

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF LONG ISLAND CREATION CARE MINISTRY

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER



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From the Editor: The Faith to Fight



DARREN J. GLENN, EDITOR

Summer 2023 is finally in full swing and the Creation Care Ministry is excited to see how you all reconnect to nature and the natural world in this time of great upheaval. In addition to spending meaningful time connecting with God's creation, we encourage our readers to also, and in equal measure, meaningfully engage with the struggles to protect the people and the planet, especially as people of faith. I'd like us to draw inspiration from the example that people of faith or setting right now in our shared goal of confronting environmental injustice.

Currently, a battle is unfolding in the State of Georgia to interrupt and abort the completion of the proposed Atlanta Police Training Center. This \$90 Million urban warfare training center, more popularly known as "Cop City" has met controversy from the first announcement of the project in 2021 for both the perception that this will prove to further militarize the police in Atlanta, as well as for the danger the construction project poses to the Weelaunee Forest and the related watershed on which the project is slated to be built. Resistance has only intensified in response to the Atlanta Police Department's use of military tactics and escalated legal charges on arrested activists throughout the campaign to stop Cop City, particularly following the January 18th police-involved shooting of Manuel Esteban Paez Teran.

On the front lines of this fight have been members of the clergy. Religious and Faith leaders from diverse religious and racial backgrounds have joined forces and have been to confront the Atlanta Police Department, Georgia State Police, and every public official responsible for the implementation of this project, the environmental destruction incurred by the project, and the human and civil rights violations that have occurred at the hands of the State in this struggle to preserve Weelaunee People's Park.

The Faith to Fight, (cont'd)

On May 15th, Reverend Keyana Michelle Jones narrated a letter from the Faith Coalition to Stop Cop City to the Atlanta City Council articulating in no uncertain terms their continued opposition to the city council project and their outrage at the many injustices perpetrated by the State throughout the struggle. Below, I've included the link to Rev. Jones' full remarks at that May 15th hearing, which includes her reading of the letter.

<https://shorturl.at/bCS9>

If this video is able to move you anywhere near the way it has moved me, then I would invite you to join our Creation Care team in our work to confront the environmental injustices and crises happening here in New York. We, too, have a struggle to which our faith calls us to be involved in. In order to find out how you can plug into the work that we are doing to support the local eco-justice movement, please contact our Missioner for Environmental Justice, Rev. Matthew Moore at: mmoore@dioceseli.org.

Finally, I leave you with the following excerpt from near the end of the Faith Coalition to Stop City's letter to the Atlanta City Council as a final encouragement to draw inspiration from their conviction and determination to make repair.

"Let us be clear: we will not succumb to evil, nor systems, nor policies that bring harm and destruction to our communities or our planet. We will continue to work as the Faith Coalition to Stop Cop City, with Justice and Love until the day we can all live in peace as the lovely community that our faith proclaims that is not only possible, but it is inevitable."



Rev. Keyanna Jones at a press conference at Atlanta City Hall delivering signed letters to Atlanta City Council on Monday, March 6, 2023, expressing the coalition's moral stance against the destruction of the South River Forest and the construction of Cop City. Photo by Dean Hesse.

Retrieved from: <https://decatrish.com/2023/03/photos-clergy-call-on-city-of-atlanta-to-stop-cop-city-construction/>

Let's plan to be 'woke' for the Season of Creation



WRITTEN BY RITA GRIFFITH

Do you know about the Season of Creation, or, as the Church of England calls it, "Creationtide"? Many of us are just vaguely aware of the existence of this new liturgical season, which starts on September 1, the World Day of Prayer for Creation, and ends on October 4, St. Francis Day.

The practice is actually several decades old. It started in 1989 when Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I of Constantinople proclaimed September 1 as a World Day of Payer for Creation for the Orthodox Church. From that relatively small beginning, the idea spread, and the day became a month-long observance.

Cont'd on pg. 4

A Word from the Missioner of Environmental Justice

In his epistle, James likens those who hear the word and fail to act on it to "those who look at themselves in a mirror . . . and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like." This passage has kept coming to my mind over the past couple of weeks, ever since the lifting of the cloud of toxic smoke that kept New Yorkers trapped indoors for what seemed like an eternity. My joy at the resumption of my familiar routines has been tempered by the lightning speed with which the collective memory of what we had just been through in that drawer where we keep whatever we would rather not think about.



THE REV. DR. MATTHEW MOORE
Missioner for Environmental Justice
Co-Chair, Creation Care Community
Episcopal Diocese of Long Island

When we found ourselves sheltering indoors once again, when we looked out our windows at the unnatural color of the sky, were we looking in a mirror, as the earth reflected back to us the reality of what we are doing to the natural world. When we allow ourselves to forget what that was like, we are indeed mere hearers of the word, who look at their own reflection and then walk away and forget what they saw. The question is not whether, but when, we will once



The Empire State Building, Wednesday 6/7/2023
Janine and Jim Eden, Wikimedia Commons.
Retrieved from:
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Empire_State_Haze_\(52958371285\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Empire_State_Haze_(52958371285).jpg)

again be unable to breathe the air without putting our health at risk. And for many people in other parts of the nation and the world, unbreathable air and untameable wildfires are already a recurrent fact of life. The reflection we allow ourselves to forget will come back to haunt us.

But James tells us that there's another way: "those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing." The muddy skies we saw out our windows were not exactly the perfect law of liberty. What we saw in that mirror was the consequences of our misuse of our liberty, of our collective choice to exploit the earth instead of caring for it. But that toxic air brought us face to face with the truth, and accepting the truth is a vital first step toward liberation and healing. In the words of the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: "you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

If we remember what we saw when the cloud descended on New York, and remember what a joy it was to see blue sky again, we will see that our God-given freedom opens up two paths to us: we can forget what we saw, and go on to suffocating the planet by carrying on business as usual, or we can remember what we saw, and be doers who act, who persevere in finding a better way. We still have that choice. And we can rely on God's promise that if we look into the perfect law of liberty and remember who we are—remember that we are stewards, and not ruthless exploiters, of Creation—we will be blessed in our doing.

[cont'd on pg. 3]

A Word from the Missioner for Environmental Justice, (cont'd)

Our first diocesan observance of Earth Day was an occasion of great joy, a vivid expression of the deep love for Creation that is widely shared across our diocese. The gospel reading for the day was taken from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus lifts up the birds and the flowers as models of trust in God's providential care, a trust we all too often fail to emulate in our anxious pursuit of material comforts. On Earth Day we celebrate the divine wisdom and beauty we see reflected in the natural world. And we also rededicate ourselves to faithful stewardship of the earth God has entrusted to our care, and to trading in our anxious materialism for trust in God's abundance.

From the Earth Day Sermon by the Reverend Matthew Moore, Missioner for Environmental Justice at the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island. April, 22nd. The Cathedral of the Incarnation, Garden City, NY.



"Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. In the name of God unbegotten, God incarnate, and God among us."

LUKE 12:24

"The ravens don't store up food, yet God feeds them. The lilies don't worry about clothing, yet God clothes them—splendidly. We're the ones who worry. God has provided for our needs, and the needs of all living creatures, in the intricate wisdom of the Earth's ecosystems. To make a world that meets our needs, as the Earth alone can do, lies far beyond our powers. But we do have the power to do serious, perhaps even fatal, damage to the Earth. And we also have the power, thanks be to God, to help the earth heal from the damage we have done.

The Earth faces a life-or-death crisis of our making, and every living creature needs us to be stewards, not exploiters—healers, not abusers. If we are to become stewards who heal, we must turn away from the rapacious ways of the nations of the world, compulsively driven by the anxious pursuit of material goods. We must trust, as the ravens and the lilies trust, in God's abundance.

The choice between these two ways of life is nothing less than the choice between life and death. Jesus challenges us to choose life. Jesus lifts up the lilies and the ravens to teach us that our priorities are out of order. And for us today, on Earth Day, there's another teaching in these familiar words, one that will bring us back around in the end to Christ's teaching about how to get our priorities in order.

The birds and the flowers, and the multitudes of creatures in today's psalm, speak to us about the divine wisdom implanted in the earth. The people who heard the Sermon on the Plain from our Lord's own lips could appreciate as well as we can the exquisite beauty of the plants and animals so movingly celebrated in our psalm. What we can appreciate even better than they did, thanks to the modern science of ecology, is the divine wisdom that weaves all these beings together into the delicate tapestry of an ecosystem.

The psalmist sings of the rain God sends down to water the fields, which in their turn bring forth plants that nourish God's creatures. And there is heavenly wisdom within this earthly beauty.



The Rev. Matthew Moore. April 22nd, 2023
The Cathedral of the Incarnation.
Photographed by Teddy Byrne.

Retrieved from:
<https://dioceselongisland.smugmug.com/Diocesan-Celebrations-services/2023/Earth-Day-Celebration-Apr-22-2023/i-ZZX75g4>



Members of the Creation Care Community of the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island. April 22nd, 2023
The Cathedral of the Incarnation.
Photographed by Teddy Byrne,

Retrieved from: <https://dioceselongisland.smugmug.com/Diocesan-Celebrations-services/2023/Earth-Day-Celebration-Apr-22-2023/i-Ch6zJFg>

When we look with the eyes of science beneath the breathtaking surface of the Grand Canyon, we find not one but five ecosystems. One of these, the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland, is named for the pygmy trees there that never grow higher than 20 feet, and so can provide shade for the animals in the blistering heat of summer. The water retained by prickly pear cactus is a vital source of hydration for the bobcats and small mammals that abound in these woodlands.



Pinyon-Juniper Woodland, National Park Service. Retrieved from: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/swscience/pinyon-juniper-woodlands.htm>

And why shouldn't we see God's wisdom at work in the ecosystems of the Earth? In the prologue to his gospel, John tells us that the Word that became flesh was with God in the beginning, that [all] things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

The christological reflection of the early Church identified the Word in John's gospel with the figure of divine Wisdom in Proverbs, who says that when [God] marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker . . . rejoicing in [the] inhabited world, and delighting in the human race.

God's wisdom fills and sustains Creation, and in our second lesson Paul tells the Romans that God's Spirit fills the Creation with longing like our own, for the fullness of life that only God can bestow. The lilies and the ravens in the Sermon the Plain speak to us of God's providential care, and the intricate web of life we share with them speaks to us of God's creative wisdom.

The divine Wisdom that crafted and sustains the delicate web of life is indispensable, and irreplaceable. Our very lives depend on the stability of that web. We cannot repeat God's creative work. But we can damage the Earth so severely that it can no longer support us. And at the same time we can, if we choose, help the earth heal from the damage we have done."

The full transcript, as well as video, of the Reverend Matthew Moore's 2023 Earth Day sermon are available on the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island's website at:
<https://www.diocesi.org/media/diocesan-news/earth-day-2023.html>

Let's plan to be 'woke' for the Season of Creation, (cont'd)

Today, the Season of Creation is observed by Christians of many denominations, from our own Anglican Communion, to the Roman Catholic Church, to the United Church, Lutherans, Methodists, etc.

As the ecumenical steering committee put it: "The Season of Creation is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together. During the Season of Creation, we join our sisters and brothers in the ecumenical family in prayer and action for our common home."

This year the theme for the Season of Creation is "Let Justice and Peace Flow". The official site refers to Amos: "Prophet Amos cries out: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream!" (Amos 5: 24) and so we are called to join the river of justice and peace, to take up climate and ecological justice, and to speak out with and for communities most impacted by climate injustice and the loss of biodiversity. As the people of God, we must work together on behalf of all Creation, as part of that mighty river of peace and justice."

The symbol is a river, from Isaiah: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:19)

Looking at the Amos and Isaiah readings, I couldn't help smiling at the thought that some people would dismiss this whole issue - creation care, environmentalism, and especially justice and peace - as 'wokeism'. Anything that acknowledges that we human beings have been the main drivers of climate change and therefore have a responsibility to address and reverse it is dismissed as 'woke' by those who would decry the kind of righteousness Amos calls for.

But this Season of Creation fits right in with our values as Episcopalians. As good Episcopalians, we are called upon to be awake to injustice, to strive for peace, and to preserve the earth. Our Baptismal Covenant enjoins us: "Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" One of our Prayers for the People reiterates: "For the good earth which God has given us, and for the wisdom and will to conserve it, let us pray to the Lord."

I hope we can find a way to celebrate the 'woke' Season of Creation this year in our parishes. We can plant a tree or two. We can visually represent it in our worship - it even has its own liturgical color: orange, the color of harvest time. Maybe someone could create some orange paraments to break up our 'long green season' of the Sundays after Pentecost.

Bishop Provenzano and other Episcopal bishops of this Province and across the country have approved a special lectionary (created by the Diocese of Western Massachusetts) that can be used instead of the normal Eucharistic and Daily Office lectionaries for the period. We will be sharing these with everyone as soon as Western Massachusetts releases the materials. There is also church school material available.

How will you celebrate the Season of Creation? Let us know. I for one plan to be very woke.



SEASON OF CREATION

The logo of the ecumenical Steering Committee of the Season of Creation,

Retrieved 7/8/2023 from: <https://seasonofcreation.org/>



Praise dance ministry from St. Peter's Episcopal Church April 22nd, 2023 The Cathedral of the Incarnation. Photographed by Teddy Byrne,

Retrieved 7/15/2023 from: <https://dioceselongisland.smugmug.com/Diocesan-Celebrations-services/2023/Earth-Day-Celebration-Apr-22-2023/i-xqWkM9N>



In Observance of The Season of Creation:

WRITTEN BY THE REV. MARK GENSZLER AND THE REV. MAXINE BARNETT

Looking to organize an outdoor summer liturgy that speaks to your local place and our care for the earth? Looking ahead to September and curious about the 'Season of Creation'? Scrambling for (free!) summer curricula with a creation theme? Planning ahead for the fall/winter and small-group work around creation justice/care? Summer can be a time for planting seeds in your community's imagination at the theological and liturgical intersection of ecology, theology, care, and justice. Or, investigate for the future. Dive right in!

Augsburg Fortress has a free Vacation Bible School/summer kid-friendly curriculum -- [investigate it here](#). Or, look at this more general ['Summer Creation Care Guide for Families and Churches.'](#)

General Convention-approved resources, prayers, litanies -- appropriate any time of year? [Right here!](#)

Looking ahead to September, and the Season of Creation? The [Laudato Si movement](#) is a pan-Roman Catholic umbrella taking inspiration from Pope Francis' encyclical of eight years ago. Want to revisit the excellent - and very Episcopal! - [liturgical resources prepared for last year](#) by our friends in the dioceses of Massachusetts and Western Massachusetts? (And, stay tuned for their 2023 edition, soon to be shared on their web site!). Their Missioner, Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, has prepared an excellent [family-friendly Earth Day liturgy](#), quite suitable/adaptable for a summer or fall event.

Planning ahead for small group work in 2023-24? Coming in July: The Episcopal Church is preparing resources for ecology/theology/creation care similar in form to our Sacred Ground work -- [sign up here for information](#) and read when made available!

Or, inspired to make a garden in your community but fully aware that the time for planting has come and gone this season? No worry! No time like the present to dream, collaborate, and plant seeds in your community's imagination for the coming year. [Plenty of inspiration here](#) -- and our own diolI Creation Care team can connect you with church gardens here on Long Island for collaboration and learning. It's never too late to start something good -- and planting seeds for others to enjoy and reap is at the heart of our spiritual disciplines.