

An Introduction to having a Kairos Moment during worship

Updated February 18, 2022

Worship is *the* central act of the church. What we do – or don't do – in that time is an expression of our commitments and our theology. That's why the UCC's *Kairos Call to Action* suggests devoting "at least one minute each Sunday to being a Kairos Moment for inspiration, reflection, and calls to action."

Most weeks, you could use a consistent time in the service (near the offering, or with the announcements, or paired with prayer concerns, or with the scripture readings) for this moment. It could be a testimony from a member of the congregation, or a passage from a book or article, or a story from the news, or a call to some action. Some samples showing this variety are in this document. (You can use these as written or edit them for your context; some are responses to events that were happening locally or globally when they were written and so need to be updated). There are also some suggestions about writing a Kairos Moment on page 2.

Other weeks, the Kairos Moment might be longer: the whole sermon, a highly focused prayer, a special liturgy of confession, or a detailed action alert. If this sort of a Kairos Moment happens *every week*, it will be a powerful affirmation of your congregation's commitment.

We invite you to:

- Use some or all of them in your worship setting.
- Give us feedback on which of these seem helpful and enticing, and if any of them strike you as inappropriate or not helpful to the cause.
- Submit your own contributions for "moments." (We recommend these "moments" be 100 to 200 words long.)

Please send comments or submissions to the Rev. Jeffrey Spencer,
jeff@nilesdiscoverychurch.org.

Very Short Films

If you have the capability to share videos during worship (which many of us are during the pandemic when we are worshipping virtually), you might want to look for something to share on YouTube. For instance, in this video <https://youtu.be/B-nEYsyRIY0>, spoken word artist Prince Ea makes a powerful case in a little under four-and-a-half minutes for protecting the planet and challenges the human race to create a sustainable future. And you can see a video created by Bill Chestnut for Niles Discovery Church at <https://youtu.be/uYND1H-KO9o>.

Tip for writing a Kairos Moment *and for talking to anyone about the climate crisis*

Think about your goal: Remember that the Kairos Moment is an opportunity to share about both the reality of the climate crisis and to offer hope. So, think about those two things. (1) What aspect of the climate crisis do you want to talk about? (2) What is the hope that you're offering?

To answer that first question, think about **your lived experiences**.

One way you can enter into conversations about the climate crisis (including in your Kairos Moment) is by focusing on climate impacts you and your loved ones experience directly or on climate impacts you have been following in the news.

A climate organizer in Canada starts their conversations like this: *I start by having people look out the window. Today, it's snowy outside, which is not surprising, since it's wintertime here. But tomorrow, the temperature is supposed to jump up — way higher than normal. So I explain that climate change doesn't just mean it's getting hotter — it means extreme weather changes as well. That's why we're experiencing more dramatic differences.*

There are fantastic examples of *lived experiences* at climatechanged.me that may spur your creative thinking! Check them out.

The next step is to craft what you're going to say. **Tell your story and connect emotionally.**

Most people understand the world around them through stories. So when we talk about climate, focusing on stories and emotion brings what we say to life and can make what you say more persuasive.

Having examples of local impacts you've experienced and how this made you feel can be a great way to start. You can also try telling your climate story. What have you seen that makes you take action?

Another thing to do as you craft what you're going to say is to **tap into values**.

When we try to persuade someone on an issue we care about, we often use moral arguments. But people have different morals. When you talk to anyone (in a Kairos Moment for at the water cooler) about climate change, ask yourself, am I presenting this in language that will resonate with them?

For example, if you are talking to someone who enjoys hiking, you could center your argument around the way the deforestation industry destroys natural habitats and creates devastating imbalances in ecosystems. If you're crafting a Kairos Moment to share in worship, you know we have shared values as Christians. Connect with those.

Finally, **offer hope**. Now is the time to offer hope. Remind the people you are talking to about the victories that are possible when we come together. Give them something concrete they can do, like getting on 350.org's mailing list, or invite them to an event.

Struggling Churches May Be Climate Justice Teachers

Craig Schaub

If your church struggles to pay for outside resources, there's a good chance your church improvises creative ways to meet our current climate crisis. Limits often spawn resourcefulness and sometimes a different kind of thriving.

We read in Deuteronomy "If you obey the Lord your God... all these blessing shall come upon you and overtake you..." Much of obedience is living within limits, discovering joy, depth, and connection inside limits.

It's the opposite of how we often measure success. We are convinced things are humming when there is unlimited economic growth hiding the true costs to many humans and the planet.

Suggestions of reduce – reuse – recycle, zero waste, eating local, church carbon offsets, or energy conservation nibble the edges of a big idea: Obedience to some limits often brings blessing, creativity, and deeper relationship.

Some economists say we should scrap the misleading index of prosperity called the Gross Domestic Product and replace it with holistic measures to include leisure time, ecological restoration, cultural diversity, community vitality, income equity and soulful wellbeing. What would such a congregational index look like? Have some fun imagining how your church could measure Gross Spiritual Thriving or a People and Planet Resilience Index. What would you include?

Hours of prayer unplugged from the messages to consume? Small and slow home-grown solutions because you couldn't outsource? The barter of space and time with other community non-profits? Projects to build economic and ecological resilience in your neighborhood? What loads of carbon and sunshine and rain did everyone and everything capture connected with your church?

Struggling churches might just be incarnations of a different way of measuring growth. With gratitude, and often by demand, we're flipping notions of economy. That's an essential prophetic role if we are to face the climate crisis. May we live obediently to receive blessings which "come upon us and overtake us."

Money and the Climate Crisis

Jeffrey Spencer

Every Sunday, we receive an offering. We do this for both spiritual and practical reasons. For instance, the practice of sharing is good for our spirit. Likewise, the offering invites us into a deeper commitment to God's mission in the world and how we fulfill our part of it in our church.

Practically, our church needs money to function. We need money to meet payroll and buy curriculum, to stock the restrooms with necessary paper products and to provide coffee at our fellowship time after worship.

I bring this up because those practical reasons mirror the needs for money all organizations have. This is true even of huge corporations, like fossil fuel companies. When an oil company decides to drill a well or to build a pipeline, they turn to banks and bonds to finance the work. And they turn to insurance companies to insure the project.

We know how dangerous it is to extract the carbon in that oil so it can be burned and emitted into the air. The safest place for that oil and the carbon it carries is right where it is: in the ground.

If we can't convince oil, gas, and coal companies to leave it in the ground, maybe we can convince the banks and bond dealers to stop financing the extraction of fossil fuels. And maybe we can convince the insurance companies to stop insuring the extraction efforts.

If we are going to respond to this kairos moment, to this moment in human history when we can see both the dangers of continuing with business as usual and the possibilities of moving closer to the kin-dom of God by making deeply needed changes, action that is bold and creative is needed. To learn more about the movement to stop the money pipeline, go to stopthemoneypipeline.com.

The Environmental Crisis Is a Theological Problem

Excerpts by Peter Sawtell from Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*, p. 30-32

This can be used as one longer "moment," or divided into two week's readings.

Part 1:

Sallie McFague was one of the world's most influential environmental theologians. Her words, from "A New Climate for Theology: God, the World and Global Warming" are a reminder about why it is important for churches to act in this Kairos time.

Deep down, beneath all of our concepts and ideas about ourselves, is a sense, a feeling, an assumption about who we are. They have to do with the deepest questions of human existence. We act all the time on the basis of these deep assumptions of who we are and who God is, even while not acknowledging that we have such assumptions.

The environmental crisis is a theological problem, a problem coming from views of God and ourselves that encourages or permits our destructive, unjust actions. For example, if I see myself (deep down) as superior to other animals and life-forms, then of course I will act in ways that support my continuation in this position.

So we are suggesting that *who* God is and *who* we are must be central questions if we hope to change our actions in the direction of just, sustainable planetary living. The problem lies in our theologies and anthropologies. The problem, as many have pointed out, is a "spiritual" one, having to do with our will to change.

Part 2:

Sallie McFague was one of the world's most influential environmental theologians. Her words, from "A New Climate for Theology: God, the World and Global Warming" are a reminder about why "the environmental crisis is a theological problem."

A communitarian view of human beings is an ecological, economic one. It is a view of our place in the scheme of things that sees our well-being as interdependent with all other life forms in a just, sustainable way.

But most churches today are not "ecological." The Sunday sermon is not about the flourishing of God's whole creation; most often, especially in North American well-off churches, it is aimed at the care and comfort of human individuals. But the well-being of the whole of God's creation is not seen as part and parcel of the gospel message.

But can human beings thrive apart from nature? If salvation is understood as eternal life for some humans, then perhaps the answer is yes. But if salvation means the flourishing of all God's creatures here and now on this earth, then the answer is no. The world cannot be left out. The church must become ecological through and through.

Australia and Knowing Our Calling

Jeffrey Spencer

The photographs started off being Beautiful and eerie and haunting. Then we started hearing the stories behind the photographs.

32,400 square miles burned in the Australian wildfires in the last few months of 2019, an area a little smaller than the entire state of Indiana.¹ A billion animals killed from flame and smoke and post-fire starvation.² Fears that all of the wild animals of some species are now dead.³ More carbon released in the last three months of 2019 by burning vegetation (that's supposed to be absorbing carbon, not releasing it) than Australia produces from every car, home, and factory in a typical eight months.⁴

We know how increasing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are causing the very climate changes that make the fires more extreme and devastating, and make the fire season longer than we have ever seen.

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it,” the Psalmist tells us (Psalm 24:1). And the Genesis storytellers remind us that God has placed the stewardship of this creation we call earth in our hands. As God’s children, we are failing in this sacred vocation.

It is time to repent. This is the decade when things must change. Now. In this *kairos* moment.

If you’re looking for some good news in the midst of the devastation, consider this: when you are working to mitigate the climate crisis you can know, without a doubt, you are doing the most important thing you could be doing.

¹ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/australia-wildfire-bushfire-size-2020-n1112006>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/11/world/australia/fires-animals.html>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jan/04/ecologists-warn-silent-death-australia-bushfires-endangered-species-extinction>

⁴ <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/bushfires-spew-two-thirds-of-national-carbon-emissions-in-one-season-20200102-p530ez.html>

A Story from Camp

Rev. Tom Martinez

Many progressive Christians are well aware of Climate change, but aren't quite sure where to begin addressing it. One way is through the power of story. Arizona Interfaith Power and Light has hosted events that invite participants to share a story drawn from an experience in nature. It might be an experience of God's sacred presence, a breathtaking sighting of a wild animal, being overwhelmed by the beauty of a sunset over the Grand Canyon—or all of the above! Stories remind us of our connection to the natural world, to each other and to life's sacred depths, which we sometimes call God!

My stepson Emilio told me a story when he got back from the SW Conference's summer camp up in the mountains of northern Arizona (yes we have some mountains up there!). As he tells it, one night they were singing around a campfire, when a family of deer emerged from the woods. His eyes lit up with excitement as he recounted the synchronicity of the experience. "Here we were singing about not being alone," he exclaimed, "and this deer comes out of the woods and stops and looks right at me! It was so cool!" Nature is cool. Sometimes we need to remind each other of that.

Here's an idea of something you can do. Hold a gathering (virtually, if it needs to be that way) in which people are invited to tell each other their stories drawn from experiences in the natural world. It's a great way to ease onto a path of engagement in these challenging times, and to celebrate the beauty and power of God's creation.

Resources: for folks who want to go deeper into the art and practice of storytelling, check out, *Re-Creating a Life: Learning How to Tell Our Most Life-Giving Story* (by Diane M. Millis, Ph. D., 2019). And for those interested in spiritual direction there's, *Reading Your Life's Story: an invitation to spiritual mentoring*, by Keith R. Anderson. And many people are finding storytelling useful in relation to social justice organizing, check out the work of Marshal Ganz who has pioneered an approach to public narrative using what he refers to as the story of self, the story of us, and the story of now at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCu-pW16Se8>

Nature as a Healing Balm

Rusty Eidmann-Hicks

Richard Louv, in his book, *Last Child in the Woods*, coins a term: *Nature Deficit Disorder*. He describes it as “*the human costs of alienation from nature.*” (p. 34)

Louv’s contention is that we’ve lost something important in the process of industrializing, and that our separation from the natural world has severe implications for our spiritual and emotional health. He writes: “Nature is often overlooked as a healing balm for the emotional hardships in a child’s life. You’ll likely never see a slick commercial for nature therapy, as you do for the latest antidepressant pharmaceuticals. But parents, educators and health workers need to know what a useful antidote to emotional and physical stress nature can be.” (p. 48)

Jesus, whenever he got stressed out, would go out ‘to a lonely place’ or to a mountaintop, or go out on a boat into the sea. He knew what it meant to take time alone in nature, and how healing that could be. It drove his disciples crazy, but it was often how Jesus renewed his strength and spiritual sanity. Some scholars believe Jesus was a desert mystic before his ministry, like John the Baptist who lived on locusts and wild honey and wore camel hides for clothes. I like to believe Jesus learned a lot from his wilderness retreats.

“Look at the birds of the air,” he’s quoted as saying in Matthew 6:26-27; “they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.... And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?” Something is out of whack when we have become so disconnected from the literal roots of our lives. It’s time to learn from birds of the air and flowers of the field how to deal with anxiety, and from our Savior who figured all this out in the stillness of the wild.

Cut Off from Nature

Rusty Eidmann-Hicks

Richard Louv, in his book, *Last Child in the Woods*, coins a term: *Nature Deficit Disorder*. He describes it as “the human costs of alienation from nature.” (p. 34)

He describes his sadness at the loss of a connection with nature for many children in our day: “The shift in our relationship to the natural world is startling, even in settings that one would assume are devoted to nature. Not that long ago, summer camp was a place where you camped, hiked in the woods, learned about plants and animals, or told firelight stories about ghosts or mountain lions. As likely as not today, ‘summer camp’ is a weight-loss camp, or a computer camp. For a new generation, nature is more abstraction than reality. Increasingly, nature is something to watch, to consume, to wear – to ignore. A recent television ad depicts a four-wheel drive SUV racing along a breathtakingly beautiful mountain stream – while in the backseat two children watch a movie on a flip-down video system, oblivious to the landscape and water beyond the windows.” (p. 2)

At a time when our souls need the healing calm and vitality of the natural world more than ever, we are more cut off. The natural world desperately needs we humans to stop paving over landscapes and animal habitat, and spewing carbon into the atmosphere, and plastics into the ocean. Like Jesus, we can use time away on a mountaintop or on the sea or in a forest. But more so, we can use the wisdom to regain balance and sustainability for ourselves and for our children’s futures.

Nature Hangs on the Cross

Rusty Eidmann-Hicks

Our human world, so wrapped up in cocoons of technology and industry, is transforming this world into its own image. Natural harmonies, interdependent communities of life, habitats that support vast colonies of creatures are being leveled, blasted, and destroyed. You've heard the figures and facts – dramatic rise in carbon dioxide, loss of top-soil, mass extinctions, burning of the rain forests, melting of glaciers, depletion of ocean life. Like a litany of lamentation, it goes on. Nature hangs on the cross. “Forgive them for they do not know what they are doing,” Jesus said as he was being crucified (Lk 23:24). Every day is Auschwitz for animals. We reap what we sow. We have lost intimacy with the natural world, and with sacred balance and respect that teaches us how to live.

Wendell Berry writes this: “We no longer hear the voice of the rivers, the mountains, or the sea. The trees and meadows are no longer intimate modes of spirit presence. The world about us has become an ‘it’ rather than a ‘thou’. We continue to make music, write poetry, and do our painting and sculpture and architecture, but these activities easily become aesthetic expressions simply of the human. They lost the intimacy and radiance and awesome qualities of the universe.”

In losing intimacy with nature, we run the risk of losing intimacy with God. Thankfully, resurrection is the heart of our faith. Human ways can be transformed into God's ways. We can regain healthy ecosystems and sustainable practices using wisdom passed down through our faith: simplicity, compassion, holy resistance, and prayerful healing. With the Spirit's guidance, we can walk gently and fashion societies of God's peace that mirror nature's rhythms.

Gratitude from a Whale

Rusty Eidmann-Hicks

“God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth’” (Gen. 1:22). God has provided us with this magnificent planet, this complex and achingly lovely world, filled with a vast array of fabulous creatures.

I read recently about a whale that had become caught in a mess of fishing net, so that she couldn't move and would soon drown. A group of divers were called out to help, and very carefully, they cut through the web of nylon cord that was holding this whale down. They cut around the fins and back flippers, aware that they could easily be severely hurt if the whale began to lash and struggle. One diver spoke with awe of the sensation of cutting the webbing by the whale's mouth and looking directly into her enormous eye, which seemed gentle and curious. Finally, when all of the fishing net was cut, the whale floated free, but then turned around suddenly. The whale swam up to each of the divers and gently nuzzled them. The divers were convinced that the whale had turned back out of gratitude, to thank each of them for saving her life.

An astounding web of life surrounds us, a myriad of wondrous creatures, with intelligence and sensitivity. We share similar sensations, sight, breath, gratitude, grief and love. Our climate crisis can serve to humble us to recognize our place in the web. We can plant seeds of a new tomorrow, founded on peace and balance, harmony and simplicity, in tune with the rhythms of life and connections with each other, even those with fins, feathers, scales or fur.

God Is Calling Us to Pay Attention

Rusty Eidmann-Hicks

A story of the Buddha goes that while walking in a farmer's field, he bursts into tears when he saw a family of ants whose home was destroyed by the farmer's plow. He wept to see them scrambling to save the larva of their children. He realized that in order to eat, some life must be destroyed.

This dilemma is more and more acute now in our age, as industrialized farming and industry churns the earth and spews carbon and pollution. Our products come in sleek, shiny packages, shrink-wrapped without smell or blood, yet they come with great cost. This earth is being crucified slowly, quietly on a cross of our own consumption. Like those who walked by the suffering Christ, wagging their heads and laughing, we carry on as if nothing is wrong.

God is calling us to pay attention. God calls us to face the suffering of this world – so that out of suffering can come transformation. We pray “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth,” seeking to replicate the harmony and joy of heaven on this earth, not in some distant reality. We don't have to deny our confusion, complicity, and consumption. God offers us ways to claim repentance, forgiveness, and resurrection; and to seek a new relationship with our earthly home. Embedded in our faith are seeds of a new tomorrow, founded on peace and balance, on harmony and simplicity. Let us move beyond our guilt and denial, unite with God's grace to heal our planet, and restore our souls by restoring the natural world.

The Universe as Story

Rusty Eidmann-Hicks

In their book, *Journey of the Universe*, philosopher Brian Swimme and historian Mary Evelyn Tucker write: “The universe is not simply a place but a story – a story in which we are immersed, to which we belong, and out of which we arose. This story has the power to awaken us more deeply to who we are. For just as the Milky Way is the universe in the form of a galaxy, and an orchid is the universe in the form of a flower, we are the universe in the form of a human. And every time we are drawn to look up into the night sky and reflect on the awesome beauty of the universe, we are actually the universe reflecting on itself... Our human destiny is to become the heart of the universe that embraces the whole of the Earth community. We are just a speck in the universe, but we are beings with the capacity to feel comprehensive compassion in the midst of an ocean of intimacy. That is the direction of our becoming more fully human.” [3]

As people of faith, we dedicate ourselves to move in the direction of compassion, of respect and love for not only people, but also for the natural world. This is our story – reflected in a journey from an Eden of harmony and sustainability, to our present dilemma of a world in peril, threatened by a flood of toxic waste and climate imbalance. We can fashion an Ark of blessed hope, to journey over terrifying waters of change to a compassionate, green, sustainable future.

An Urgent Moment.

Stephen Gifford

Caring about and for the Earth has taken on a new urgency. What should you do? Well, *Don't just stand there! Do something!*

We can start simply. We can find ways to be more environmentally conscious as a congregation. How about we pray for creation and this crisis in some way every week? We could convene an action group to lead this ministry to actualize those prayers. There are online resources out there (for instance WebofCreation.org, CreationJustice.org). And there are organizations who are taking political action that we can partner with.

And also: *Don't just do something, stand there!* Or maybe even, *take a step back*. Let's do our biblical and theological homework. Creation theology is much neglected. We have allowed ourselves to think that God's plan is simply, and only, for humanity's salvation from the earth. We have glossed over how God's covenant of faithful loving is rooted in a Creation theology that looks for the redemption of the whole earth (Romans 8.) We have dismissed as "merely poetry" the place of nature's flora and fauna have in offering praise to the Creator (Psalm 104). We have, with little awareness or remorse, displaced God as our Sovereign, adoring our own accomplishments, wallowing in our conspicuous consumption of earth's resources, and generally dismissing any accountability to the Creator for our role as the garden keepers of God's good creation. There is a need for much reflection and repentance. Reading UCC leader Jim Antal's *Climate Church*, *Climate World* or Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* are good places to start.

Missional urgency emerges when we recognize the gap between what God expects of us as God's own people and our present state of affairs. As God's people we are, through our holiness and justice seeking, called to preserve and enhance life for *all* of creation. The urgency of this missional calling is before us. We can play a crucial role in God's desire to redirect humanity's self-destructive and nature decimating ways. We can be yeast, salt, and light for a new way and a new day.

A Short Story About Silence

Rev. Peter Sawtell

A few years ago, I spoke with a young woman about the work of my non-profit agency, which helps churches develop environmental perspectives in their worship, education, buildings, and advocacy.

She responded with both surprise and delight. Her brief comment spoke eloquently to me about the need for churches to speak up: “I’ve always been involved in the church, and I’ve always cared deeply for the environment. But I never heard the church talk about the environment, so I thought I was wrong.”

For whatever reason, the church has often been silent about the need to care for God’s creation. Most churches recognize the need to speak and act about issues of human rights and social justice. We have not done as well in extending our concern beyond the human realm.

Our silence sends a powerful message. As the woman felt so clearly from her years of church life, silence speaks a loud message: This is not important! This is not even deserving of my interest and my attention.

These weekly Kairos Moments are one way for your church to break the silence.

What Kind of World?

Rev. Peter Sawtell

When I visit churches to talk about the climate emergency, there's one question that comes up over and over again. The good-hearted church members are usually asking themselves, "What kind of world do we want to leave for our children and grandchildren?"

I tell them that they're asking the wrong question. The one we need to be asking is, "What kind of world do our children and grandchildren have a right to demand from us?"

The first question is one that wants us to be charitable. How good an inheritance do we want to leave them, and how much do we get to claim for ourselves? How much do we want to change our lives for the sake of our kids?

We might decide that our own comfort, convenience, and prosperity are more compelling than what the planet will look like in 50 years. Indeed, that's precisely the way our global society is answering the question. The way we're trashing the planet shows that we're willing to leave them a ruined world.

But if we ask what they have a right to demand from us, then their needs get considered first. It is a question of intergenerational justice, not charity. At the very least, our children and grandchildren have a right to a livable planet. How can we, as justice-seeking Christians, respond to their demand for a livable world?

Teaching the Rs of Earth Care

Beth Newell

Good morning.

There is a revitalized team in church, the Green Team. As a part of our efforts, we are sharing occasional “Kairos Moments” in our worship services. This is our first, so let me start with my definition of a *Kairos Moment*. A *Kairos Moment* is ‘the opportune occasion to change behaviors and opinions. The perfect teachable time!’

Think about Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus. That was a major *Kairos Moment*, and major ones are easier to spot. There are also plenty of minor *Kairos Moments* in our lives. I had a *Kairos Moment* when our daughter was 13 years old. She had the tendency to drop almost-clean clothes on the floor or in the laundry basket. She also threw empty shampoo bottles in the trash. Neither of these habits was very gentle on the earth.

One day, I had a flash of insight: I used sticky notes placed on such items to urge different behaviors. On the clothes, I put, “Please re-wear me or put me in a drawer; I am not dirty.” On the items in trash I put “Please recycle me.”

This gentle approach had the desired effect as she has become a master recycler and, as far as I know, to this day washes only dirty clothes.

Can you find a *Kairos Moment* in your life this week?

Reading Through a Green Lens

by Sandra Wong

My first Bible has special meaning to me. I was a freshman in high school and started attending a local Chinese Southern Baptist Church. One of the youth leaders saw that I did not have a Bible of my own and gave me a New American Standard Bible. I carried it faithfully every Sunday to service and underlined and highlighted in it during Sunday school. Despite its frayed edges and wrinkled pages now, it still holds a special place for me because it symbolizes the start of my journey with God.

In Christmas 2006, my parents-in-law gave me a Quest Study Bible which is a New International Version translation. My father-in-law painstakingly made and attached tabs for each book of the Bible to make it easier for me to reference. Whenever I open this Bible, I remember the love and care that took place in preparing this gift for me.

There are hundreds of English versions of the Bible which is derived from the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. The most commonly used translation is the King James Version or New King James Version, followed by New International Version (NIV), and then the New Revised Standard Version. The King James version is considered a deeply poetic translation though it uses 17th century English. The NIV uses more modern language and may be easier to understand, though it isn't always true to the oldest manuscripts. With all these different versions of the Bible, it may be hard for one to choose. And I suspect that some of you have several different translations of the Bible on your bookshelves.

I would like to introduce to you a version of the Bible you may not have heard of before. It's called *The Green Bible*. It's actually a New Revised Standard Version Bible. But once you flip through the pages, you will quickly notice something different about this Bible. Many passages are highlighted in green. These green-colored passages encourage the reader to see God's involvement with creation. There are over a thousand references to the earth and caring for creation in the Bible. Highlighted texts illustrate how all parts of creation – land, water, air, plants, animals, and humans – are interdependent. Most importantly, the green texts show how we are called upon to care for God's creation. Our scripture for today's sermon is in fact all highlighted in green.

Each translation of the Bible can be used in its own way to help the reader understand the meaning behind the message. I encourage you to try reading through a green lens. It's hard to find a copy of the Green Bible, so you may have to create your own. That work may provide new insights and discoveries in the Bible you thought you already knew.

An Invitation from Revelation

Roberta McReynolds

Have you ever read the very last chapter of the Bible? If you've ever tried to read the Bible straight through or even the entire Book of Revelation, it wouldn't be surprising if you stopped before the end. So much to think about and chew over in all that reading!

In chapter 22 of Revelation, St. John of Patmos wrote about the New Heaven and the New Earth. It was his vision of what life would entail when time has ended and God is fully in charge. Surprisingly, John wrote of a City, the New Jerusalem, a City on Earth! No view here of a heaven in the clouds. Listen to John: "The angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God ... through the middle of the street of the City. On either side of the river is the Tree of Life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

Here is a beautiful portrait of a renewed earth with crystal clear river water. And with trees bearing luscious fruit year-round. And a special characteristic: the leaves of the trees can be used to heal all the disease and hurt and misuse the earth has acquired. What a good and healthy picture of earth and its restoration! What a hopeful vision! But why should we wait for that future? Let's work with God to create it now!

Climate Voter Pledge

By Tarrah Henrie

Since I am more of an analytical person than a word person, I had to look up the definition of Kairos. It means right, critical, or opportune. This really is a Kairos Moment for our nation. It is critical to take action to address climate change and other environmental issues right now.

In 2016, I was the volunteer coordinator for the Fremont area for one of the presidential candidates. (I will let you guess which one.) While this election is vitally important, this year is really different from 2016. With the added duties of online schooling on top of work, I won't be volunteering for any campaigns. What I will be doing is voting for candidates that have a firm commitment to the environment and addressing climate change.

I believe that this is an important expression of my faith because environmental justice is linked to social justice. In the US, climate change impacts will disproportionately affect our low income and minority brothers and sisters. Plus, because of the impacts of the pandemic, our economy needs to be rebuilt. Let's do it in an equitable way that makes green jobs and builds an infrastructure for a carbon neutral future.

I invite you to join me in voting for candidates that care about making a positive difference on these issues. I invite you to contact your elected officials at all levels and let them know that this is a priority for you.

You can also pledge to be a faith climate justice voter:

<https://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/voter-pledge-form/>

The Golden Eagle

Ron Adamson

The members of our congregation's Green Team believe that Global Climate Change is real, and we believe that we here on earth are at least partly the cause. I don't mean to say that every hot day and every lightning strike and every hurricane is due to Global Warming, but the scientific evidence is clear that on average our Earth is warming and as a result, both the weather patterns and the earth's eco-systems are dramatically changing.

Now, Global Warming does not *only* affect us humans – animals, our co-inhabitants on this earth, are also stressed. A few weeks ago, Rich talked about the decline in bird population and varieties.

Today, polar bears get lots of publicity as the ice packs in the Arctic melt. And as droughts and rainstorms and ocean currents and human population increase, the space and food needed by big and small animals decrease. For instance, today worldwide we see big drops in the number of giraffes and elephants and foxes and butterflies and salmon and even squirrels.

When I was a boy I was fascinated by golden eagles. Growing up in flatland Illinois, I never saw even one golden eagle, but I read lots about them. And one of the books ended with a sage observation. The author said, "The needs of the golden eagle are his message to mankind."

I think that statement has general truth to it. Maybe we can get by without eagles or polar bears or spotted owls, but if they cannot survive it means that our own world and our own environment would have changed to the extent that our own way of life could be the next to go.

It would be sad to be without our animal friends and colleagues, so let's take care of their needs as well as our own. In the end, it is to all our benefit.

The Mountains

Inger Svaerd

In the Mountains I find my Kairos moments.

In the Mountains:

change is possible,

opportunities are at maximum,

everything comes together.

Because:

God created the Mountains for you and me.

God created the Mountains for us to enjoy.

God created the Mountains for us to hike.

God created the Mountains for us to ski.

God created the Mountains for us to climb.

God created the Mountains for us to take care of.

God created the Mountains for me to care for.

The Mountains are God's blessing to a stressed body.

The Mountains are God's blessing to a broken body.

The Mountains are God's blessing to a fatigued body.

The Mountains are God's blessing to worried souls.

The Mountains are God's blessing to anxious souls.

The Mountains are God's blessing to a broken heart.

The Mountains are God's blessing to a troubled heart.

The Mountains are God's blessing to an exhausted brain.

The Mountains are God's blessing to a clouded brain.

The Mountains are God's blessing to my life.

God created the Mountains so we could find peace in our souls.

God created the Mountains so we could heal our body.

God created the Mountains so we could heal souls.

God created the Mountains so we could heal broken hearts.

God created the Mountains so we could praise God's creation.

God created the Mountains so we can make peace with the world.

God created the Mountains so I can make peace with God.

Gardening as Faith

Ginny August

One learns a lot of lessons while gardening: hope, patience, resilience, and to be observant.

There are rules: Good soil is of utmost importance, as are water and compost. Once you plant a seed, it may take *forever* to emerge. It might need a stick to grow on, or thinning. You will always be needed!

Your beautiful garden will attract gophers, squirrels, raccoons, and voracious bugs. Gardening teaches us to coexist with God's creatures.

If you garden, your friends will give you plants and cuttings. It's an unspoken rule that gardeners share.

Our garden gives us a great deal of pleasure. After work (in the days before I retired), I would go directly to my garden swing. Breathing the freshness, listening to the rustle of birds, and seeing the moths and butterflies would immediately de-compress me. A garden is God's medicine and television channel!

Years ago, an acquaintance told us she continually moved the plants in her yard. What a radical idea! At that point in my life, I thought everything had to stay just where I put it. She gave me permission to change.

Our yard is a photo album of memories. In the spring we plant sweet peas to honor my grandmother. The clivia, amaryllis, and matilija poppies are sweet reminders from family.

During this pandemic it has been especially important to be out in the yard. We created new growing places in the yard just for the pleasure of having more food. When we harvest, we know exactly where our food came from.

May I suggest, if you haven't planted something, give it a try.

Please remember, by taking care of God's Earth, you are caring for us all

Planting a Seed for Conservation

Tom Gunnarson

In my youth, my best friend and I would spend hours exploring the woods and meadows near our homes in Concord, Massachusetts, following well-worn trails and footpaths that wound through the hills and hollows. In one spot at the edge of the forest, an ancient pool of inky black water endured, protected on three sides by stonewall and surrounded by a carpet of Fan clubmoss and Bracken Fern. Every spring something magical happened there – the rebirth of the delicate [pink Lady's Slipper](#).

We were always amazed at the soft radiance of this orchid and thought it must be rare and have enchanting properties. We thought the same of the Monarch butterflies that were associated with the Milkweed plants that we used to play in, getting the sticky milk and then white, fluffy coma all over us. Many times, we watched the caterpillars eat and grow, then pass through the chrysalis stage to become magnificent butterflies. Those were the days of innocent youth and a carefree age.

Now, five decades later near another coast, ambles through nature remain a constant that provides spiritual sustenance and perceptual clarity.

Walking down the winding path of the Pacific Grove Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary just a few weeks ago brought back the relatively recent memory of seeing large clusters of orange, black and white wings high in the trees. This day there were none. A December 7, 2020 headline from the Western Monarch Count stated, “With Fewer than 2,000 Butterflies Counted So Far, Western Monarch Takes an Astonishing Step Closer to Extinction.” No monarch butterflies had reportedly been sighted although counters had been looking every week since mid-October. So it wasn't just us.

In our small back patio, we have a four-station bird feeder and birdbath, four large pots planted with flowers, herbs and small vegetables and we regularly feed a stray yellow tabby cat. We get great pleasure and a certain calm from watching hummingbirds, chickadees and doves; eating fresh cherry tomatoes and thyme; and petting our furry friend. Yet in all the time living in this house, we have rarely seen a butterfly.

Maybe, through simple ignorance, we have not been good hosts to these sylvan fairies. Come to think of it, we feed the birds with seed, nectar and suet, plants with fertilizer, and our cat with kibble. Why not add butterfly food? Maybe we can do our small part to help this population flourish in the flora and fauna microcosm that is our backyard. The Ardenwood Historic Farm, just over two miles from our house, has (or had) the largest overwinter Monarch population in the East Bay.

With so much COVID-spawned time at home, we should buy some Milkweed and other butterfly friendly seeds and grow our own little sanctuary for the Monarchs and their brethren. The realization when we first see a butterfly alight on our new plot will be good for our souls.

Happily, the Pink Lady's Slipper is not rare or endangered as long as there is a high level of humidity and readily available subsurface water. These are just two examples of the many natural living wonders that we live with and have control of with conservation for the precious balance of life that that we all need to survive and prosper on this earth.

On John Muir

Roberta McReynolds

God holds our lives, and also the lives of all the creatures on earth, and, we might say, the lives of rocks, grasses, and streams. An early 20th Century Californian by the name of John Muir realized this about God and nature, perhaps as well as anyone has. I want to read you two short selections from Muir's writings about the Sierras and about Yosemite, the first about a startling experience and the second, about a beautiful one.

“When the avalanche started, I threw myself on my back and spread my arms to try to keep from sinking. Fortunately, though the grade of the canyon is very steep, it is not interrupted by precipices large enough to cause outbounding or free plunging. On no part of the rush was I buried. I was only moderately embedded on the surface or, at times, a little below it, and covered with a veil of backstreaming dust particles; and as the whole mass below me and about me joined in the flight, there was no friction, though I was tossed here and there and lurched from side to side. When the avalanche swedged and came to rest, I found myself on top of the crumpled pile without a bruise or scar. This was a fine experience!... This flight in what might be called a milky way of snow-stars was the most spiritual and exhilarating of all the modes of motion I have ever experienced. Elijah's flight in a chariot of fire could hardly have been more gloriously exciting.”

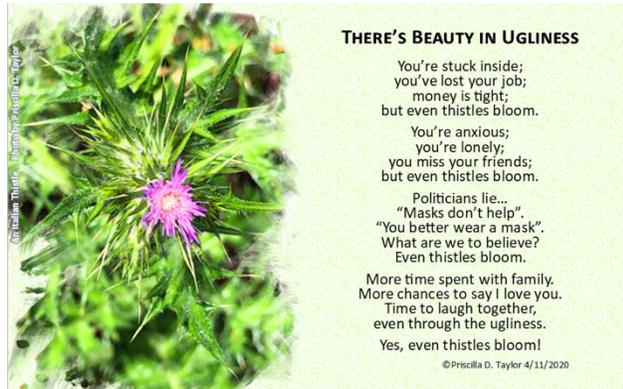
“Climbing along the dashing border of the cascade, bathed from time to time in waftings of irised spray, you are not likely to feel much weariness, and all too soon you find yourself beyond its highest fountains. Climbing higher, new beauty comes streaming on the sight.... All the streams and the pools at this elevation are furnished with little gardens which, though making scarce any show at a distance, constitute charming surprises to the appreciative mountaineer in their midst. In so wild and so beautiful a region your first day will be spent, every sight and sound novel and inspiring, and leading you far from yourself.... With the approach of evening long blue spiky-edged shadows creep out over the snowfields, while a rosy glow, at first scarce discernable, gradually deepens, suffusing every peak and flushing the glaciers and the harsh crags above them. This is the alpenglow, the most impressive of all the terrestrial manifestations of God. At the touch of this divine light, the mountains seem to kindle to a rapt religious consciousness, and stand hushed like worshippers waiting to be blessed. And then comes suddenly darkness and the stars.”

[Quotes are from *Meditations of John Muir: Nature's Temple*, edited by Chris Highland.]

My Happy Place

Priscilla Taylor

Before last year, I wouldn't have said that I was a poet. COVID-19 changed that. During the first shelter-in-place orders, I spent a lot of time in our backyard. We have a lot of trees and at the time, a lot of weeds. Worry about the virus and a flowering thistle, inspired me to write "There's Beauty in Ugliness," a poem that appeared in the first COVID-19 Special Edition of *The Bell*. Since then, I've written several others.



2020 was a stressful year and I had a lot of feelings. I found it therapeutic to put those feelings down on paper. Some thought or feeling would pop into my head and I'd start free writing. In free writing, it doesn't matter what you write. The goal is to get all your thoughts down on paper then read through it to pick out any relevant idea or theme. Sometimes, I'd find a complete a poem in my free writing. Other times, I'd have to flesh it out.

When I shared my finished poems with friends and family, I could tell they were moved by my words. I like to think my words helped them work through the issues they were experiencing because of the virus or learn that they weren't alone in how they felt.

When I was invited to speak today, it was suggested that I use a photo as inspiration for a new poem. I chose a photo of the beach. I've always loved going to the beach and several times during this pandemic, I've been lucky enough to meet up with friends by the shore. Don't worry, we were socially distant, and we wore masks.

Here's the poem this photo inspired:

My Happy Place

The breeze blows by.
The sand squishes between my toes.
The waves crash nearby.
The beach is my Happy Place.

It doesn't matter which beach.
I've been to a lot of them,
up and down the West Coast
on the Islands of Hawaii and Oahu,
in Maine, New Hampshire, and Virginia,
even in Mexico.
As long as there's sand and ocean,
I consider it my Happy Place.



My heart and mind soar
with the gulls & pelicans.
My breath flows in and out
with the crashing of the waves.
I can relax here.
Sun, overcast or rain,
it doesn't matter to me.
The beach is my Happy Place.

I can be combing the sand
for shells or glass,
reading a book,
or laughing with friends.
Whatever I'm doing,
I'm happy being at the beach.

When I can't be there,
I can look at a photo,
and easily be transported.
I can imagine sitting on the sand,
or walking along the shore.
My mind and my heart settle,
because the beach
is my Happy Place.

If you feel inspired by what I shared today or by something you see or feel, I hope you'll try putting it into words. Then I hope you'll share it with us by submitting it for *The Bell*. Thank you!

Green Challenge

Sandra Wong

[ed: the city of Fremont, California, has initiated a "Green Challenge" to engage people in actively lowering the environmental impact. Niles Discovery Church launched an invitation for members and friends of the congregation to join the church's "team" with this Kairos Moment.]

Since joining our church's Green Team, my awareness of how our actions impact the environment has greatly expanded. I decided to start the Niles Discovery Church community group on the Fremont Green Challenge website. So far, we have 17 households on our team and we want to grow that team.

The changes I have made are most evident in how I get ready in the morning for work. I love long hot showers. So, choosing the action item of taking shorter showers was not immediately enticing.

After a while, it became a game to me. How fast can I shower without feeling stressed or rushed?

Now, while the water is warming up in the shower, I start washing my face, hands, and feet with the cold water since these parts of my body can withstand the cold temperature better than the rest of my body. To cut down on using plastic, I started using shampoo and conditioner bars. This also avoids the few seconds of opening, closing, and shaking up the plastic shampoo bottle. I may turn off the water when lathering my hair (depending on how cold it is in the morning). If too cold, I'll just turn down the force of the water, but not completely off. No blow dryer for me. I have the fan on in my car on the way to work to air dry my hair. I have gotten my shower down to 5 minutes or less now! Also, I brush my teeth with chewpaste instead of using toothpaste from a plastic tube and I floss with silk floss that comes in a glass tube. All these items can be purchased on plastic-free websites like Etee or Ethique.

Conserving our natural resources like water and electricity and using less plastic waste did not come naturally for me. I was challenged by our Green Team and inspired by our church's commitment to caring for creation. Now, I challenge you to join me and our church in participating in our own version of the Summer Olympic Games. The Niles Discovery Church Green Challenge will start today and continue through August. To kick off our Challenge, you will hear from Community Climate Solutions city program manager, Patrick Journey, as he walks us through the website after today's worship service. You will learn how you and your family can get involved in this fun Challenge. Each month will have a different theme. April and May will challenge us to just sign up on the website and poke around it a bit. June will be focused on transportation. July will be about electricity and heat. August will be about food and waste. Eco-friendly prizes will be awarded by drawing among those who participate in the theme month's action items.

Maybe an ultrashort shower is not for you. The great thing is that the Fremont Green Challenge website has something for everyone to try and you don't have to be a Fremont resident to participate.

Let the Games Begin!

One of the 15 Commandments

Ray D'Ambrosio

I am, and for many years have been, a fan of Mel Brooks movies. I feel that we need occasional doses of unbridled silliness in our lives to provide some emotional protection from the doom and gloom that we see plenty of. While some of his comedy hasn't aged well, some of it is (in my humble opinion) timeless. My favorite movie of the lot is "History of the World Part 1", where in 90 minutes Brooks summarizes the process of human civilization from the dawn of human intelligence to the French Revolution.

In the midst of this, one short sketch shows Brooks, dressed as Moses, coming down from the mountain carrying *three* stone tablets. He says "my people, the Lord Jehovah has given unto you these *fifteen* ... (he drops and destroys one tablet) Oy! TEN! TEN Commandments for all to obey." Cracks me up every time.

Over many years of teaching Sunday school, I've brought up this scene several times, and asked my student-friends a question: *If there were actually 15 commandments instead of ten, what do you imagine the other five would be?*

As you can imagine I've heard many suggestions over the years. One topic that seems to come up almost every time is caring for the Earth. Even though the direction to care for the earth is there in Genesis – 2:15 says, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden *to work it and take care of it*" – for some reason that didn't make it into the Commandments. A moment for a needless disclaimer: I have no authority to write commandments. That said, I trust and pray that the Lord won't smite me for *suggesting* the wording for one:

Thou shalt care for the land, sea and sky and all the creatures who live there: Reap only as you must, restore what you consume.

So, pretending for a moment that this makes the list as one of the 15, now what? I suggest the following:

Reap only as you must

- Save energy. Energy you don't use takes nothing from the earth.
- Eat less meat.
- Use reusable alternatives.
- Go paperless.
- Use renewable energy.
- Recycle and reuse.

Restore what you consume

- Grow your own produce.
- Donate unused items.
- VOTE for the preservation of natural spaces.
- VOTE for the large-scale restoration of ecosystems.

- VOTE for reductions in fossil fuel infrastructure, replaced with renewable energy infrastructure.

I will leave suggestions for the other four imaginary commandments to you.

How to save energy the easy way

by Bee Newell

Good Morning All,

I am proud to be a member of a congregation that is already very environmentally aware. In many ways I think that these Kairos (teachable) moments are like ‘preaching to the choir’—Oh wait! I am talking to the choir—“hello choir.”

I have some amazingly easy tips for you to save energy in your residence.

The number one energy user in most households is your water heater so:

1. Turn all your faucet handles to cold or only use the cold-water side if two handled faucets. It is soap that destroys viruses, bacteria, and other germs—not the temperature of the water.
2. Turn down the temperature of your water heater. There even is a ‘vacation mode’ on most. Use it if you are going to be gone for more than three days. This will save you many kilowatts of energy and is quite easy to do. (Instructions are on the Fremont Green Challenge website—please sign up for our team)
3. Use your oven, dishwasher—full load only, please, and washing machine, also full load—before 4 in the afternoon. For those of you who have PG&E as your provider—rates go up from 4 to 9 p.m.
4. Wash all clothes in cold water unless very greasy.
5. Dry everything you can outdoors. You can use a line strung between two trees or a bush and a tree, and clean patio furniture works well also.
6. Wash only full loads of clothes, but dry similar things together. Timed dry and correct temperature for items saves more electricity than auto dry (especially if your auto dry fluffs.) If you can not dry your clothes during the lower rates, then put them (at end of spin cycle) in the freezer to prevent mildew until lower power rate times
7. Turn off all lights when leaving a room. Even with fluorescent lights, you will save more energy than will be consumed by the spark in turning them back on.
Turn off all power drainers -Router, printer, computers, etc. when leaving for more than 3 days.
8. And my final tip for today, although I have many more, is to change out your incandescent light bulbs to LED ones. They now come in a dimmable type, a fluorescent replacement type and are finally very reasonably priced.

I just said a form of the word “final” twice, so I’d better say goodbye for now.

Forest Bathing

by Sandra Wong

My first experience with forest bathing was in September of 2019 and it wasn't even in a forest. It was at Lyon Arboretum in Honolulu, HI. I came across an ad for a forest bathing excursion while booking a guest house on the Airbnb website. Forest bathing or forest therapy started in Japan in the early 1980s as a way to reduce stress and prevent chronic illness. The point of the experience is not to rush through the walk. You are immersing yourself in the sights, sounds, and smells of the forest (or other natural environment).

In my case, my certified forest bathing guide led my small group through a 2-hour long walk that covered less than a mile. She had me pick up a leaf or feather and asked me to appreciate the color and feel of the object. We touched and smelled the flowers on our walk. We listened for the birds in the air. There was very little talking. Only the prompting from our guide. Getting to a destination was not the goal. It was a very slow, purposeful walk where you felt at one with the earth. Slowing down to this degree allowed me to further appreciate God's Creation. I didn't notice the intricacies of a leaf until I really *looked*. I rarely touched the trunks of trees when I walked, but I do now after this experience.

How often do we move through life so quickly that we don't notice God's presence in everything around us?

One of my favorite Bible verses about trees which is from Job 14:7-9: "For there is hope for a tree, when it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and its shoots will not fail. Though its roots grow old in the ground and its stump dies in the dry soil, at the scent of water, it will flourish and put forth springs like a plant."

This summer, some of you may be reading our all-church book read, *The Overstory*, which is all about trees. May it inspire you to go out and spend time with God's beautiful creations. I encourage you to slow down and use all your senses to connect with God.

Stop Line 3

by Susie Claxton

Good Morning, everyone. Today I am bringing you a Kairos Moment for Climate Action in Solidarity with Indigenous Tribes of Minnesota

The Line 3 *expansion* is a massive tar sands oil pipeline under construction through the heart of Northern Minnesota. If completed, it would cross more than 200 bodies of water, including the headwaters of the Mississippi River. It would also pass near the border of multiple Native nations and across hundreds of miles of treaty-protected land, which those communities depend on for drinking water and wild rice gathering.

Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org in a New York Times Opinion piece on June 11, 2021, wrote, “The administration should pause construction on Line 3 and re-examine the river-crossing permits granted by the Army Corps of Engineers. The Department of Justice should stop trying to uphold the last administration’s decisions, which were made by people who thought climate change was a hoax. And the Biden administration should issue standards to make sure that new fossil fuel infrastructure has to pass a climate test – a test that takes into account America’s theoretical commitment to the Paris accords.”

A whole network of different indigenous peoples in different parts of Minnesota have been putting themselves on the line, protesting this treaty land they call home

UCC clergy from all areas of the country have joined in protests. They feel that people of faith should stand in solidarity with these people.

You may have eaten wild rice from Minnesota, as I have. There is always a danger of oil spills from pipelines. Once the leak happens, it is very hard to cleanup, and has a devastating effect on crops, wildlife, and waterways.

The Line 3 pipeline crosses hundreds of water bodies, including passes under the headwaters of the Mississippi river.

Here are three things you can do now:

- Watch this UCC Environmental Justice Webinar on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uePNEPb73_U
- Check out this UCC Creation Justice Actions list:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nK1i3i2zhlyb4eUP0usHFpenSo6FTwgV/view>
- Donate to the Stop Line 3 Legal Defense Fund found at Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light Take Action pipeline webpage:
https://fundrazr.com/81YBOc?ref=ab_9Muq8Kzw6SJ9Muq8Kzw6SJ

TUFA Trees

by Lynn Miller

God's great gift of Creation is in crisis. The scale of Climate Change is dramatically expanding beyond our comprehension.

I am a member of our church Green Team, and I have been invited to share about my non-profit, Tri-City Urban Forest Alliance, an organization working to address this crisis in one small way locally. I will quickly tell you what we are doing at present, ways we are collaborating with the City of Fremont, and current opportunities for Niles Discovery Church to participate.

Tri-City Urban Forest Alliance, or T.U.F.A, is a branch of the Fremont Tri-City Ecology Center. Our mission is to advocate for trees. Currently we:

- Teach the many benefits of trees in our urban environment at public events.
- Work with the City of Fremont Urban Forest Director, Kit Jory, to assist faith groups, Rotary, Scouts, and others plant trees in our parks and public places.
- Have become the "go to" organization the City liaisons with to assist groups to who wish to plant trees.
- Offer educational events a planting day, and supply planting supervisors, tools, materials, and coordination needed to have a successful and fun planting event.

Our city was awarded a CalFire grant that paid for a survey of our city trees and the creation of an Urban Forest Master Plan. Unfortunately, the city has neither the budget nor the staff to implement the Urban Forest Master Plan. Unless the Fremont City Council hears loud and clear from citizens that we are willing to pay for a bigger budget for urban forestry, no change will be coming. Currently, very few tree planting projects from nonprofits are approved. The city turns away free trees! Benchmarks show we should have a minimum of eight city staff members focused on our urban forest; we have three. We have the lowest tree canopy of 11 area cities!

You can give your feedback to the City about how important trees are. Please look for the third (and last) Urban Forest survey coming to FremontTrees.gov this month, and be prepared for future alerts to civic action.

The very best place to plant a tree is in front of homes. The most potential sites are there. More street trees are missing from older neighborhoods than remain. Heat rises on unshaded street pavement, homes are hotter, property values lower. Air quality suffers. To address this, TUFA and the City of Fremont are beginning canvassing of neighborhoods to offer free 15-gallon street trees to be planted by volunteers. This will be an ongoing project. Would you like to be a volunteer Canvasser?? Check our church newsletter for details.

Because climate change is an emergency, TUFA desires to get as many trees planted as quickly as possible. We have a tree nursery, growing over 300 Oak trees at Tule Ponds. We grow six species of Oaks, ones recommended in anticipation of climate change, and offer them at no cost for Habitat and restoration plantings or planting on private property as 1- to 5-gallon trees.

Remember what Margaret Mead said: “Never doubt that a small group of concerned people can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Use Water Wisely

By Bee Newell

Around my house I am a water warrior. If I hear water dripping anywhere, I am on in a flash. I can be a real nag when it comes to wasting water. Let me explain why.

Scientists used to believe that the continent of Antarctica was solid and that it held 70% of the world's fresh water in the form of ice. They now know that Antarctica is more a [collection of islands](#) than a solid landmass, and this means that a warming ocean touches much more of the ice than previously thought. Once that ice melts, the fresh water it held is mixed with salt water, which is no longer much use to land mammals, including humans.

I would argue that our most precious resource is water – *fresh* water. Water, beautiful, clean water is needed for drinking to keep animals alive and for keeping our crops alive. If people are to survive, we must conserve every drop of water, especially here in the drought-prone western United States.

Save every drop – catch it! Catch it in buckets as shower water is warming, and then use that collected water for plants, both indoors and outdoors, and your lawn! Catch it in sinks to dip your hands in before soaping; and after you washed your hands, just dribble water for rinsing. You can use water you've captured for mopping floors and other clean-up.

Here are 9 tips to help you conserve water easily.

1. Use as little as absolutely necessary – don't leave water running while you brush your teeth or wash your hands
2. Use cold water whenever possible. (Why pay to heat water that doesn't need to be hot?)
3. Take short sequential showers if you live with other people. That way, the water at the shower is already hot.
4. Take what my father called "Navy" showers – wet body, turn the water to a dribble, soap yourself and shampoo your hair, then turn the water back up to rinse.
5. Shower rather than bathe; a quick shower uses much less water than filling your tub.
6. Wash *full* loads of clothes and dishes (and don't wash your dishes before you put them in the dishwasher, though you should wipe grease off dishes [so it doesn't end up in the sewage system] and then compost the paper towels).
7. Fix all drips immediately.
8. Don't plant grass; use xeriscaping.
9. Do plant trees, and pick species native to where you live that only need extra watering when they're young.

I hope you will join me in becoming a water warrior and use water wisely, saving every drop of water before the Earth becomes a total desert with no mammal life.

Join the Third Act “Banking on the Future” Day of Action

By Iris Nicholson

I have a friend who is pessimistic about the future of the planet. She’s done a lot: Added insulation to her house, bought a hybrid car, reuses plastics, doesn’t water her lawn during our drought, eats very little meat. Nonetheless, she doesn’t think there’s much chance humans will reduce CO₂ emissions. She expects the climate crisis to get worse and massive animal species extinctions to continue. She often ends our conversation by saying, “I won’t be alive much longer, so it doesn’t matter.”

I wish I could tell you these talks don’t scare me almost witless, but they do. I understand my friend’s pessimism. Report after report warns that the world needs to shift to fossil-free energy faster than ever (because we did not shift sooner). The window is closing. Will we make it?

Then I come to church. My hope is rekindled here, I think because we all do what we can to help our neighbors and to care for creation.

I think that’s what draws me to this Church and the Green Team. We have faith and we have love as we take action: planting trees that will shade the next generation, arranging for people who don’t yet have houses to use our parking lot and sleep safely in their cars – those are the things we do until that brighter future arrives.

That hope is also drawing me to Third Act.

Third Act is disrupting ageism in our county – those “Get out of the way” and “Make room for the younger generation!” messages. Instead, Third Act is mobilizing older adults to work for and with younger generations, recognizing that we care about our children’s future. We also have experience, time, and many of us have money to spare. Not a lot on an individual basis, but as group: The Baby Boomers and The Silent Generation have over 70% US household wealth. It may be our superpower!

In the seven years since Paris climate accords, the four biggest U.S. banks (Chase, Citi, Wells Fargo, and Bank of America) have lent well over a trillion dollars to companies that make the climate crisis worse by expanding fossil fuel projects and cutting down rainforests.

Third Act is supporting small groups all over the county to take action locally. For me it’s a pledge to cut up my Chase Credit Card and move my business to Greener pastures. I also plan to join Piedmont’s Third Act event outside of Wells Fargo Bank on March 21 – the first day of spring.

Pressuring US banks may well work: HSBC Bank, Europe’s biggest, announced in Dec that it would stop financing new oil and gas fields – though continue financing other new infrastructure. It’s a big win.

The Green Team invites you to learn more about Third Act's campaign. "Banking on the Future," and the Day of Action coming up in March. Be sure to join us after worship on March 5. We'll be providing some "Green" Snacks.

See you then.

Sometimes you will want your Kairos Moment in your worship services to be a call to action. Here are some samples to help you craft your own, by Shirley Doolittle-Egerdahl.

Kairos moment “Call to Action” – A Watershed Moment

We are in a Kairos Moment. A Watershed Moment when global ecological, political and health crises blend together, trapping us in a morass of anger, cruelty and sadness.

Water is Life. This is not a slogan; this is Truth. Water enlivens and sustains me. I struggle with all my questions and despair, but as Psalm 23 tells me, God “leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul.” I find I cannot hold still for long or I stagnate. “He leads me in right paths.” Life-giving baptismal waters flow through and around each of us, empowering us to move despite our paralyzing despair and confusion.

It is time for pilgrimage and vision-seeking, time to take the Bible seriously and follow right paths beside the waters, time for a Long Walk Together.

Every congregation is set in a particular watershed. Tolt UCC’s home watershed is the Snohomish/Snoqualmie watershed. Each designated Long Walk Sunday, we will walk another section of the watershed, following the course of the rivers, creeks and streams as closely as possible. The water chooses our course. We will carry our questions, our fears, our anger and wisdom. We will meet our neighbors, human and otherwise. Who are they? What do they want to teach us? We start where the Snohomish River flows into Puget Sound and end in the headwaters in the mountains at Snoqualmie Pass. Join this months-long endeavor. Our first Long Walk Sunday is DATE. More logistical details regarding coronavirus precautions and transportation is available from ADD DETAILS/CONTACT PERSON.

Kairos moment “Call to Action” – Signs and Wonders

What do pangolins, the novel coronavirus, grieving orcas, climate change, murder, and angry men have to do with each other? How do we tie it all together? With so much distress and hostility, how can we live as neighbors? Why don’t we ask our neighbors and each other? One way to do it is with signs. Tolt UCC members are invited to ask questions (in a loving way) at a sign-making workshop, on DAY, DATE, TIME. We will spread out on the church grounds and make our signs. *Follow the usual social distancing guidelines and wear masks.*

A selection of signs and wonderings will appear in front of the church building on Sunday, July XX. A few Tolt UCC members will participate in RADION STATION’s call-in program, 6-7 p.m. that evening, which will also live-stream at URL.

Writing your own Kairos Moment script for use in worship

Senegalese environmentalist Baba Dioum has been often quoted as saying: “We won’t save places we don’t love, we can’t love place we don’t know, and we don’t know places we haven’t learned.”

This quote may suggest a four-paragraph structure for personally witnessing to the evolution of a commitment you’ve made to serve and protect our biome, eco-system, or the planet in a particular way:

1. I learned about _____ in our ecological neighborhood when ...
2. I began to really know about it by ...
3. I knew I was in love when
4. So, I made a commitment to serve and protect it by ...