

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF LONG ISLAND CREATION CARE COMMUNITY

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER



ABOVE: ABOVE: Missioner of Environmental Justice, the Reverend Matthew Moore speaking at the 158th Convention of the Diocese of Long Island. Photo credit: Teddy Byrne.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- MESSAGE FROM THE MISSIONER OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE - PG. 1
- RESOURCES FOR LENT/SPRING - PG. 1
- SHELTER FROM THE STORM - PG. 2
- THE MOON AND US - PG. 3
- MOON ABOVE US - PG. 3
- ROGATIONTIDE REFLECTION- PG. 4
- EARTH DAY CELEBRATION - PG. 5

Resources for this Lent, Easter, and Spring



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



Amid the cold of winter, our hearts keep the memory of the new life available to all in the power of the resurrection. What might Lent look like as a season that attunes our hearts to the ways in which the most vulnerable of the creatures of God - the Earth, itself - suffers from the sin of our collective heedlessness and greed as a species? What call to repentance and right relationship might orient us better to the new life proclaimed at Easter, or indeed, the passing-through-suffering of the great Paschal mystery, itself?

Springtime observes this new life in feasts both deeply Christian and broadly secular. Rogation Days and Earth Day both ask us to consider our relationship to the cycles of our common home, and our relationship to all the other creatures with whom we share our habitat. Where might this find [a home in our liturgical life](#), and in our wider life of prayer? Praying shapes believing, and both the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi* shape the *lex vivendi* -- the way of living as creatures of God.

Perhaps have a look at the Church of England's 'single-use-plastics-free Lent' [calendar from a few years ago](#). The dates are off, of course, but the scheme is easily adaptable. Or just search on the internet for 'plastic-free Lent' -- you'll find lots of ideas!

Eco-Congregation Ireland has many ideas for [orienting common religious life](#) around attention to (and repentance around) the effects of climate warming around the globe.

'Easter' ideas that avoid plastics and emphasize the earth? They abound on the internet. Here are [some ideas to get started](#). Or, a [vegan Easter meal](#) to emphasize the new life of the earth, itself. Christ is the first fruits of those who have died, and this new life is for the whole cosmos.

[cont'd on pg. 2]

[cont'd on pg. 2]



Message from the Missioner of Environmental Justice

BY THE REV. MATTHEW MOORE

Dear Friends,

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, an ethicist at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, has inspired many with her prophetic calls for Christian engagement in the struggle for ecojustice, which for her is inseparably connected (as it is for our Creation Care Community) with racial, economic, and gender justice.

We are now witnessing a concerted effort at the highest levels of our government, to roll back the advances that have been made on all of these fronts. So we can readily appreciate how Dr. Moe-Lobeda felt some years ago, in a less drastically troubled time than our own, as she surveyed the stubbornness of injustice, and the steps backward that always seem to follow steps forward in the building of a more humane world.

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

Message from the Missioner [cont'd]

She asked a friend of hers, a pastor with an abiding and active commitment to justice work, how he could keep on when significant and lasting progress was so elusive. "You know, Cindy," he answered, "I know the end of the story." For Moe-Lobeda, these words are grounded in her friend's Christian confidence that "God's life-saving, justice-seeking love is stronger than all else. In some way that we do not grasp, the last word is life raised up out of death."

We carry this confidence into our Lenten preparation for the feast of the Resurrection. For those of us who hear the cry of the earth, and the cry of the poor (Leonardo Boff), Lenten self-examination will necessarily include honest reflection on how our individual lifestyle choices contribute to the degradation of the environment. Such reflections can help us make new and less damaging choices.

But if our reflections end there, and don't reach beyond the narrow sphere of our private lives, we will not have the collective impact that Christians can and must have in the public sphere, most especially in times like these, when so many of those working to turn back the clock pretend to do so in the name of Jesus Christ.

Moe-Lobeda's despairing question is even more poignant now than it was when she first asked it. But her friend's answer is as true now as it was then. We may not see how life will be raised up out of what looks like the irresistible power of death. But then we wouldn't have known, as we walked away from the horror on Golgotha, what would happen three short days later.

We can't know how life will triumph, but we do know that life will triumph. And we know that we have our part to play, however modest it may be. So I invite us all (myself included!) to reflect in this Lenten season, and on into the Easter season as well, on how we can live together toward the future that God has in store for all Creation.

This year the Creation Care Community will combine our **Earth Day observance and Green Team Retreat in "Fight for the Earth Day,"** to be held at the **Mercer School on May 3**, early in the Easter season. We hope you will join us as we come together to refresh our spirits and to reengage in the holy work of caring for our irreplaceable earth. Further details can be found in this newsletter. I look forward to seeing you there!

Blessings,
Matthew+

Resources for Lent, Easter, and Spring [cont'd]

Something for a small group to read, watch, and discuss? The Episcopal Church has a nine-session curriculum called 'Love God, Love God's World.' Or, looking ahead to summer children's programs? Augsburg Fortress has 'Operation Restoration: Mending God's World.' (and a lot of free downloads here).

Earth Day comes right after Easter this year, but these ideas might prove useful all springtime long. Or, simply come to know your own habitat better -- the other-than-human landscape where you live, and move, and have your being. Where does your drinking water come from? Sister water! Get involved in local efforts to know our neighbors better -- whether planting shade trees in urban heat islands or restoring Long Island's oyster beds. Or - literally - anywhere in between.

This good news is for all of creation. How might we as humans re-learn this, and re-orient our lives so that we may be and bring this good news to our neighbors, human and other-than-human? May our Lenten repentance bear fruit worthy of this good news.

Shelter from the Storm: Buttressing Our Churches Against Climate Risk

BY BENJAMIN SPIERS

In the past few years I've come face-to-face with the aftereffects of nature's fury—even in consecrated places. I will never forget my early-autumn stay at Trinity Wall Street Church's Retreat Center, nestled in the woodlands of northwest Connecticut. A few months prior, torrential rains had brought down a flood from the surrounding hills, forcing the evacuation of the center—and slathering its prized farmland in toxic chemical-laden goo. Looking out across the once-fertile fields hit me with a burning question: How can faith communities preserve their sacred spaces from the impacts of climate change?

This question looms large in my own Episcopal Diocese of Long Island, where sea levels are projected to rise 13 to 25 inches by 2050 and low-lying parts of South Brooklyn and Queens are vulnerable to increased coastal flooding. So what is being done to fortify our churches for future climate shocks?

I asked Anthony Natale, director of construction for Episcopal Real Estate of Long Island. Natale knows a thing or two about climate-related impacts, having worked with the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery to demolish or retrofit houses in the wake of Superstorm Sandy.

To avert future disasters like Sandy in communities prone to coastal flooding and storm surges, Natale and ERELI have worked with architects and contractors to assess climate vulnerabilities in new construction, elevate structures, and implement zoning regulations, following guidelines set by the Office of Storm Recovery (replaced in 2022 by the Office of Resilient Homes and Communities).

Churches in vulnerable areas like low-lying neighborhoods in Brooklyn have come to Natale for guidance in recovery from storms. In support of these efforts, the diocese has tapped state programs like RetrofitNY and the Empire Building Challenge, as well as Hazard Mitigation Assistance grants from FEMA.

Yet while communities turn to agencies such as FEMA for assistance, FEMA itself is in upheaval. In the past month the new Trump administration has fired FEMA employees en masse, straining the chronically understaffed agency. FEMA has also moved to drop efforts to promote building-resiliency codes and flood protection rules for home construction and public buildings.

At the same time HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development, which administers block grants to aid rebuilding in regions devastated by storms such as Helene and Milton, has seen its staff reduced by more than 80%.

In the face of the chaos and uncertainty unleashed by the hard turn in federal policy on climate change, one is reminded of Jesus' timeless parable of the builders in Matthew 7:24-7:

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the wind blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock."

Striving for that foundation is more critical than ever.



“The Moon and Us”

BY THE REV. CANON EDDIE ALLEYNE
AND
RITA GRIFFITH



This Passiontide and Easter, a wonderful opportunity comes to us, courtesy of the Cathedral of the Incarnation: the installation of a scale replica of the moon from the [Museum of the Moon](#).

According to the site:

‘Measuring seven metres [23 ft.] in diameter, the moon features 120dpi detailed NASA imagery of the lunar surface. At an approximate scale of 1:500,000, each centimetre of the internally lit spherical sculpture represents 5km of the moon’s surface.’

From the pictures of previous installation (such as the below, at Rochester Cathedral, UK) it promises to be breathtaking and awe-inspiring. But what does the moon have to do with Creation Care or the environment? Good question.

In the story of Creation in our tradition, the moon is a part of God’s plan for how the earth is ordered. Genesis 1:14-19:

And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

For seasons, it says, and we now know, for tides, and the earth’s orbit itself. If the moon were to suddenly disappear, life on earth as we know it would drastically change. The moon controls our tides, so the coastal regions, like here in the Diocese of Long Island, would change and probably be inundated. The temperatures on earth would change. Our rotation and orbit around the sun would be affected. Many of earth’s species, both plant and animal, would die.

The short answer is: the moon is very much a part of Creation, and as such, we honor it, as we do all of the created order.

So on **Earth Day, April 22, from 8:00 – 9:00 p.m.**, we are planning to hold an **Hour of Prayer for Earth** – under the moon. It will take the form of Compline, including prayers, readings, and reflections.

In the face of recent unrelenting attacks from the White House and others in power on climate agreements and environmental actions, as we continue to work hard, we also need to pray hard for the Earth.

We hope you will be able to join us.



ABOVE: Moon installation in Rochester Cathedral, UK. Photo by David Furness/Museum of the Moon (c) Museum of the Moon

“Moon Above Us”

BY DARREN J GLENN



If you’re looking for the perfect spot to take in the beauty of the full moon on Long Island, there are plenty of great options. From Jones Beach State Park

and Montauk Point State Park to the Custer Institute and Observatory, these locations offer some of the best vantage points for moon gazing. Whether you prefer a peaceful beach setting or a dark sky observatory experience, these spots provide an unforgettable way to connect with the night sky. Honoring the moon’s brilliance is a reminder of the divine order in creation, a moment to reflect on the wonder of God’s work in the heavens.

[cont’d on p. 4]



ABOVE: The 2013 March full moon hangs bright over the Bodie Island Lighthouse in Outer Banks, N.C., in this photo from Greg Diesel Walck. Retrieved from: NBC News, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/all/easter-treat-springs-first-full-moon-flna2b9115110>



Red Moon,
Photo by Nick Owuor on
Unsplash

Custer Institute and Observatory

- Custer Institute and Observatory: Long Island's oldest public observatory, located in Southold
- Dark sky area: One of the best dark sky areas on the island



LEFT: Full Beaver Moon behind the Jones Beach Water Tower, (November 2023)

Retrieved from: [NBC News, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/all/easter-treat-springs-first-full-moon-fna2b9115110](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/all/easter-treat-springs-first-full-moon-fna2b9115110)

State parks

- Jones Beach State Park: A top spot for watching the moon rise
- Montauk Point State Park: A good place to view the moon, especially from the upper parking lot
- Sunken Meadow: A good place to view the moon, especially from Field 3
- Wildwood Beach: A good place to view the moon, especially from the main parking lot
- Orient Beach: A good place to view the moon, especially from the main parking lot

Rogationtide: Protection, Blessings, Thanks, and Praise



BY IRENE ROSS

Rogation Sunday is May 25. After it comes Rogationtide, a 3 day period of deep reflection and prayer, asking God for protection and blessings, particularly for harvest and nature. It's also a time to praise and thank him for the earth's bounty. Rogationtide then ends on the Wednesday before Ascension Thursday.

Creation is beautiful, adding energy and color, while also boosting our well being. One of the biggest advantages of Creation is to our mental health: When we spend time around flowers and foliage, our bodies secrete a substance called oxytocin (sometimes called the "Love" or "Trust" hormone).

Oxytocin instantly raises our mood, reduces stress and relaxes us. Depression and anxiety are alleviated. Here's what the National Institutes of Health say about oxytocin: <https://shorturl.at/MrXuj>.

Other benefits include:

- Fighting climate change. Trees and plants provide oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide through their process of photosynthesis. They improve air quality, conserve water and support wildlife by giving them sanctuary.
- Providing food for both humans and wildlife: Creation provides nutrients to soil, making it fertile for gardening and growing food. Falling leaves and other debris often have food under them for the wildlife; squirrels, especially, are known for hiding food—and then forgetting they put it in trees and foliage.
- Better sleep: Indoor houseplants not only collect dust, they add oxygen and eliminate carbon dioxide, all of which provide greater sleep surroundings.
- Boosted productivity and creativity. Multiple studies point to this, as well as one study showing that people who had plants in their offices had fewer sick days.
- Faster recovery from illness, injury and surgery: According to the American Society for Horticultural Science, post-surgical hospital patients who were surrounded by greenery had shorter hospital stays and often needed less pain medication. Much of this can be attributed to lower stress and anxiety levels.

Many plants however, also include anti-inflammatory substances, speeding the process.

All of this adds up to one big reason to thank and praise God.

A PRAYER FOR THOSE IN THE PATH OF FIRE



Almighty God, who is our strength and our refuge; be with those who are besieged by fire, guide those who evacuate so that they may find care and comfort in a safe place; protect their homes and their pets, their neighbors and their friends, so that they may return home to a loving community. We ask this in the name of Jesus your son, who abides with you and with the Holy Spirit.

RIGHT: Picture of the 2024 Airport Fire in Orange County, California.

Retrieved from: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:2024_wildfires_in_California#/media/File:2024_Airport_Fire_10.jpg
Photo credit: Fluffy89502



In response to the devastating 2024 California wildfires, Episcopal Relief & Development has shared the following prayer for those affected. As wildfires have scorched over 500,000 acres, forcing thousands to evacuate and leaving communities in crisis, this prayer seeks strength, protection, and comfort for those in harm's way. May these words serve as a beacon of hope for those displaced and a call for solidarity in the face of this ongoing disaster.



THE
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE
OF LONG ISLAND

CREATION CARE MINISTRY

presents

“FIGHT FOR EARTH” DAY

Celebrating & Preserving God’s Beautiful Creation

Speakers

Demonstrations

Activities, and more

Saturday, May 3

10:-00 a.m - 3:00 p.m.

George Mercer Jr. School of Theology

65 4th St, Garden City, NY

www.dioceseli.org/creationcare