

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF LONG ISLAND CREATION CARE MINISTRY

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE:

**LET'S TREAT MOTHER EARTH AS
A PRECIOUS GIFT – P.2**

**CREATION CARE &
CHRISTIANITY: ONE PERSON'S
JOURNEY – P.2**

**REPORT TO DIOCESAN
CONVENTION – P. 3**

**A MESSAGE FROM THE
MISSIONER OF ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE – P.4**

Sustainable celebrations and ecological liturgies: ideas for advent actions, and beyond!

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



As we look toward Advent - the coming into our lives of the presence of God-with-us - how might we keep this vigil in harmony with all creatures on Earth, who also wait with us for the liberation of all creation?



Our Episcopalian friends in Colorado [have excellent suggestions](#) for a 'green' Advent and Christmas celebration, at home and in the parish. Move for Hunger - a not-for-profit dedicated to ending hunger and waste in our culture - [has additional ideas](#) for your (still very festive!) celebrations. There is still that tree, though! 'Real' tree -v- 'fake' tree: which is 'better'? Read through this ['5-minute guide to buying a sustainable Christmas tree.'](#)

Eartheasy also has a ['how to have a 'green' Christmas guide](#), taking some of the more customary aspects of the cultural holiday and letting them replant themselves in a more sustainable way.

Liturgically, of course, we enter 'Year B' in the Sunday lectionary - the year of Mark. Want to refresh your Advent encounter with familiar texts? There are many thoughtful commentaries these days; [here is one](#) from 'Lutherans Restoring Creation' for Year B. Even if you aren't preaching regularly with a creation or eco-justice focus, it can be a gift to a congregation to have a new gloss on a familiar theme, opening eyes to see the world anew, particularly in this season of



September 17th, 2023, The March to End Fossil Fuels.
The Rev. Matthew Moore and Darren J. Glenn

To subscribe to this newsletter, email us at:
creationcare@dioceseli.org

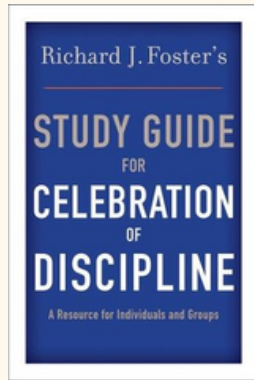
[cont'd on pg. 2]

Creation Care & Christianity: One person's journey



BY IRENE ROSS

"Our self-centeredness is choking the earth. We are ravaging it up to the point of no return. God gave us the earth as a gift to care for. We can still care for it. The first step is to let God renew our minds. Then we'll see the earth as God sees it. We'll see the earth with the eyes of love. Amen"



So said the Reverend Matthew Moore, missionary of Creation Care, in his sermon on his visit to St. Mark's, Islip. How did this change my thinking?

All of our actions, even the most seemingly innocent ones, contribute to this crisis. For instance, as Reverend Moore pointed out, our love of beef requires clear-cutting so cattle can graze. One of the many unfortunate results of this is deforestation.

Intellectually, I had been aware of the environmental crisis for decades. Yet, the issue still seemed somewhat distant to me. Three things happened to change my mind and I became deeply committed and wanted to learn more.

1. The first seemed from a seemingly unlikely source. A fashion stylist talked about the need to clean out the closet. "If you don't use it, donate it to someone else so they can enjoy it." It was the first time I heard it phrased quite like that and my brain immediately flipped the switch, going from a state of consumerism to one of sharing.
2. I began re-reading Richard Foster's Celebration of Discipline. This time, I became stuck on "The Discipline of Simplicity." Forster explained how our rush to acquire "more stuff" hurts us all. To be clear, Foster explains that isn't the same as asceticism, but balance. Balance creates freedom, he says—we no longer have the frantic attitude of grabbing more things, which creates anxiety and fear.
3. As, Rev. Moore's sermon discussed, God put Adam in the most beautiful and pleasurable place on earth, the garden. God wanted Adam to rest and enjoy it—but also to work. God commanded him to "take care of it"—till, cultivate and generally service it. Remember, we're all created in God's image so when we work it is a reflection of the glory of God.

Ephesians 6:5-9: "When you work unto the Lord, you do the will of God from the heart.



St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Rosedale, Queens. NY Harvest Celebration, October 1st, 2023. Copyright St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Rosedale, Queens NY

In the Season of Giving, Let's Treat Mother Earth As A Precious Gift

BY RITA GRIFFITH

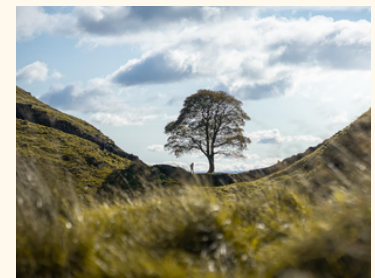


During the St. Francis Day celebration at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine - where the great procession usually has an elephant coming up the aisle - the accompanying music is the Missa Gaia, the Earth Mass, by Paul Winter. It includes the calls of wolves, whales, seals, and other creatures, which mingle gloriously with the sounds of the actual animals inside the cathedral.

Recently, I learned about the Gaia Hypothesis, which, put simply, is a theory that Earth is a living organism. It's not universally accepted science, but how apt for us who believe in a God-directed origin for the Earth. Our catechism almost says that:

- Q. What do we learn about God as creator?
A. We learn that there is one God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
Q. What does this mean?
A. This means that the universe is good, that it is the work of a single loving God who creates, sustains, and directs it. So if God made it, and 'creates, sustains, and directs it', why do we mistreat it?

Recently two events brought home again to me the interconnectedness of our planet, and the necessity to care for it. The first event was in the UK. On the border of England and Scotland, along Hadrian's Wall, in a protected area, stood an iconic 300-year-old sycamore tree. It was the only tree for miles and was one of the most photographed trees in the country, the scene for many a proposal, many a painting. Early one morning a man took a saw and felled the tree.



Sycamore Gap Tree, Hadrian Wall, UK. 2022. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

The second event was right here in this area. In September, Governor Hochul declared a state of emergency for Nassau, Suffolk, Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, Westchester and further afield, where one 24-hour period was the wettest since 1948.

[cont'd on pg. 4]

The Creation Care Community's Report to 2023 Diocesan Convention

SEPTEMBER 29TH, 2023

Earth Day 2022:

On Saturday April 22 the CCC, in conjunction with the Bishop's Office, held the first ever diocesan-wide celebration of Earth Day at the Cathedral of the Incarnation. Clergy and lay people from across the Diocese attended the special Eucharist, with Bishop Wolf presiding.

Dishwasher and Tree Planting Initiatives:

Episcopal Ministries of Long (EMLI) awarded a grant of \$20,000 for a pilot program to install commercial dishwashers in parishes, in order to eliminate their use of disposable wares. Transfiguration Freeport and St. George's Hempstead have already applied for the pilot and two more are in process. EMLI also gave \$5,000 for planting and preserving trees, to be awarded to selected parishes diocese-wide.

Season of Creation:

Bishop Provenzano was among 16 diocesan bishops nationwide who authorized an official alternative lectionary and liturgies for the Season of Creation 2023 (September 1 - October 4). It was produced by the Diocese of Western Massachusetts and distributed to clergy by the CCC.

Green Team Retreats:

In October 2022 and October 2023 the CCC held two successful Green Team Retreats, with members from just under two dozen parishes. They aimed to help participants understand the urgency of the climate crisis; find resources to strengthen their parish Green Teams; and identify projects to start their own parish-level work.

Organizing Training Curriculum:

With the generous support of EMLI, the CCC engaged training experts to put together a six-month curriculum to guide Green Teams through the initial stages of their work. We are using it ourselves; have already shared it with another diocese's ecojustice ministry, and look forward to sharing with many more.

Going Solar:

Our Emissions Reduction Team is working with the Long Island Progressive Coalition to recruit parishes to explore solar power installations. So far, six parishes have committed to participating, and eight more are considering it. The ER Team also offers parishes a free carbon footprint calculation through the Energy Star program - available to all who want to reduce their carbon footprint and help move our diocese toward carbon neutrality.

Advocacy:

Our diocese was well represented at the March to End Fossil Fuels on September 17, and we continue to support New York Renew's push for legislative action on climate change. We are currently campaigning for Governor Hochul to sign the Birds and Bees Protection Act, which restricts the use of neonicotinoid pesticides. Many of our clergy signed a faith leaders letter in support of this bill, and our Missioner and the Executive Director of the New York State Council of Churches penned an op-ed which should have appeared before Convention convenes.



TOP LEFT: Bishop Gerilyn Wolf, Assistant Bishop, Diocese of Long Island presiding over the Eucharist.



BOTTOM LEFT: The Praise Dance Ministry from St. David's Episcopal Church (Cambria Heights).

CCC's Earth Day Eucharist held at the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Garden City, NY. April 22, 2023. Copyright: Teddy Byrne



ABOVE LEFT: Attendees to the Green Teams Retreat engaged in group discussion on environmental stewardship.

ABOVE RIGHT: Co-Chair of the Creation Care Community, Rita Griffith outlining the ongoing work.

Green Teams Retreat. Mercer School, Garden City, NY. October 7, 2023. Photos: Teddy Byrne



ABOVE: "Fossil Fuels Desecrate Creation."



ABOVE: "Climate Justice for Island Nations, Indigenous Communities, Communities of Color, & Impoverished Communities. NOW!"

RIGHT: "Our Faith Is Stronger Than Big Oil," GreenFaith demonstrates during the March to End Fossil Fuels in Manhattan, NY. September 17th, 2023



Copyright: Darren J. Glenn

Let's Treat Mother Earth As A Precious Gift [cont'd]

Our screens were filled by images of flooding roads, cars floating away, and water filled subway stations. The rain stopped us all in our tracks.

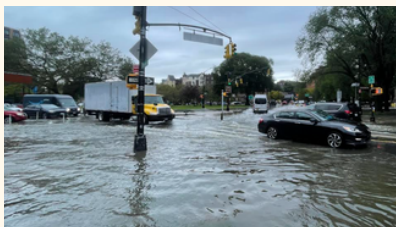
Are they related? To me the wanton cutting down of the sycamore tree is symbolic of humanity's disrespect for the uniqueness of creation; our need for dominance over nature; our stupidity in not realizing that when we kill our environment, we kill ourselves.

They say if the tree grows back at all, it will take over 200 years to reach the state it was before. Multiply that one tree by millions of trees. The rapid deforestation of the Amazon will be irreversible if we don't stop it soon, and the earth will pay the price - and we will too, in floods and droughts, hurricanes and tsunamis.

Every day we learn of fresh climate-related disasters - all related to our own excesses, unfortunately. I think as Christians, we do have a duty to preserve God's good creation.

The universe is good; Earth is good because God made it that way. God made it alive; will we kill it?

Most of us know what to do; many of us aren't doing it because we can't be bothered, or it's just one (or one dozen) plastic water bottles per day, and it's so convenient. But we have to inconvenience ourselves for the planet if we want to hand it on alive to our grandchildren. It is their gift from God too, as it was ours. Perhaps in this season of giving we can start to think of Earth as God's first gift, and decide to treasure it as it should be.



Brooklyn, New York. September 23, 2023. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Message from the Missioner of Environmental Justice



BY THE REV. MATTHEW MOORE

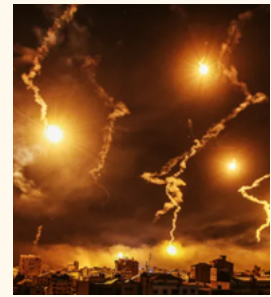
Dr. King's Christmas Eve sermon speaks as pointedly to the world of 2023 as it did to the world of 1967: "Now the judgment of God is upon us, and we must either learn to live together as brothers or we are all going to perish together as fools."



The most immediate horror of the spiraling violence in Israel and Gaza is the rapidly mounting death toll: 1,400 Israelis butchered by Hamas on October 7, and more than 10,000 Palestinians (including more than 4,000 children) killed in Gaza by Israel's military response. A less immediate, but no less lethal, horror unleashed by this bloodletting is the reinforcement of extremist attitudes on both sides.

On the Changing Cultural Climate [cont'd]

The indiscriminate violence of the Israeli attacks on Gaza do not have the support of all Israelis, any more than Hamas's depraved terrorism has the support of all Palestinians. But this latest round of killing can only add to the numbers of those on each side who believe that the only way out of the impasse is to wipe out the other side. Such murderous hatred may bring the impasse to an end, but only at the cost of mutual annihilation.



The Israeli Defense Forces launch rockets into Gaza after global calls for a ceasefire. Photo: Wiki Commons

The flood of horrific news from the Middle East has all but drowned out the equally horrific news about the deteriorating condition of the earth. A swelling chorus of climate scientists predicts that by the end of this decade average global surface temperatures will have risen more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, the threshold beyond which the effects of climate change become much more catastrophic than they already are. It has become commonplace to say that all the warning lights on the earth's dashboard are flashing red. Icecaps are melting, rainforests are shrinking, and a recent study estimates that two million species are now at risk of extinction. Humankind may not have set out to wipe out the nonhuman beings (plants and animals alike) with whom we share the earth, but this what we are doing, whether we mean to or not.

In the presentation I offer when I visit parishes across our diocese, we quote this prophecy from Isaiah (5:8-10): Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land. The Lord of hosts has sworn in my hearing; surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant. We are leaving no room for our nonhuman kindred. But we cannot occupy the land alone. Without the full wealth of life God called into being before creating us, we will perish as fools.

It doesn't have to end this way. God's steadfast will is that all the beings God made for love's sake should flourish together, just as God's will for the Israelis and the Palestinians is that they should flourish side by side in a peace that is not just the absence of tension (Dr. King again) but the presence of justice.

We are about to begin to prepare to celebrate the incarnation of the one through whom and for whom all things were made, in whom all things hang together, and through whom God was pleased to reconcile to Godself all things by making peace through the blood of the cross (Colossians 1:16-20). May God prepare us, in this Advent season, to have Christ born in us, so that we can carry on the hard and joyous work of reconciling all things, all people, and all creatures, to God.

Blessings,
Matthew+