planet Earth and put them inside the stuffed plastic bottle bricks for

their contribution toward the opening day and to support our Eco-Learning Centre. The bottles were then made into a bench next to a flower tree planted by our special guest, Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche.”

The inauguration also held a live demonstration of making compressed plastic blocks and affordable earthquake-resilient technologies. Workshops were also given on bamboo earth, “earth-bags” construction, zero-waste solutions, water filtration systems, less wasteful irrigation techniques, and gardening.

“The next phase will be to engage local schools and teachers in environmental education focusing on disseminating knowledge on practical solutions through creative learning workshops,” said Lillian. “Our trust also hopes to develop an online portal to engage and link local communities and schools. We need to recruit specialists in various fields of ecology and solutions based approaches for dialogue. We plan to host even more workshops to explore expertise and solutions for the practical development of surrounding communities around Bodh Gaya.”

“The activities we host at our Eco-Learning Centre are worthy exercises in mindfulness about the needs of nature and the underprivileged in Bodh Gaya, Bihar, and beyond,” she explained. “They address how we can be part of a virtuous cycle of cause and effect for our actions, and how we can transform from harming the planet to being of benefit to ourselves, others, and future generations. The planet’s pollution and climate change issues require a multi-level approach to be effectively ameliorated. Finally, as a Buddhist community we can be proactive and collaborate with non-profits and social entrepreneurships to reduce and eventually neutralize local sources of pollution.”

Bihar is the most recent state in India to become plastic free, and from 14 December it will become a criminal offence to use disposable plastics such as bags, straws, and cups. Lillian has also invited organizations to partner with Sacred Earth Trust.

“Soon, on multiple platforms, we will be sharing with a wider audience ecologically sustainable solutions which can be adopted on a small and local scale,” she said. “We welcome collaboration and partnerships to work with us to transform Bodh Gaya.

See more: [Sacred Earth Trust](#)

<https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/matri-bhumi-eco-learning-centre-opens-in-bodh-gaya-india>

November 29, 2018

Can we live in a world without a Sabbath?

By Norman Wirzba
ABC Religion and Ethics

Who is the human being, the *anthropos* (to use the Greek term), that now defines and determines the world? Do humanity's world-shaping powers compel a rethinking of "the human" as such?

The *Anthropocene* marks the moment when (some) humans became the dominant force in planetary history, responsible for the widespread alteration of the world's land, ocean and atmospheric systems. In the immediately preceding geologic epoch, the *Holocene* (beginning roughly 12,000 years ago), a relatively stable and predictable nature was presumed to fund, dwarf and limit human power. In the Anthropocene, however, the situation is nearly the reverse: human power and ambition are now a primary, determining influence shaping Earth's increasingly unpredictable future. Though planetary systems and biological processes are still clearly at work, their expressions and effects can no longer be understood apart from human activity. Ranging from the cellular to the atmospheric levels, there is no place or process on Earth that does not reflect humanity's technological prowess and its economic reach.

This makes the Anthropocene an unprecedented event of geological and world-historical significance. If (some) human beings are now the primary drivers not just of their own histories but also those of other species and the planet as a whole, then it is of the utmost importance that we submit this power to rigorous examination. So much — perhaps everything — is at stake.

As is becoming clear, the dawning of the Anthropocene, while foregrounding the ascendance and dominance of human power in the world, is at the same time creating the conditions — catastrophic climate events, sea-level rise, mass species extinction, deforestation and desertification, the creation of climate refugees, new disease vectors, fear-inspired apocalyptic imaginations, to name a few — that threaten to frustrate that power and undermine the life it influences.

While there is clearly much to celebrate in the technological innovations and economic efficiencies that have produced unparalleled comforts and opportunities for many, is it not also the case that the *telos* of so much of this innovation and efficiency assumes a profound dissatisfaction with, if not contempt for (as reflected in transhumanist, techno-immortality), the very material and practical conditions that make a human life possible at all, and that the paths of "success" (for some) have depended on the theft of indigenous lands and the enslavement of mostly black bodies — a process that Sven Beckert has called, in [*Empire of Cotton*](#), "war capitalism"?

Depending upon one's point of view, the Anthropocene can be characterised as the time when humanity, having finally shed itself of superstition, unreason and fear, now embraces and operationalises its god-like potential to remake the planet and engineer life from the ground up. But it might also be described as the time when the massive machinery invented and deployed to address a longstanding dissatisfaction with the embodied conditions of life revealed a deep disdain for the finitude and fallibility that have heretofore marked the human condition as such. This has produced a strange outcome: the age of humanity's ascendance is also the age of humanity's dissolution.

*

Anthropocene discourses compel us to ask about the point of the exercise of human power. What is this much vaunted power ultimately for? To make an entry into this immense topic, I suggest we start with [Dipesh Chakrabarty's illuminating observation](#): "The mansion of modern freedom stands on an ever-expanding base of fossil-fuel use." Chakrabarty is right to draw our attention to freedom, because *freedom*, as diversely describable as it may be, has been one of the most potent concepts inspiring and organizing the imaginations and institutions of modernity. To fight for freedom is to fight against the various forms of injustice, oppression and inequality that have violated countless numbers of women, children, natives, servants, slaves and transgender people.

So far so good. But what is often overlooked, is that modern conceptions of freedom often presuppose humanity's emancipation from the natural world, and a release from the needs and demands — the physical labour — of embodied life. As Amitav Ghosh describes it in [The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable](#), "Only those people who had thrown off the shackles of their environment were thought to be endowed with historical agency ..."

The realisation of freedom, as here described, entails one's transcending or escaping the material constraints of life. Why be a hunter or gatherer, and thus bound to the rhythms of plant life and animal migration, or a farmer, and thus wrapped up in the care of farm fields and domesticated animals, when one can be a shopper of life's necessities, purchasing and consuming the world on the timing and the terms of one's own choosing? To be free is to be exempt from the muscle work of knowing and maintaining the contexts of one's livelihood. Coal, oil and gas have been the fuels powering the machinery enabling humanity's escape.

To inhabit an Anthropocene consciousness is to realise that the desire to escape has come at a high cost — namely, the creation of a diminished and degraded world. The accelerated burning of the fossil fuels that have and continue to build the mansions of freedom (for some), now threatens the long-term viability of future building (for many). Climate change, deforestation, desertification and species extinctions, along with the many catastrophic disruptions and injustices within human communities that follow in their wake, compel us to consider the possibility that the pursuit of freedom, essential and fundamental as it is, needs to be rethought within a larger horizon of what a human being is and what the aims of a properly human life might be. What is a human life for, and what end does freedom serve? Can we know if and when an authentic realisation of a distinctly human life has occurred?

To answer these questions, I propose that we turn to two foundational religious texts that speak to the meaning and purpose of life. The opening chapters of Genesis provide an ideal context for the exploration of the limits and potential of freedom, and thus also the identity and vocation of a human life. Here we find two texts on the creation of the world that have long exercised human imaginations. They continue to speak to readers, not because they give anything like a scientific account of how the world began, but because they give accounts of why life exists at all and what it is ultimately for.

*

In the first — and in what can fairly be described as a poem in praise of the order, dynamism and fecundity of the world — God speaks the world into being the differentiated and diverse sort of reality that it is. Over the course of seven days, light is separated from darkness, earth from the heavens, and land from sea, with all the fertility and profusion of plant and animal creatures coming to be in their midst. The focus of this text has most often centred on day six, because this is the day on which human beings appear. The creation of human beings is unique, because unlike what is said of other creatures, humans are created in the image of God:

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26).

A mountain of commentary has been devoted to this text. What does the *imago Dei* refer to, and what sort of power does it inspire and legitimate? What is the point, as the text further elaborates, of being fruitful in number and subduing the earth (1:28)?

The responses to these questions have been diverse and numerous. What I wish to highlight, however, is this passage's role in the development of various strands of [human exceptionalism](#), and its deployment to inspire and warrant the modern quest to control nature and engineer life. As historians such as [Peter Harrison](#) and [Rémi Brague](#) have argued, the scientific desire to know the world, and the technological obsession to remake the world, can be understood as a modern, often secular, variant on the desire to restore human beings to their divine-like nature. To recover the *imago Dei*, on this reading, means to acquire the knowledge and develop the power that liberates people from the physical exertion that acquaints them with the limits and the needs of embodied life. It puts them on a path to what ecomodernists have described as a *good Anthropocene* — a path on which catastrophes are engineered away and human freedoms and creativity flower.

The desire to rid people of disease, hunger and so much misery and toil is surely commendable. But the desire to assume a god-like position in the world is also supremely dangerous, because it so often results in the possessing and instrumentalizing of people and places alike. Put in terms of the Genesis text that gave us the *imago Dei*, it can lead to the presumption, pride and power that eventually leads God to say to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence" (6:13). When people elevate themselves above what can be termed their creaturely, finite and needy condition, as when they seek to be exempt from the care of others and their places, they also set in motion patterns of behaviour that will inevitably violate others and their ability to be.

Freedom, in this context, means humanity's emancipation from the needs and nurture of creaturely life together. It seeks an autonomous and autarchic position in the world, a position in which the freedom to be is best realised in the power to be alone and to enjoy life according to the terms of one's own choosing. The construction of the tower of Babel, a tower that would elevate humans to the heavens (11:4), and thus position them to obliterate the distinction

between the human and the divine, was but an early expression of the techno-utopic dream that leads to the Anthropocene.

*

Scripture's second creation account begins in a garden with the divine creator thoroughly immersed in the delights of soil. With knees on the ground and hands in the dirt, God scoops up soil (*adamah*), kisses it and breathes into it so as to make the first human being (*adam*). In this story, creatures come to be and flourish because God relates to them as a gardener who plants, nurtures, protects and enjoys the beauty of things (*Eden*, after all, means "paradise"). Apart from gardening work, and all the skill and understanding this work implies, life and the world simply fall apart. This is why God places the human in the garden, and instructs the *adam* to till and keep it (2:15). Gardening is not an optional task, nor is it a form of punishment. It is a primordial way of being that gives meaning and purpose to life. The point of freedom, and the proper exercise of power, is to come into the presence of fellow creatures in various modes of attention, patience, care and celebration. Authentic freedom seeks the nurture and liberation of those it engages.

As the story develops, we discover that human beings resist the work of care. They seek to be exempt from the demands of creaturely need and help, and desire to rise above their soil-bound condition so as to assume a divine-like position deciding good and evil. Again, a mountain of commentary has been devoted to the meaning of Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit. What needs to be highlighted here is how the eating of the fruit signifies the *abolition of limits*. To consume the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is to install oneself as the arbiter of good and evil, or, to use a Nietzschean phrase, beyond good and evil.

The story suggests that it is the desire to live without limit or constraint that is the fundamental human problem. To fail to know and honour limits is to bring about needless pain and suffering, and eventually even murder. If people are to live properly, which means to live in ways that affirm their rootedness in soil and their dependence upon and need of fellow creatures, they must humble themselves by becoming the caretakers of others. This is what the story of Noah is fundamentally about.

It is customary to describe the story of the flood and Noah's ark as a massive rescue operation. Because there is so much violence and corruption on Earth, God resolves to turn the life-mediating soil into a vast sea of mud. But not everything and everyone will be destroyed. Among a violent humanity, Noah stands out as one who "walked with God." He and his family will be the ones who demonstrate what an authentic human life looks like. How do they do it? By building the ark and by serving the life that has been placed within their care. This means that the ark is not an escape vessel. Nor is it something like a floating seed or species bank that will repopulate Earth once the disaster is over. Instead, the ark serves as a school for the learning of compassion and care, a massive, complex laboratory for the exploration and realisation of hospitality.

To appreciate the radical nature of the work that Noah and his family perform, we should try to imagine ourselves in their position. What knowledge of species and their habits must Noah have

had to assemble the ark's inhabitants? What attention and skills must he have possessed to provide for their dietary and health needs over the many months of time in the ark? As some commentators noted, one of the marks defining Noah's fidelity to God is that he was *curious* about the life around him. He wanted to know what creatures were like and what they needed. And he wanted to care for them in ways that were appropriate for their life, much like a gardener cares for plants and a host provides for guests. Some commentators even speculated that during the many months on the ark, Noah did not stop to sleep because there was so much to do and so much to enjoy and celebrate. And not insignificantly, upon exiting the ark, Noah is described as "a man of the soil" (9:20). In the attentive and hospitable work of creaturely care, Noah fulfills the vocation first given to, but refused by, Adam.

It is tempting to read the creation poem and the garden story in Genesis as being at cross-purposes with each other. Humans as bearers of the *imago Dei* serves to exalt, perhaps even exempt, them from a creaturely condition, while Adam as an essentially soil-bound being humbles humans by placing them in a gardening, hospitable role. But that would be a mistake, because it is crucial to ask about the character of the divine being whose image people bear. Is the God who creates the sort of being who tires of or is frustrated by the limits and needs of creaturely life? In this context, it is essential to continue the poem to day seven, where we learn about the ultimate meaning and purpose of God's creating work. The climax of the poem is not to be found in the command given to humans to subdue and have dominion over creatures. It is, instead, to participate in the Sabbath rest of God as the one who delights in the goodness and beauty of a world wonderfully made.

The progression of the poem makes clear that Sabbath rest is at the heart of the proper exercise of power, because without it people will fail to appreciate the sanctity and the praiseworthiness of the creatures and places of their life. Sabbath rest is not simply the inactivity associated with taking a break. It is about putting an end to the many forms of restlessness that presume to declare this world and our embodied life as not good enough, and thus needing to be exceeded. It is about stopping the frenetic activity that supposes people must always do more, have more, be more. And it is about committing to oppose the forces and the practices that damage creatures and places, and thus turn a world made for the purposes of delight into a world that is the cause of unending, and sometimes unbearable, lament.

*

My brief turn to Genesis suggests that the authentic exercise of power, and the ultimate aim of freedom, is for people to pursue paths that serve the well-being of creatures, because it is by means of the diverse practices of care that the flourishing of life together has its best chance. The power of God is not competitive or coercive. Instead, it is a way of being that makes room for others to be, and then commits to their nurture. Insofar as people desire to pattern their freedom and power on God's — and thus image God wherever they are — they must learn God's empowering, healing and sustaining ways that lead to mutual delight. The attainment of freedom is not a zero-sum affair in which the affirmation of my freedom depends on the denial of yours.

Freedom, in other words, cannot be understood in terms of an individual achievement, nor is it an end in itself. It finds its true meaning and its best realisation within the frameworks of a

gardening and hospitable life that seeks the liberation of others into the fullness of their lives — frameworks that bring us face to face with the vast diversity of life forms that continuously mingle with our own. To be human is to be rooted in the soil and enmeshed with myriads of creatures, seen and unseen, all growing together within geo-bio-ecosystem processes we have barely begun to understand. To desire an escape from this creaturely mesh, and the responsibilities that accompany our entanglements with others, is to misunderstand what a human being is. It is, ultimately, a desire to bring about humanity's end.

The picture and the practice of the human that emerges from these religious texts is no pious abstraction. When the ancient Israelites characterised the human as a creature living within a Sabbath-oriented world, they also developed what we might call a *Sabbath economics* in which the nature and extent of work, and the practices of land tenure and distribution, were reframed. Among its many practical implications, no person and no animal were to work on the seventh day. Land was to be given a fallow rest every seventh year, and on the fiftieth year — the year of Jubilee — family land that had been lost to misfortune or some catastrophic event was to revert to the original family, because no family should be prevented from access to the means of their own livelihood (and no land owner should be permitted to consolidate vast acreages).

As rabbinic teaching on the Sabbath developed, it became clear that one of the primary purposes of Sabbath teaching is to restrain a grasping, hoarding impulse within people. It is to teach people that they live not by the power of their own might and cunning, but must, in the end, learn to receive their livelihood and each other as gifts. Sabbath economics, in other words, is a regular check on human presumption to possess and control. When it is being properly realised, it issues in practices that open human hands to share the gifts of land and provision with fellow humans and with the domestic and wild creatures of this earth. This is why some rabbis argued that in a Sabbath year, the people must not only cease from working the land to their own benefit; they must also open their storehouses to the wild animals so that no creature is hungry. The desire to practice a Sabbath economy is, therefore, also a desire for the creation of a just world in which the flourishing of the land and all its inhabitants is achieved.

One could argue that the creation of an Anthropocene world is also the creation of an anti-Sabbath world. Why? Because the ambition that seeks to engineer, patent, possess and control creatures and places knows little of the restraint, humility, liberation and respect that mark a Sabbath sensibility.

To characterise the human as a creature made by God to serve and delight in the goodness and beauty of others, and then to develop the many economic policies, cultural institutions, legal codes and education systems that will be necessary to repair a world that too often evokes lament rather than delight, is an enormous task. To move in this direction will require creative and improvisational skills that are inspired by God's own abiding and delighting *Shabbat*. It will require of people that they slow down, pay attention and come to know the places and the creatures of their life as worthy of their cherishing and care. Inspired by love, they may yet become the humans who work for a better world.

[Norman Wirzba](#) is the Gilbert T. Rowe Distinguished Professor of Christian Theology at Duke Divinity School, and Senior Fellow at the [Kenan Institute for Ethics](#). He is the author of [Food](#)

[and Faith: A Theology of Eating](#), [Way of Love: Recovering the Heart of Christianity](#) and, with Fred Bahnson, [Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation](#).

<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/rethinking-the-human-in-the-anthropocene/10567192>

November 29, 2018

Interfaith Rainforest Initiative Launched to Protect Colombian Rainforest, Indigenous Peoples

By Catherine Benson Wahlén
IISD's SDG Knowledge Hub

Story highlights:

- The Colombia 'Interfaith Rainforest Initiative' will help the country in its efforts to end deforestation by bringing faith-based leadership and moral urgency to global efforts to end tropical deforestation.
- The Initiative will also work to protect the rights of forest and afro-descendent communities and indigenous peoples.

23 November 2018: Leaders from every major religious faith joined Afro-Colombian communities, indigenous peoples, climate scientists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to launch the Colombia 'Interfaith Rainforest Initiative.' Through the Initiative, leaders aim to emphasize the urgent moral responsibility to end deforestation in Colombia and protect the role of indigenous peoples as forest guardians.

According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP, or UN Environment), Colombia is among the top ten countries experiencing "dramatic levels of deforestation." Forest loss has increased significantly since the peace agreement with FARC was signed in 2016; in 2017, Colombia lost nearly 220,000 hectares of forest. At the same time, however, the Government of Colombia has committed to dramatically reduce deforestation by 2020 as part of its commitments under the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The Colombia Interfaith Rainforest Initiative will help Colombia in its efforts to end deforestation by bringing faith-based leadership and moral urgency to global efforts to end tropical deforestation. The international, multi-faith alliance provides a platform for religious leaders to work with indigenous peoples, governments, civil society and businesses on actions to protect forests and safeguard the rights of indigenous peoples.

UNEP is implementing the Initiative with the support of the Government of Norway. UNEP Deputy Head, Joyce Msuya, described the Initiative as "both welcome and urgently needed." Msuya underscored forest protection and restoration as "one of the best tools we have to tackle climate change."

In addition to its commitment to protect forests, the Initiative underscores the urgent need to protect the rights of forest and afro-descendent communities and indigenous peoples. According to UNEP, evidence shows that indigenous and other forest communities “outperform all other managers of tropical forests when their rights are recognized and protected.” In Colombia, indigenous peoples have secured the title to 23 million ha of ancestral territories in the Amazon, an area that represents 75 percent of the Colombian Amazon. Their rights do not extend below the soil, however, leaving these groups vulnerable to extractive industries and the threat of violence over land rights. According to the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), 5,730 people have been forced to flee their homes, and at least 68 indigenous peoples have been murdered.

Religious leaders from diverse spiritual traditions launched the Initiative at an event in Bogotá, Colombia. UNEP and a coalition of Colombian and multi-faith partners convened the event. [\[UNEP Press Release\]](#)

<http://sdg.iisd.org/news/interfaith-rainforest-initiative-launched-to-protect-colombian-rainforest-indigenous-peoples/>

December 4, 2018

Exploring the Dharmic Way to Think About Climate Change

Dharma is the fabric of a healthy, sane, sustaining and nurturing ecology.

By Christopher L. Fici
The Wire

What is the *dharmic* response to the emerging presence of planetary climate change? How do Hindus, in the creative complexity of how they value, define, express and practice *dharmā*, approach the Age of Climate Crisis? Within the academic, activist and other cultural realms, where the challenges of the climate crisis are being confronted, there is tremendous potential for Hindus worldwide, in their scholarship, practice and culture, to provide dharmic pathways forward as we face this unprecedented challenge. There is now a clear calling in the global Hindu diaspora to practice and express dharma as eco-dharma, dharma for Earth.

At the 2018 Parliament of the World’s Religions, from November 1-7, 2018, in Toronto, Ontario, a roundtable of leading Hindu scholars and practitioners launched The Hinduism and Ecology Society. The launch of the Hinduism and Ecology Society at the Parliament focused on the theme of “Hindu Eco-Dharma for the Age of Climate Change.”

The Hinduism and Ecology Society builds upon the work of foundational scholars in the field to provide rich, fertile soil for the study and practice of Hinduism in an ecological vein as we enter into the climatic challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Values and practices for ecological well-being are always already inherent within Hindu communities practicing the arts of dharma. We can understand dharma as the ecology of well-being which emerges organically from devotional relationship with all elements and creatures of creation. The Indian environmental scholar O.P Dwivedi writes that dharma “can be considered an ethos, a set of duties, that holds the social and moral fabric together...giving rise to harmony and understanding in our relationships with all of God’s creation.”

Dharma is inherently eco-dharma. Dharma is the fabric of a healthy, sane, sustaining and nurturing ecology. In the seventh chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Krishna tells Arjuna that he is *vasudevah sarvam*, the supreme divine energy and presence which resides in each element of creation. Krishna is the original fragrance of Earth, the heat in fire, the original seed of all existence, and the very life of all that lives. All earthly creatures are *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, the family of Mother Earth. Mother Earth, as a most sacred being herself, is offered prayers, like the *Prthvi Sukta*, as the embodiment of dharma.

“O Mother Earth!...Be kind to us and bestow upon us happiness. May you be fertile, arable, and nourisher of all. May you continue supporting people of all races and nations.”

To practice eco-dharma is to understand and experience the immanence of divine presence within Earthly creation. “We have to look for the immanent, for the divine that is within us, the divine that is right here and right now,” Rita D. Sherma said in the Hinduism and Ecology Society roundtable at the Parliament. *Sakti* traditions and Goddess traditions within Hinduism, Indic traditions and other global religious traditions, Sherma adds, teach that divinity “unfolds itself within creation to become self-aware.” Our lack of awareness of divine presence and energy within earthly creation is a spiritual crisis which leads directly to climate crisis. If we do not experience the very sacredness of Earth in our everyday lives, then our understanding of dharma is incomplete. The rites, rituals and teachings of dharma depend on earthly and earthy sacredness. Devotion to Earth is an essential aspect of dharma.

The practice of eco-dharma is about the essence of *bhava*, of relating with the pervasive, immanent divine presence in earthly creation. “Love and devotion is a noun and a verb,” David Haberman said. “Personal relationship, in love and devotion, in action, can become concrete levers of change.” Haberman shared an example [from his work on the Yamuna River](#) of a young worshipper of the Yamuna who learned to appreciate the divinity inherent in Yamuna through his approach of loving worship. Yamuna then “revealed herself to him. The more she revealed herself, the more he was inspired to worship her. This is the circle of love which comes out of concrete actions, which provide a very solid basis for ecological concern and action, for the expansion of our compassion.” The circle of devotion at the heart of eco-dharma is where the dance of dharma and justice takes place. Communities like the Govardhan Eco-Village are practicing eco-dharma as environmental justice, as their [rural empowerment](#) programmes connect economic and ecological flourishing for their neighbouring communities in Maharashtra.

As the intense, unprecedented challenges of the climate crisis continue to emerge, the practice of dharma as eco-dharma commits all Hindus to a renewed sense of devotional courage, concern and active compassion for the flourishing of all living beings, especially those who are most vulnerable. The experience of *dharma* is an experience of the sacredness of all life, of each and

every creature, each and every element of creation. It is within this earthly sacredness, where eco-dharma is found, which can give hope even in this seemingly hopeless hour.

The Hinduism and Ecology Society will be an intentionally international community to foster and encourage the diverse creativity of Hindu scholarship and to encourage collegial fellowship between Indian Hindu and non-Indian Hindu scholar/practitioners. For more information and how to get involved, please contact Christopher L. Fici at clf2138@utsnyc.edu.

Christopher Fici is the Director of The Hinduism and Ecology Society and a doctoral candidate in religion and ecology at Union Theological Seminary, New York.

<https://thewire.in/religion/exploring-the-dharmic-way-to-think-about-climate-change>

December 6, 2018

Shaping New Climate Narratives: Why a Journalist/Historian Turned to Theatre for Climate Stories

By Jeff Biggers
Artists and Climate Change

Earlier this year, taking a front row seat at a church in Gary, Indiana, I watched as a young rapper, local food leader and an arts educator beguiled a standing-room-only audience with a theatrical envisioning of their city in the year 2030.

To the side of the stage, jazz legend Billy Foster and his trio added a lively soundtrack to the performance; a multi-media show reflected the images of their stories in the background.

To be sure, this “Ecopolis” performance was no simple task. After a short period of training, developing the script and rehearsing, the actors had to transform the sanctuary into a pop-up theatre and a community of the future in the minds of the audience.

Requiems for Gary’s demise have been written for years, where entrenched poverty and unemployment have left the city in ruins; where the strong scent of hydrocarbons still sting the cold night air. “The maw of that beast, the steel industry,” actor and urban farmer Walter Jones recounted, “takes up nine miles of lakefront.”

“Love song to the scarred lungs, my people bare,” performance poet Krystal Wilson rapped, “because in my city glocks ain’t got nothing on poison and hostile air.”

Departing on a journey through the Gary woods, on the edge of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, one of the most biologically diverse regions in the nation, the local actors walked the audience on a trip from the city’s past as a once proud Steel City to a futurist rendering of Gary as a “regenerative city” in an age of climate change, re-envisioning ways to regenerate their

energy, food, transportation, green enterprise zones and a circular economy, neighborhood by neighborhood, front yard garden by front yard garden, bakery by bakery, character by character.

After the performance, the audience convened for lunch outside, catered by urban farmers, where discussions were led by the actors and community organizers on various renewable energy and local food initiatives. Rarely had I encountered such an energy of determination and excitement for change as I experienced in Gary.

The pop-up theatre took the page to the stage—and into the daily lives of the participants. It literally gave everyone a seat at the table. By providing a vision of a regenerative future, and a roadmap of stories to reach it, the performance galvanized action on climate change in a very real way.

At a performance at the Jane Addams Hull-House in Chicago, upstream designs for a zero waste neighborhood were explained in the voice of Magali, standing in front of his row of veggies in a hoop house that looked like a quilt from Somali; carrots, peas, beans, bell peppers, potatoes, cabbage and cloves—what he called the Chicago Sambusa.

On the stage at Appalachian State University, a character walked us through the future Boone EcoDistrict, where retrofitted homes with green roofs and solar energy moved beyond doing less bad, and actually doing something that enhances rather than harms our environment. To give a new framework and vocabulary to our times – to begin the process of regeneration.

After years of filing hundreds of stories, blogs, and radio stories, writing several books and organizing community events, I founded the Climate Narrative Project in 2014 to ask how can we better inform ourselves on the growing peril of climate change and promote regenerative solutions.

In truth, I created the Climate Narrative Project out of a sense of failure. I had spent years – decades, really – investigating and chronicling the devastation of the coal industry on communities, miners and the environment, as well as its impact on carbon emissions. From Appalachia to Illinois to [Black Mesa on the Dinétah \(Navajo Nation\) in Arizona](#) to Montana and the 20 coal-mined states, a health and humanitarian crisis from the lethal fallout of decades of mining had raged under the auspices of flawed regulatory measures, blatant disregard for civil rights, and media indifference. Coal companies and barons who openly flaunted workplace safety and environmental laws walked away free. The cumulative effect of CO2 emissions from coal had altered our future with climate change.

We had simply failed to galvanize the necessary action to learn from our mistakes, atone for our regulatory disasters, and hold coal mining outlaws accountable. The same can be said for the rest of our fossil fuel industries and the political apparatus and ways that have allowed it to flourish.

In effect, while the science of climate change is clear, and abundantly available on campuses and communities across the nation, the art of communication for more sustainable ways of living, planning and development has yet to take the stage in an effective manner.

Bringing together science, the arts and humanities, I have found myself turning more often to the stage with actors who are also deeply engaged in the local arts, food, biodiversity, environmental justice and community development, in order to find new ways to communicate and galvanize action on climate change. Using local history and stories, we have “rooted” our Ecopolis stories on the stage with actors in major cities like Chicago and San Francisco, working with urban planners and arts organizations, and in small towns and college campuses across the Midwest, the South, Appalachia and the Southwest.

Collaborating with fellow artists in leading workshops in creative writing, film, theatre, visual arts and dance, we have worked with schools and communities to design new frameworks and media arts strategies for presenting climate solutions.

The goal: to shape a new climate change narrative.

“How can you be a catalyst for this regenerative city,” the actors asked the audience? “What is your role—and the role of artists, innovators, engineers, teachers, preachers, and entrepreneurs? What is growing in your garden? And can I walk there?”

It all begins with a vision. And a stage.

*Journalist, historian and playwright, [Jeff Biggers](#) is the founder of the [Climate Narrative Project](#), and author of numerous books and plays, more recently *Damnatio Memoriae: Una Commedia*, and *Resistance: Reclaiming an American Tradition*.*

<https://artistsandclimatechange.com/2018/12/06/shaping-new-climate-narratives-why-a-journalist-historian-turned-to-theatre-for-climate-stories/>

December 7, 2018

Pilgrims march to demand action on climate change

By Todd Dagwell
MNnews

A group of pilgrims from all over the world is preparing to enter the city of Katowice, Poland, to bring climate disruption to the attention of world leaders meeting for the 24th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24).

The group has walked 1,500 kilometres after setting out from St. Peter’s Square in the Vatican two months ago. The walk, known as The Climate Pilgrimage, was the initiative of Yeb Saño and was designed to reproduce a march completed in 2015 for COP21, held in Paris. After starting out at the Vatican on 2 October this year, the group walked to Paris with the blessing of the Pope, while carrying a pair of his shoes, to show the determination of Christians to move the

fight against climate disruption forward. Sébastien Dumont is one of the pilgrims joining the group for the final week of the march, scheduled to end on 7 December.

A beekeeper from the Drôme region in France, Mr Dumont, a Catholic and father of seven children, had already walked the first 15 days of the adventure, between St. Peter's and Assisi.

For Mr Dumont, this climate pilgrimage is a concrete commitment and an integral part of his life of faith.

A member of the Ecologia association which wishes to make the link between ecology and Christian life, Mr Dumont wanted to walk to make people aware of the climate emergency.

“As a Christian, ecology is not an option just like any other,” he said. “With the *Laudato si* encyclical, Pope Francis shows how much the ecology is an integral model of life.”

Like Pope Francis and Sébastien Dumont, most of the marchers on the pilgrimage, whose numbers range from 10 to 100 persons depending on the stages, relate this commitment to ecology to their faith.

Founder of the pilgrimage, Yeb Saño, feels much the same way. Mr Sano hails from the Philippines, a country directly threatened by climate disruption due to the threat of rising sea levels.

He explained his approach on website, *The Climate Pilgrimage*, supported by Greenpeace and the Catholic Climate Movement, created following the publication of *Laudato si*.

“We are carrying an urgent cry for climate justice,” he wrote, adding that the pilgrimage was bearing the teachings of the encyclical on “safeguarding our common home”.

For the climate pilgrims, COP24 needs to result in concrete commitments enabling the attainment of the emissions targets set at COP21 in 2015 in Paris.

<http://mnnews.today/church/2018/36148-climate-change-pilgrimage/>

December 8, 2018

How Climate Change Is Driving Central American Migrants to the United States

By Gus Bova
Texas Observer

In the poor, violent Northern Triangle of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, worsening floods, drought and storms are pushing a growing number of migrants north.

Donald Trump thinks there's an immigration crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border. He has no idea what's coming.

Thousands of Central American migrants arrive at the border each month, fleeing both grinding poverty and unchecked gang violence. Increasingly, they're also escaping a threat they might never mention to immigration agents: climate change. A narrow strip of land flanked by oceans, Central America is one of the world's most environmentally vulnerable regions. "It's an area hit by hurricanes on both sides, rocked by volcanic eruptions, drought, earthquakes, and with accelerating climate change, it's even more vulnerable," said María Cristina García, a Cornell University professor of American studies who's writing a book about climate refugees.

Central America hosts both spectacular catastrophes — Hurricane Mitch displaced 3 million people in 1998 — and slow-burn disasters, such as frequent droughts worsened by climate change. Many of the current crop of refugees hail from the region's "dry corridor," a zone afflicted by alternating drought and flooding, where farmers face crop failure even without the effects of a warming planet. The corridor falls mostly within the poor, violent Northern Triangle of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala — a major source of immigrants to the United States.

Recent spikes in migration have tracked with precipitation patterns. In 2014, the year of the much-politicized surge in families and unaccompanied children arriving at the border, a drought struck the dry corridor. Farmers were still scrambling to recover when another untimely drought hit early this summer, wiping out first harvests of beans and maize. Many of the asylum-seekers caught up in Trump's short-lived family separation policy were indigenous Guatemalan farmers fleeing the specter of starvation.

The interplay between climate change and migration can be complex. Many Central Americans displaced by hurricane or drought first relocate within their home countries (a rule that holds true worldwide). They often face gang violence, marginal employment and racial discrimination. When they later flee to Mexico or the United States, García said, the original cause of their displacement is obscured, leading to an undercount of climate-driven refugees.

Nobody knows how many people climate change will displace globally. At the high end, the U.K.-based Christian Aid predicts there will be 1 billion environmental migrants by 2050. A more typical estimate is 200 million. Of those, an unknown number will cross international borders, and no country is ready to receive them. Climate refugees are not recognized by the United Nations or any government. The closest thing in the United States is Temporary Protected Status — a designation that shields migrants from deportation to areas devastated by natural disasters, which Trump is currently shredding. When it comes to refugee policy, "There's a total refusal to deal with the reality of climate change," García said.

Trump rejects reality altogether. In October, he claimed the climate will simply “change back again.” Still, his policies have a certain cruel logic. A flood of climate refugees is coming, and the choices are stark: Develop a generous asylum policy and mitigate the impacts of climate change with investment abroad. Or build walls high enough to stem the tide.

<https://www.texasobserver.org/climate-change-migration-central-america-united-states/>

December 10, 2018

Catholic groups push for strong climate deal at U.N. summit in Poland

By Jonathan Luxmoore, Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Catholic representatives worked to keep negotiations on track for a comprehensive deal to address global warming as the U.N. climate change conference entered its second and final week in Katowice, Poland.

The effort was complicated by the actions of U.S., Russian, Saudi Arabian and Kuwaiti delegates, who objected to a note by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP24, "welcoming" an October report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The report warned that greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels would need to be reduced by 45 percent by 2030 for global warming kept to a maximum of 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit under the 2015 Paris climate accord or risk worsening drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty.

After hours of negotiations Dec. 8 and with no consensus reached, the note was dropped under U.N. protocol.

Still, the church continued to press for sustained action on climate change.

"The church is exerting pressure and showing really significant commitment. We must hope countries match this," said Rebecca Elliott, communications director of Global Catholic Climate Movement, a coalition of more than 650 Catholic organizations.

"Besides acting as a moral voice and providing a robust faith-based response, Catholic organizations are relating stories about the experiences of people from Latin America, Africa, India and the Pacific islands who are gravely affected by climate change."

Elliott's observation came as climate campaigners met Dec.10 in Katowice for a conference marking Human Rights Day. The Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences and France's National Center for Scientific Research organized the event.

The day also was observed as the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights by the U.N. General Assembly.

The appearance of Patricia Espinoza, executive secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, at the church-sponsored event served to recognize "the importance of the Catholic voice" at the Katowice meeting, Elliott said.

A senior policy adviser with U.S.-based Catholic Relief Services also recognized the work of Catholic campaigners at the conference to coordinate efforts.

"With so many technical and procedural matters to contend with, it's been essential to bring everyone together and avoid duplication as we push for a deal," said Lori Pearson, who advises the U.S. bishops' overseas aid and development agency on food security and climate change issues.

"While interesting, wonderful ideas are being generated at national and global level, they won't be implemented without local action," she said. "This is where Catholic organizations like ours are playing a key role: in translating initiatives into real benefits for people on the ground."

Meanwhile, Dan Misleh, director of the Catholic Climate Covenant, said Dec. 10 in a statement that nearly 800 Catholic institutions in the U.S. had committed "to finding ways to reduce their carbon footprint, raise awareness and advocate to their legislators that we must all do our part to avoid a climate catastrophe."

Reacting to the U.S. government stance at COP24, Bishop Richard Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, episcopal liaison to the covenant, said Dec. 10 that climate change was a "profoundly moral crisis" demanding "international engagement."

The bishop added that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, a party to the covenant, has said it believes the President Donald Trump's plan to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement was "inconsistent with the responsibilities of a nation as wealthy and compassionate as ours."

In addition to the Human Rights Day event, Catholic organizations met the same day to "explore personal stories from the front lines of the climate crisis" and ensure government actions upheld human rights, a statement released after the meeting said.

Participating organizations included Caritas Internationalis, Franciscans International and Brussels-based CIDSE, a network of 17 Catholic development agencies in Europe and North America.

Meanwhile, a "climate pilgrimage" group that included typhoon survivors from the Philippines reached Katowice Dec. 8 after walking 950 miles from the Vatican. Participants handed prayer ribbons Dec. 10 to the U.N.'s Espinoza.

December 12, 2018

How Native American tribes are bringing back the bison from brink of extinction

By Jeremy Hance
The Guardian

The continent's largest land mammal plays crucial role in spiritual lives of the tribes

On 5,000 hectares of unploughed prairie in north-eastern Montana, hundreds of wild bison roam once again. But this herd is not in a national park or a protected sanctuary – they are on tribal lands. Belonging to the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes of Fort Peck Reservation, the 340 bison is the largest conservation herd in the ongoing bison restoration efforts by North America's Indigenous people.

The bison – or as [Native Americans](#) call them, buffalo – are not just “sustenance,” according to Leroy Little Bear, a professor at the University of Lethbridge and a leader in the bison restoration efforts with the Blood Tribe. The continent's largest land mammal plays a major role in the spiritual and cultural lives of numerous Native American tribes, an “integrated relationship,” he said.

“If you are Christian and you don't see any crosses out there, or you don't have your corner church ... there's no external connection, [no] symbolic iconic notion that strengthens and nurtures those beliefs,” said Little Bear. “So it goes with the buffalo.”

Only a couple of hundred years ago, 20 million to 30 million bison lived in vast thundering herds across North America. They were leftover relics of the Pleistocene and one of the few large mammals to survive the Ice Age extinction.

But less than 400 years after Columbus' direful voyage, white settlers pushed their way west into Native American territory in so-called manifest destiny. And the US government made the fateful decision to cripple the Native Americans through whatever means necessary. One of these was the bison: the government viewed slaughtering the great herds en-masse as a way to starve and devastate Native American tribes.

Within just decades, the bison went from numbering tens of millions to within a hair's breadth of extinction. “Fort Peck was the first to stand up and say we want to help. We want to restore these important bison back to their historic Great Plains home,” said Jonathan Proctor, Rockies and Plains program director with NGO Defenders of [Wildlife](#), who has worked with the tribes for years to bring the bison back.

To do so, the tribe looked to Yellowstone's bison herd. After the slaughter of the 19th century, 23 bison survived in a remote valley in Yellowstone. Today, the herd is 4,000 strong and is seen as a vital population because it has never been domesticated or interbred with cattle, maintaining genetic purity. While so-called pure genetics of the bison are often important to scientists and conservationists, Kelly Stoner – who heads the bison program at the Wildlife Conservation Society – said the issue is more complicated among tribal groups.

“You’ll find that amongst Native Americans . . . the predominant attitude is ‘if it looks like a buffalo and smells like a buffalo, it’s a buffalo’. The deep, personal relationship between Native Americans and buffalo exists, and is relevant and important, whether or not a particular animal has 8% cattle genes or not,” she explained.

Still, in 2007, Fort Peck Reservation eyed Yellowstone's herd as a potential source to build a cultural herd. Fort Peck, and many other tribes, already had a commercial herd – used for economic purposes – but now they wanted to build a second herd with conservation in mind.

But getting bison from Yellowstone national park would prove far harder than Fort Peck initially thought. Although pure bred, Yellowstone bison carry the disease brucellosis. The Yellowstone bison originally contracted the disease from cattle in the early 20th century and now ranchers and state officials fear a return. Although scientists have never recorded brucellosis jumping from bison to cattle, it is theoretically possible according to lab research.

“It’s really difficult [to pass]. It’s passed through the placenta,” explained Proctor. “You’d have to have cattle mix with bison in the spring when the bison would potentially abort their calf because of brucellosis and the cattle would have to lick [the aborted placenta]. It’s not likely.”

Still, cattle ranchers so fear the disease that they have pushed for hundreds, sometimes even more than a thousand, bison to be slaughtered every year in Yellowstone national park to keep the animals from roaming outside the park boundaries and potentially mixing with cattle. Yellowstone elk also carry the disease, but are spared slaughter since they are seen as less of a risk.

The brucellosis panic almost stopped Fort Peck from ever getting Yellowstone bison. Over six years, the tribes had to battle anti-bison legislation from the Montana congress and legal battles. The case went all the way to Montana supreme court, which the tribes won unanimously.

“The biggest roadblock is the politics in Montana,” said Robert Magnan, director of the Fort Peck tribes’ fish and game department and the buffalo program. “They don’t understand what we’re trying to do out here.”

The first Yellowstone bison finally arrived in 2012: around 60 animals in all. “There was a huge celebration; many, many people from the community came out,” said Proctor. “It was just thrilling to see.”

Two years after their arrival, Magnan said that the bison had already begun to rejuvenate the land.

“We’ve seen the ecosystem revive. Grassland birds have returned, native grasses are thriving. We welcome and look forward to the buffalos’ continued benefits to our tribal lands.”

Since then, several more deliveries have been made and the Fort Peck herd – at 340 – is among the top 10 conservation herds in the US.

But the work has only begun. In 2014, two years after the bison came to Fort Peck, 13 tribal nations – representing eight reservations both in the US and Canada – signed a ‘Buffalo Treaty’. The treaty outlined the importance of bringing back free-roaming bison to both the US and Canada. “We used to always have an empty chair for the buffalo, for the spirit of the buffalo [at the dialogues], in our talking circles,” said Little Bear, who facilitated the dialogues. “It’s hard to explain but the buffalo was basically asking us, ‘you know, I’ve been gone for 150 years, why do you want me to come back?’”

By the end of the dialogues, the tribes agreed why. “The concern was the young people hear only stories, they hear the songs, they see the ceremonies, but they don’t see the buffalo out there,” added Little Bear.

The treaty is already making good. Last year, Blackfeet Reservation, also in Montana, received 89 genetically pure bison from Elk Island in Canada. Although the Blackfeet’s Iinnii Initiative – their name for buffalo – is the youngest, it’s also the most ambitious.

The tribe is negotiating with state officials to allow these bison, which are free of brucellosis, to range freely into Glacier national park and even, hopefully, one day as north as Waterton Lakes national park and Blood Tribe Reservation Canada – which would make it the first international bison herd in over a century.

Little Bear said they are also working with [the Y2Y Initiative](#), which aims to create a massive wildlife corridor from Yellowstone to the Yukon for wildlife such as bears and wolves.

“We talked to the Y2Y people and said ‘hey, what about buffalo?’ And [they said], ‘we never thought about it but we can include buffalo.’” This year, wild bison returned to Banff national park after being gone over 100 years. Little Bear said the tribe’s Buffalo Treaty acted as a “catalyst” for the re-wilding in Canada’s first park.

“Tribes of the northern plains are the lead in wild bison restoration right now,” Proctor said. In 50 years’ time, the conservation community hopes to have at least 10 bison herds that number 1,000 animals – the minimum, he said, needed for the bison to fulfil their ecological role (currently only Yellowstone has a herd of more than 1,000 animals).

On top of that, Proctor hopes there will be a few herds of more than 10,000 animals, a herd size which hasn’t been seen since the mass extermination in the 19th century.

“Well never see bison roaming the entire Great Plains again,” said Proctor. “We’ll never see 20 million to 30 million bison again. No one is trying to go back in time. We’re trying to go

forward. We're trying to restore this important animal where we can, where people want them, and to the level where they will help restore the natural balance.”

For any of this to happen, Native American tribes will be key. They have the land and the desire to bring back the continent's largest land mammal. And it's not just bison, Proctor said. They have been instrumental in conserving wolves, grizzly bears, swift foxes and black-footed ferrets among other species.

Magnan said Fort Peck's "dream" is to have 2,500 buffalo in their conservation herd running on more than 40,000 hectares. Already the tribe has passed a resolution to purchase more land.

“It's amazing ... with limited budgets and widespread poverty, [Native American tribes] are the leader in wildlife restoration when compared to the state wildlife agency,” he said. “In reality, it was not the buffalo that left us, it was us that left the buffalo. So we have to do something.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/12/how-native-american-tribes-are-bringing-back-the-bison-from-brink-of-extinction>

December 13, 2018

COP24: It's not about resources anymore; it's about moral maturity

By Joan Chittister
National Catholic Reporter

This article appears in the [COP24 Poland](#) feature series. [View the full series.](#)

I just came back from the [U.N. Conference on Climate Change](#) in Poland. It was a meeting we should all have been able to attend.

Almost 50 years ago, in 1973 during the Arab-Israeli War, OPEC imposed an embargo on oil exports to the U.S. in retaliation for U.S. support of Israel. It awakened the world to the dark side of the bright side of modern economics. All things have an end, even oil, the engine of modern productivity. Now, scientists estimate that at the current extraction rate, there are about 53.3 years of oil left on the planet, at least 80 percent of it in OPEC countries.

Years ago, in other words, the West woke up to a head-on confrontation with what would later be seen as our first serious experience of the finitude of resources. But no one panicked. "Oil shortage?" I heard a man in the airplane seat behind me say. "Oil shortage? There's no oil shortage! And even if there is, they'll just go into a laboratory somewhere and invent something to take its place. Till then, this is nothing but an excuse to raise the price of gas again."

Few Americans believed in the limitation of natural resources then and few believe in the real effect of climate change on daily life now, despite years of scientific data to the contrary. So

what if it's real, we figure. We'll just go on, business as usual. Oceans refresh themselves, we argue. More methane emissions come from cows than from humans, we assure ourselves.

The regulation of carbon emissions hurts industry, we decide, and so resist it. Land always dries up from lack of water, but floods and wildfires repair the balance to nature as we go, we insist. But the scientists go on warning us. And so the world as we know it dies from lack of care.

For nearly 25 years, the United Nations climate conferences have been attempting to educate the world to the vulnerability of the natural order and encourage global collaboration on climate change. Each of those 24 assemblies has released more and more data on the forever upward-trending data on the loss of species that make up our biological diversity.

They have certified the poisoning of the oceans and the rising of the tides that will reclaim coastal land everywhere. They have charted the extremes of climate that are beginning to render whole areas of the globe unlivable.

Yet, now, as then, few Americans are genuinely exercised by the subject. In fact, Donald Trump, the president who pledged to "make America great again," can look into a camera and dismiss his own administration's recent climate change alarm with a simple, "I don't believe it." So much for leadership.

But there are three other groups who are vying to be heard on the subject of climate change in the light of scientific data that says that we have as few as 12 years to be able to influence the trends toward ecological disaster. They all met within the past few weeks. The average American needs to understand each of them.

The first is COP24, the most recent in the string of 24 international meetings on climate change. Somewhere between 25,000 to 30,000 people registered for this "Conference of Parties" in Poland. They are political types, educators, activists and corporate planners whose presence is just one sign of their commitment to the implications of sustainability and climate change. They are from every nation around the world.

Most of all, at least half of them, if their backpacks and T-shirts are any indication, are under 50 years old. They are hurrying to save a world where desertification is already well on the way, drinking water is drying up by the day, and fossil fuels are choking oxygen out of the atmosphere.

The second group, a task force called ALEC, the [American Legislative Exchange Council](#), was also in session. This group wasn't in Poland for the U.N. meeting. Instead, it met behind closed doors in a hotel in Washington, D.C. They are state legislators and corporate lobbyists whose commitment is to herding legislation through U.S. Congress that will block climate change programs. This older, more professional group supports the elimination of tax benefits for the manufacturing of electric vehicles and endorses Trump's fossil fuel energy agenda.

Welcome to the modern world. Opposites are in motion, in conflict, on almost every major issue on earth. We live, in other words, at a crossover moment in time.

To walk through the halls at COP24 is to sense the human energy behind the concerns. This younger generation sees its future through the filter of coming destruction. They spend their young lives trying to alert the world to its own demise. They organize groups to take action, to bring pressure to bear on resisters, to usher in a new, more life-giving lifestyle of recycling, sustainability and corporate commitment to a pollution-free world. Their job in a self-satisfied industrial world is the difficult one.

But I have a feeling that COP24 itself also indicates a kind of climate activism that is starkly different from all the COPs before it. There is a new tone to it. This is no longer the kind of COP meeting that preceded this one.

Previous COPs, I remember, were airplane hangars full of exhibits. A good number of them taught basic science. There were tools for science teachers on all levels. There were prototypes of technology meant to measure and convert and reduce energy types. There were samples of products designed to change the way the average person went about life.

There were vendors who encouraged people to abandon Styrofoam cups and plastic straws, and save energy by wearing wool in winter weather rather than turn up the heat in our houses.

Those concerns are still there, of course. But no one here really believes anymore that such personal projects, good as they may be, can really save a society hell-bent on destroying tomorrow by continuing yesterday.

Consequently, perhaps, the presentations have taken on a different tone in another group of people who took part in COP24.

Instead of concentrating on external projects, there is a move now to recognize the impact of internal attitudes on an entire series of very present dangers: fire, flood, the loss of life-sustaining biodiversity, large-scale famine, immigration overflow, poverty and joblessness, for instance.

The third group weighing in on climate change these days is religious leaders, spiritual teachers, more philosophic types who know that nothing much can happen to the world around us until something happens within us that is beyond money and power, that seeks global harmony and world peace.

In our group, the [Global Peace Initiative of Women](#), a Buddhist teacher, a Sufi practitioner, an American evangelical, an American Indian, a Hindu swami, a Vedic scholar and myself, a Catholic nun, addressed interested audiences on spiritual development as the key to human development, the need to understand that we are here to complete the work of creation rather than consume it.

From where I stand, it seems to me that the scientific data won't mean much, then, until we stop again to examine our core values, our sense of what it means to be fully human, our attitudes about what makes for a full life, a happy life, a moral life. Until we each make a connection between how we live on the Earth, how we see our relationship to it as a measure of our morality, it is doubtful that much will happen to save it.

At the end of the day, we simply need to decide what kind of person we want to be on a globe that is crying out in distress. Until then, I doubt that repeating all that scientific data over and over can possibly move us beyond "I don't believe it."

[Joan Chittister is a Benedictine sister of Erie, Pennsylvania.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/where-i-stand/cop24-its-not-about-resources-anymore-its-about-moral-maturity>

December 17, 2018

New Environmental Ethics: 20 Years of The Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology

As the F&ES-based Forum on Religion and Ecology celebrates 20 years, we sit down with co-founder Mary Evelyn Tucker, who describes the growing global awareness of the relationship between the world's religious and spiritual traditions and it can help humankind solve its environmental challenges.

By Allegra Lovejoy Wiprud
Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies

Twenty years ago, Yale's [Mary Evelyn Tucker](#) and [John Grim](#) founded the [Forum on Religion and Ecology](#), an ambitious initiative that has helped create a new academic field which explores the relationship between the world's religious and spiritual traditions and the environmental challenges we face.

Two decades later, the field is taught in universities across the world, similar forums have emerged in Canada, Europe, and Australia, and a force of religious environmentalism is growing in churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques globally.

In recognition of this anniversary, I spoke with Mary Evelyn Tucker, a senior lecturer and research scholar at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, in her New Haven office. As an F&ES student keenly interested in the nexus of religion and ecology, I find the work of Tucker and Grim tremendously inspiring.

[This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology. The founding occurred at a conference you and John Grim organized at the United Nations. What was driving you at that time?](#)

Mary Evelyn Tucker: As a scholar of Asian religions, I was especially motivated by a concern for what would happen in China and India as these countries began to modernize. Clearly the environment would suffer as over two billion people began to seek the fruits of modernity. This is now happening in those countries as air, water, and soil are being severely polluted. Twenty

years ago I felt we should seek environmental ethics that were culturally diverse, which meant we had to investigate how religious traditions shape the way nature is viewed and valued.

Our vision with the Forum, then, was to create a field of religion and ecology in academia and a moral force in the larger society. From the beginning, we laid out our plans regarding research, education, and outreach. The research was to make sure this new field was taken seriously in the heart of academia. It is clear that that we've got good environmental science, policy, law, technology and economics, but we need to include values and ethics from the world's religions.

We began this research with three years of conferences at Harvard (1995-1998) after which we published 10 edited volumes with Harvard on the world's religions and ecology. Since that time we have been creating classes and workshops to reflect on how we teach this new field. The outreach has been very exciting over the years with public conferences bringing together religious scholars, scientists and grassroots activists. We send a monthly e-newsletter out to about 12,000 people.

The Forum [website](#) is also a major outreach tool with its attention to all the world's religions, including statements and annotated bibliographies. There is a special section on the Pope's 2015 encyclical letter on the environment, *Laudato Si*, which has made a significant contribution to formulating an integral ecology for the flourishing of the planet.

Over the last 20 years, the Forum has organized more than 30 conferences and taught numerous students here at Yale and around the world. There's also the sister project [Journey of the Universe](#), through which you've created a feature-length film, book, conversations, and [MOOCs](#) reaching some 23,000 people around the world. What are you most proud of?

Tucker: Well, I hope these various projects will make different contributions. All of this work has been much inspired by our teacher, the cultural historian, [Thomas Berry](#). Next spring John and I will be publishing a biography of Thomas Berry. In writing his biography these last few years I have been even more inspired by how he studied these traditions when few people were and, particularly, how he understood their spiritual dynamics. He was an intellectual, but he could appreciate religious practices and the care for nature. Berry had this vision that we need a new story that can bring us together as an Earth community — a multi-form planetary civilization. His ideas infuse what we do with both the Forum and the Journey project. The Forum is focused on drawing forth and evoking from the world's religions their teachings, their traditions, their practices for an environmental ethics. We want people to understand that 85 percent of the world's population *are* religious, with a billion Muslims, a billion Hindus, a billion Confucians, two billion Christians. We would do well to understand their stories and cultures and worldviews.

[Journey of the Universe](#) is a complementary effort that suggests that whether or not you're part of the world's religions, you have a place in this unfolding universe. *Journey of the Universe* is a

scientifically and ecologically grounded telling of our evolutionary story. It's trying to appeal to people, especially young people, all over the world, who may not be attached to a religion, but are inspired by the complexity and beauty of nature. We were very fortunate that it was broadcast on PBS for three years and won an Emmy. We have just launched a new website and will be drawing more people into the discussion of the film and book [in the online classes](#).

Last year, I was honored to attend the Hinduism and Ecology Conference, held at Govardhan Eco Village in India. That conference was nearly 20 years after the first Hinduism and Ecology Conference you organized at Harvard in 1998. I was struck by how far the dialogue must have come in the religion and ecology field.

Tucker: [Govardhan Eco Village](#) was a remarkable setting for that conference and it was fantastic to have young people there — scholars and practitioners — as well as people from other institutions, such as Oxford. It was great to see Radhanath Swami's charismatic leadership and this partnership with academics, which doesn't always happen. We always try to have our conferences be intergenerational and this was very pronounced at that event. We are quite focused on how we get the next generation to carry on this work, whether as a field in academia or as a force in the larger society. The Eco Village is a remarkable place that embodies an inclusive vision — something that many of us hope for — growing organic food; making earthen brick buildings; running a school for orphans; assisting indigenous peoples in the region; reaching out to women, and helping rural community stability. This range of concerns is fully in accord with our concerns as well. If we say “religion and ecology” it might sound narrow, but the opposite was on display at Govardhan Eco Village. It involved working creatively within a whole ecosystem — of local people and local bioregion. This eco-community has emerged over many years and despite great challenges. Twenty years after the founding of the Forum on Religion and Ecology, it was inspiring to see this.

Are there changes you've observed in the academic field of religion and ecology over the last 20 years?

Tucker: We were brought to F&ES by former Dean Gus Speth, who, after 40 years of doing environmental work, felt that science is necessary but not sufficient. After graduating from Yale Law School he founded the National Resource Defense Council and World Resources Institute, yet ultimately realized that even law and policy are not enough. He felt we needed other approaches, namely from religion, philosophy, art, and culture. He perceived this lacuna, this lack, in the environmental field. That's what's exciting now — the opening for religion and ecology within academia, especially in a school like F&ES, is getting stronger. Students are very interested because they understand why culture matters in Asia, Latin America, and Africa and why religion needs to be part of the solution for our social and environmental problems. There are also an increasing number of academic jobs in this area, which is very exciting. This is because environmental humanities are growing — history, literature, art, philosophy, and

religion are contributing to environmental studies, especially here at Yale.

We're seeing that here at Yale with the interdisciplinary program in religion and ecology between F&ES and the Divinity School.

Tucker: Yes, exactly, with the new M.A.R. [Master of Arts in Religion] at the Divinity School and the existing joint degree between the two schools. That's real progress.

You attended the San Francisco Global Climate Action Summit in September. What was your impression of the Summit?

Tucker: What was evident was that the force of religion and ecology is definitely growing. At the [Global Climate Summit](#), there were major events at Grace Cathedral which included all the world's religions, an interfaith service, and a whole day of workshops. We showed our film, *Journey of the Universe*, there. And a few years prior, there was the Climate March in New York in 2014 with 10,000 religious leaders and laity participating among 400,000 marchers.

The strong voice of Native Americans was so striking in San Francisco. They were saying, "climate capitalism is insufficient. This is not about monetizing nature but valuing it intrinsically as the source of life, not just a resource for humans to use without restraint." That critique is coming from indigenous people and others. They were also saying human health is at stake with fracking and oil spills and other negative impacts of drilling. Even apart from the Summit, Native American activists have been creating new alliances with ranchers and farmers in the West, the Pacific Northwest, and Canada. [The water protectors at Standing Rock](#) in North Dakota was another remarkable example of alliances that went across generations and tribes. Native young people are really the ones who started that protest. It was one of the largest gatherings of indigenous peoples ever to occur on the continent. And inclusive of everyone. It's an extraordinary movement that has spread across North America.

Diverse and younger voices are coming up, new leadership is emerging, and I'm so thrilled about all of this.

Often the religious or interfaith presence at these events can be somewhat sidelined. Outside of Grace Cathedral — outside of just the 'interfaith event' — were connections happening at the Climate Summit between religious folks and people in science, technology, and business?

Tucker: That's a great question. I'm not entirely sure. The Summit was, as you said, very much driven by science, economics, and technology. It was an important political effort launched by Governor Jerry Brown to illustrate that "we are still in" regarding the goals of the Paris Agreement. The moral force and religious concerns are not exactly marginalized, but they're still

a bit on the sidelines in their own sphere. There's a lot of excitement about new technologies and financing and green funds and all of which is necessary. Certainly the religious communities can't do this alone. At the COP conferences, the annual conferences held by the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change, there's been a bit more connection, but we're just now getting to this point where religions are no longer left out at the door — they're on the doorstep, they're moving into the hallway, they're beginning to engage in more dialogue. The Parliament of World Religions in Toronto in early November had many sessions on climate change and the environment. Some 8,000 people attended this from all over the world.

You have just returned from Norway where you were speaking at the 2018 Arne Naess Symposium on the future of humankind. What are your views on our collective future?

Tucker: I was excited to be at the Norway [conference](#) and learned a lot. As far as our understanding of human futures, we have lots of perspectives to draw on. I spoke about *Journey of the Universe* where we are suggesting that humans can find their larger role in being aligned with this vast evolutionary journey. That's empowering. For me, one of the ways forward is thinking deeply about this sense of evolutionary time and this unfolding universe that we're a part of. I think it has tremendous possibility for unlocking awe and wonder along with a sense of beauty and connection.

In Europe there's a strong environmental sensibility, which is profoundly connected to nature. This is especially true in the Nordic countries, The Arne Naess Programme at the University of Oslo is dedicated to continuing this conversation, especially through the lens of "deep ecology," of which Arne was a great thought leader. He was one of Norway's most distinguished philosophers who was trying to move beyond anthropocentrism to a sense of our "ecological self." He lived immersed in the forests and mountains.

You cannot help but realize in a country like Norway how important the forests are. People live close to the forests and are much engaged with outdoor sports and activities. They are keenly aware of the seasons because of the long darkness of winter. It is striking how much the energy and movement of the rivers and the fjords and the fishing culture is part of the culture. Their adventurous outdoor spirit is evident in their explorations into the Arctic and Antarctic. The Norwegians have been thinking about what it means to live in harsh conditions for a long time. I think they love that and take pride in their resilience. The United Nations Environment Programme and the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment have created the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative that is partnering with the Forum on Religion and Ecology and other interreligious groups to assist indigenous peoples in the protection of the rainforests.

Why is it that the Scandinavian countries have led environmentalism in its vibrant secular form? In Scandinavia they've realized for some time now that people and planet have got to have a new marriage — a fresh relationship. How are we going to do that? I've been to conferences in Sweden that are astounding where they are exploring new human-Earth relations in singing and

the arts as well as films and sculpture. They have a very rich feeling for nature that includes incisive practical policies, especially about equity and social justice.

For those of us immersed in environmental issues and climate change, it's easy to start to feel negative or despair about the state of our world. What gives you hope?

Tucker: This is on my mind often. At the end of October we held a conference in Virginia at the Oak Spring Garden Foundation with Peter Crane, our previous dean at F&ES. It was titled "[*Living Earth: New Ways of Being and Knowing*](#)." We brought together a remarkable group of people who are writing about the sensibility that we dwell on a living planet. We had scholars at this gathering who are focused on various forms of non human sentience. This included Eduardo Kohn, who wrote "How Forests Think"; David Haskell, "The Song of Trees"; David Abram, "The Spell of the Sensuous"; Jeanette Armstrong, "Flash"; and so on.

We know that ecosystems, such as forests, are so complex and we're just beginning to get views of how we live within them. There are people who've thought about how such systems have their own self-organizing dynamics. Eduardo Kohn, for example, is talking about biosemiotics, namely the communication that takes place between trees, from the roots up to the leaves. The popular book, "The Hidden Life of Trees," by a German forester also describes this kind of communication. This work is so intriguing and growing in publications and widespread interest. It is a source of hope for renewing mutually enhancing human-Earth relations.

Migration patterns are also a sign of certain kinds of sentience in the more than human world that includes birds, butterflies, caribou, turtles, and salmon. How do birds, for example, get all the way from Tierra del Fuego at the tip of Latin America to Canada — 6,000 miles away? How do their chicks fly back without the parents and find their way, never having gone before? This is incredible. I think these are topics that many people are keenly interested in. A better understanding of the dynamic, complex systems of nature is something that can generate awe, wonder, and hope, even a possibility that we actually can be aligned with and assist these systems.

Literature on the differentiated sentience of nature is popular right now. Why? Because we don't want to think of this as a dead world that we can destroy with impunity. Matter is living, changing, and communicating. That's what's so amazing.

Some authors have written about the world being in a 'Great Turning' or 'Great Transition.' With this sort of interest in religion and ecology across various walks of life, do you think we are in a time of transformation as a human community?

Tucker: On my better days, certainly, I think we're moving towards some sort of deeper understanding of the challenges we are facing. Why would religion and ecology have progressed in such a short period of time? There's a yearning for participating in something larger, more

comprehensive, and more fulfilling. Materialism and consumerism have created a vacuum of meaning. This is what we're saturated with in the U.S. and what we have exported around the world. Young people say they're experiencing a spiritual desert. I think it's inevitable that some kind of transition of consciousness *and* conscience — of active responsibility is emerging. This can happen as we awaken to a deeper understanding of ecology as relational systems in which we are embedded. Humans are part of a vibrant, dynamic Earth community.

We are imperfect and we'll make mistakes, but many people are seeking to be aligned with the self-organizing dynamics of nature. That's part of human creativity. If we build cities in an ecological manner, if we have green buildings — these are expressions of such creativity. Our current energy revolution is an important historical moment of transition from a fossil fuel based economy to a sustainable economy. The physical energies we are looking for are paralleled by a search in the human community for deeper energies of resiliency going forward.

Allegra Lovejoy Wiprud '20 M.E.M. is a first-year master's student at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies

<http://environment.yale.edu/news/article/20-years-of-the-yale-forum-on-religion-and-ecology/>

December 17, 2018

Indigenous peoples denounce ongoing land rights violations in Ecuador

By Genevieve Belmaker
Mongabay

- *Indigenous leaders in Ecuador say that a lack of progress toward addressing key issues stands in the way of their fundamental territorial rights.*
- *Concerns include resource extraction projects initiated without proper prior consent and consultation, as well as the activation of several mining and oil concessions in Ecuador.*
- *The outcry comes at a time when indigenous peoples are increasingly being recognized as key partners in ensuring the protection of the world's tropical forests.*

Indigenous people in Ecuador say their territorial rights are being systematically violated, according to a top United Nations official. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, the U.N.'s special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, is urging the Ecuadoran government to form a "truly plurinational and multicultural society" in accordance with its constitution and international law.

Indigenous leaders cite a lack of progress toward addressing key problems impeding their fundamental rights, according to Tauli-Corpuz. That includes a lack of free and informed prior consent before implementing resource extraction projects. The leaders are also concerned about the activation of several mining and oil concessions.

While Tauli-Corpuz has praised the current Ecuadoran government for advancing constructive dialogues with indigenous people over territorial rights, she criticized it for maintaining a status

quo established by predecessors that failed to recognize, respect or protect the fundamental rights of indigenous communities.

“The future of Ecuador’s indigenous people as well as the country’s forest ecosystems are at stake,” Tauli-Corpuz said in an interview with Mongabay. “The government has eliminated the autonomous institutions within the state that represented indigenous people, which means the national development plan is being developed without meaningful participation on the part of the indigenous.”

During a recent trip to Ecuador, Tauli-Corpuz met with the country’s top officials, including President Lenín Moreno, high-ranking ministers, and representatives from the legislative and judicial bodies.

The former president, Rafael Correa, borrowed [billions of dollars](#) from China to pursue his national development agenda from 2007 to 2017. That left Moreno with a massive budget deficit when he took office last year. To close the deficit, Ecuador signed contracts worth \$1.6 billion in October to increase oil production at sites in the northeastern Amazon basin. The country is expected to increase metal mining investment from \$1.1 billion this year to \$7.9 billion in 2021, according to a [BMI Research](#) report.

“The government feels that the country is in an economic crisis with high debt,” Tauli-Corpuz said. “Therefore they’re pushing economic ventures to raise revenue to pay off their foreign debt.”

On her trip, Tauli-Corpuz reviewed a [report](#) put together by indigenous leaders that covered five emblematic cases in the Amazon Basin involving Chinese capital and investment. The extractive projects and infrastructure covered in the report were carried out without adequate human rights protection of indigenous peoples in countries such as Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru and Brazil, creating concerns over China’s rising influence in the region.

Mining and oil threats

After visiting several indigenous territories around the country, Tauli-Corpuz said mining and oil extraction were the main threats to indigenous peoples, although agribusiness expansion and large-scale infrastructure projects also endangered their communities.

She cited the case of an older woman she met from an indigenous community, who told her she had been given just five minutes to clear out after being notified of her family’s eviction. Her home was bulldozed before she could get her children to come help her move her belongings, Tauli-Corpuz said.

“When the military and police arrive, the indigenous people are subjected to inhuman treatment as they are forced to leave land they have lived in for time immemorial,” she added.

Although the security situation for indigenous communities has reportedly improved slightly in recent years, Tauli-Corpuz said indigenous peoples had complained to her about armed groups

threatening and even assassinating land rights defenders with impunity for standing up to extractive industries such as gold mining. She pointed to the example of indigenous leader José Tendetza, a prominent critic of the Mirador gold mine operating on Shuar indigenous territory, whose battered body was found in an unmarked grave in 2014.

“The perpetrators of that crime have never been brought to justice,” Tauli-Corpuz said.

Indigenous peoples have also demanded amnesty for land rights defenders held by the state after opposing extraction projects in their territories, Tauli-Corpuz said. Seven pardons and one amnesty have been granted to indigenous human rights defenders to date, and the government is considering a simplified process to grant 137 additional pending petitions.

Tauli-Corpuz called on the government to meet its commitments under its own 2008 constitution to fully recognize and implement “indigenous peoples’ rights in accordance with international human rights law.”

“Protection of rights of nature cannot be achieved without protection of stewards,” she said.

Indigenous land rights and climate change

A [report released in November](#) showed that countries are not on target to meet the 2020 goal of the New York Declaration on Forests (NYDF), which aims to halve global deforestation by 2020 and eliminate deforestation by 2030. The average annual rate of natural forest loss is 42 percent higher than in the previous decade.

According to the latest NYDF Goal 10 report, co-authored by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), studies have shown territories where indigenous rights are legally recognized have lower rates of deforestation than lands beyond their borders.

The Goal 10 report pointed to a study released this year that found that between 2000 and 2012, rates of deforestation inside legally recognized indigenous communities in the Brazilian Amazon were seven times lower than in lands beyond these borders. In the Colombian Amazon, the rates were three times lower.

Global forest programs such as REDD, or reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, have yet to invest substantially in the protection of land rights for indigenous communities, according to RRI spokesman Andy White. The REDD program was first negotiated under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2005.

“The problem was that the REDD program was first developed by ministries of environment in Europe,” White said. “From there, REDD mostly went to work with the ministries of environment in the tropical countries but it hasn’t really dealt with land rights as of yet.”

White said protecting and restoring the world’s forests could produce natural solutions to climate change impacts, and would go over 30 percent of the way to achieving the cost-effective mitigation necessary to bring down runaway carbon emissions.

“In a world where it has become a global priority to protect global forests, research shows that indigenous people do a better job at protecting forests than governments do,” he said. “We aren’t going to be able to solve the climate change problem without protecting indigenous rights.”

Multiple attempts to reach Ecuador’s Ministry of Energy and Non-Renewable Resources for comment by email and telephone before publication were unsuccessful.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2018/12/indigenous-peoples-denounce-ongoing-land-rights-violations-in-ecuador/>

December 25, 2018

Irish prelate channels pope's environmental message on Christmas

By Christopher White
Crux

NEW YORK - On a night when Catholics are asked to reflect on the mystery of God becoming man, Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh said that Christmas is an occasion to “marvel at the wonder of the universe,” from the unborn child to the vastness of creation.

During his homily at midnight Mass in Saint Patrick’s Cathedral in Armagh, Ireland, Martin channeled Pope Francis’s 2015 encyclical *Laudato si’* where he argues that “everything is connected” in his efforts to nudge all people of goodwill to work together for care of creation.

Martin made a similar case, stating, “The Christmas story reminds us that, although we are small and frail, with the grace of God, and our ‘yes,’ like Mary’s, to God’s will in our lives...we can be transformed and in turn we can help to change the world for the better!”

“On this Christmas night, as we marvel at the wonder of the universe, let us pledge to care for Planet Earth, our common home, by being less wasteful, and more conscious of the damage that we can do to our environment by selfish living,” he continued.

Just days after the president of Ireland signed into law a bill which legalized abortion, the primate of All Ireland said that Christ’s birth is a chance to “gaze in wonder and awe at God’s presence in the newborn infant Jesus, let us bring to mind children who bring so much joy and happiness into our lives.”

“We pray that all children - born and unborn - will be protected from violence, trafficking, abuse, abortion, neglect or exploitation,” he said.

In the lead up to last May’s referendum in which the nation voted to do away with its restrictions on abortion, Martin was one of the most vocal Catholic prelates against the initiative.

“As we reflect on the Christ’s birth in the poverty of the stable, may we always be thankful for the food we have to eat, for our health, and for the warmth and security of a home; may we be more conscious of those less fortunate - the poor and the hungry, the sick, the lonely,” he pleaded.

In what could be a nod to this past August’s World Meeting of Families, where Ireland played host to the Vatican-organized family festival that takes place every three years, concluding with a weekend visit by Francis, Martin paid special tribute to the significance of families.

“As we contemplate this Christmas the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, let us pray for our family members at home or away, and spare a thought for families who are wounded or separated by war and violence, distrust or relationship breakdown,” he said.

In concluding his homily, he turned once more to the pope’s plea in *Laudato si’*.

“All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty,” he prayed.

“Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one,” he concluded.

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-uk-and-ireland/2018/12/25/irish-prelate-channels-popes-environmental-message-on-christmas/>

December 27, 2018

Our ladies of perpetual activism: Nuns for social justice

These sisters believe that their faith calls them to create a more just world.

By Liz Brazile, YES! Magazine
Nation of Change

Whether focusing on fossil fuels, social justice, or lobbying major corporations to be better stewards of the environment, these sisters believe that their faith calls them to create a more just world.

Sister Simone Campbell

Sister Simone Campbell didn’t expect the Vatican to condemn her group, Nuns on the Bus, as a “bad influence.” Campbell didn’t let it stop her from touring the country by bus to protest social and economic issues, though. Their latest excursion will target the 2017 tax law and encourage voter participation in the midterms.

A key element in Campbell's religious practice is meditation. It allows her to pause and listen to what she calls "the wee voice – the Holy Spirit." This is what she says has gotten her through the tough parts of her activist journey.

After witnessing protesters risk their lives during the civil rights movement, Campbell said, "the gospel spoke to me." She decided then to use her faith to mend gaps in equality. Despite disapproval from the very institution she serves, Campbell says that activism requires accepting opposing perspectives. "I came to realize it's fighting for a vision and not against a person."

Sister Janet McCann

An integral part of Sister Janet McCann's faith is her devotion to Mother Earth.

McCann and her colleagues at the Adorers of the Blood of Christ filed a complaint last year against the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to keep a pipeline off their land in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Previously, they had built an outdoor chapel on the proposed route of the pipeline as an act of peaceful protest.

"We wanted to have some kind of physical witness to our faith on that property," she said.

While judges ultimately ruled against the nuns, McCann said that their fight to preserve the environment isn't over. She and the rest of the order are planning to establish a small solar farm near the pipeline to call attention to and combat the negative impacts of fossil fuels.

"So long we've been fighting this pipeline," she said. "We want to use some of our expertise to do something for the environment."

Sister Nora Nash

The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia set up a corporate investment portfolio with their retirement fund in the 1980s. The sisters use their stakes to lobby more than 70 companies to be better corporate citizens.

Led by Sister Nora Nash, the order's director of corporate social responsibility, the nuns have used their dividends to provide capital and mentorship to women of color entrepreneurs, build infrastructure in developing nations, and compel corporate giants such as ExxonMobil and Wells Fargo to measure and lessen their environmental and social impacts.

"We believe that we need to look at corporations as organizations that are accountable for their impact on health and human rights," Nash said. "We encourage corporations to do the right thing – not just for themselves but also for the environment."

The Trump administration's rollbacks on environmental protections have made this type of activism even more critical to Nash and her convent.

The sisters have also lobbied airlines to combat human trafficking, gun retailers to amend their sales practices, and grocery stores and restaurants to promote healthier options.

Sydney Worth contributed to this article.

<https://www.nationofchange.org/2018/12/27/our-ladies-of-perpetual-activism-nuns-for-social-justice/>
