

Celebrating 30 Years of Religion and Ecology

Friday, October 16, 2026

Yale Divinity School

YALE FORUM ON RELIGION AND ECOLOGY

Yale Center for Environmental Justice

Celebrating Three Decades of Our Shared Work

The original premise of our work in religion and ecology is that we need to identify environmental ethics from the world's religions that arise from various cultural contexts. In other words, such ethics will be different in Asia than in the West or among Indigenous Traditions. Thus, at Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) we organized a series of 10 conferences on Religions of the World and Ecology from 1996-1998. The papers were published in a book series from Harvard (1997-2004).

With the help of many other scholars and environmentalists a new field of study in academia and a moral force for change in society was born. While there was no academic field of study in 1996 there are now some 30 graduate programs in religion and ecology in North America. Three of them are PhD Programs. Moreover, there are hundreds of grassroots engaged projects and interfaith efforts that embody the moral force of religion and ecology. For example, Interfaith Rainforest Initiative is an innovative project that honors Indigenous voices for protection of rainforests. On a worldwide level there is now $40 trillion in the divestment movement from oil and gas and 40% of that is from the religious communities.

The critique that we felt of religion from skeptical, positivistic scientists is still present. We share some of the concern, namely that religions have their problems, as is evident historically and at present. But they also have their promise in contributing to the moral force of change in issues such as abolition of slavery and the extension of civil rights. That is the hope that the environmental movement will grow by including the ethical component in making the shift toward a viable future for people and the planet.

Now we are beginning to see openings in which science understands there are multiple ways of managing ecosystems, for example, that include traditional environmental knowledge (TEK). Moreover, change is happening as the next generation of students and faculty understand that religion, ethics, and culture need to be included in solutions to environmental problems. That may be because some 85% of the world's people identify as religious. Their influence as leaders and members of institutions and communities is substantial. They have significant educational, financial, social, and political influence that can be used for transformation toward the wellbeing of the Earth community. This conference provides inspiring examples as how the field and force of religion and ecology has blossomed in the last thirty years.

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology

Conference Program

Sessions held in the Old Refectory at Yale Divinity School

Yale Land Statement

Yale University acknowledges that Indigenous peoples and nations, including Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern Pequot, Schaghticoke, Golden Hill Paugussett, Niantic, and the Quinnipiac and other Algonquian-speaking peoples, have stewarded through generations the lands and waterways of what is now Connecticut.

9:00AM REGISTRATION

In the main YDS entryway (Croll Hall)

Coffee, tea, and pastries available in the Old Common Room

10:00AM GREETINGS

Darlene Kascak, Educational Outreach Ambassador, Schaghticoke Tribal Nation

Gather outside the main doors to YDS and your guide will escort you to the greetings & tour

10:15AM LIVING VILLAGE TOUR & DISCUSSION

With Hayden Shaw and Sam King

11:30AM-12:00PM SERVICE IN MARQUAND CHAPEL

THEME: "CRY OF THE EARTH; CRY OF THE POOR"

This term arises from liberation theologian, Leonard's Boff book of the same title in Orbis' Ecology and Justice series. This book influenced Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si.

Organizers: Awet Andemicael, Mark Heim, Nancy Wright, and Diana Northington Samponaro

For those who will not be joining the chapel service, lunch will be available from 11:30am on.

12:00PM LUNCH

In the Old Common Room

12:45PM OPENING COMMENTS

Gerald Torres, Yale Center for Environmental Justice
Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology

See also the Introduction to the New Ecozoic Reader Special Issue on Religion and Ecology (September 2025)

1:00-1:30PM PLANETARY PERSPECTIVES

Chair: Mary Evelyn Tucker, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology
Dekila Chungyalpa, Loka Initiative, University of Wisconsin
Chantal Elkin, World Wildlife Fund, Faith and Nature Hub

1:30-2:30PM YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL FACULTY

Chair: Jennifer Herdt, Living Village and Ecotheology
Greg Mobley, Creation Care in the Bible
Carolyn Sharp, Ecological Witness as Public Theology
Ryan Darr, Multispecies Justice
Clifton Granby, Attunement and Renewal in Black Contemplative Praxis

2:30-2:45PM BREAK

Coffee, tea, and snacks available

2:45-3:45PM CURRENT ENGAGED PROJECTS

Chair: Mary Evelyn Tucker, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology
Fletcher Harper, Greenfaith
Lisa Dahill, Hartford International University
Terri Eickel, Interreligious Ecojustice Network
Leif Castren, AAAS DoSER
Jim Robinson, Iona University
Brian Sauder, Faith in Place

3:45-4:45PM ECOTHEOLOGY AND ECOJUSTICE IN GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Chair: Catherine Keller, Drew University
Heather Eaton, St. Paul's University, Ottawa
Karenna Gore, Union Theological Seminary, NYC
Elizabeth Allison, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco
Christopher Key Chapple, Loyola Marymount University

4:45-5:00PM BREAK

Coffee, tea, and snacks available

5:00-6:00PM YDS ALUMNAE REFLECTIONS

Chair: Stephanie Johnson, Convenor of the Episcopal Church's Green Caucus
Jim Antal, Special Advisor on Climate Justice, United Church of Christ
Meredith Barges, Visiting Instructor and PhD Candidate, SUNY School of Environmental Science & Forestry
Nailah Garard, Founding Farmer of Succotash Gardens
Blair Nelsen, Director, Waterspirit
Russell Powell, Research Associate, Harvard CSWR

See also this video interview series: Reflections on Religion & Ecology: Yale Alumni Speak from the Field

6:00-6:45PM BREAK

No coffee service

6:45-7:30PM DINNER

Reflections from Larry Rasmussen, Union Theological Seminary, Emeritus

7:30PM SCREENING OF JOURNEY OF THE UNIVERSE

Introduction and Discussion: John Grim, Sam King, and Heather Eaton

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