

Standing in the Need of Prayer, Volume IV
Climate Action for Peace - UN International Day of Peace
Boston 2019 Edition

Spiritual Voices
Envisioning Just Peacemaking with the Earth



Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries

Faiths Uniting in Social Action Since 1966

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Newton, MA 02458
617-244-3650
info@coopmet.org
www.coopmet.org

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Þingvellir, anglicized as Thingvellir, is a national park in the municipality of Bláskógabyggð in southwestern Iceland, about 40km northeast of Iceland's capital, Reykjavík.

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PREFACE

Prayer for Just Peacemaking with the Earth By Rev. Dr. Rodney L. Petersen

Rev. Dr. Rodney L. Petersen is executive director of CMM. He came to this position after serving as the executive director of the Boston Theological Institute (BTI) for almost 25 years. He has taught in BTI member schools and overseas, in addition to facilitating workshops on restorative justice, reconciliation, interfaith just peacemaking, and community engagement. He is author and editor of a wide bibliography and co-founder of the Religion and Conflict Transformation program now centered at Boston University School of Theology. He is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., co-chair for the national committee for “An Interreligious Stance of the Presbyterian Church (USA),” and he serves on the board of several Greater Boston nonprofits.

Merchants weep and creation groans (Apocalypse 18:11; Romans 8:18-21). The environmental crisis presages the possible “collapse of our civilizations and the extinction of much of the natural world,” to quote the noted environmentalist David Attenborough. David Wallace-Wells’s book *The Uninhabitable Earth* (2019) offers up a remorseless, near-unbearable account of what we are doing to our planet, but it also offers hope. Wallace-Wells says that, “We have all the tools we need...to aggressively phase out dirty energy...”; [cut] global emissions...[and] scrub carbon from the atmosphere.... [There are] ‘obvious’ and ‘available,’ [if costly,] solutions.” But will we do it? Ever since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued its warning in 2018 that we have just twelve years to turn things around every day is Earth Day.

There is a crisis in the body politic, or body of the world to use Sallie McFague’s metaphor. Political and cultural leadership has failed, contributed to, or refused to recognize what we have done. Oceanographer Roger Revelle and his colleagues produced the first official report to any government anywhere in 1965 on the possible threat to humanity from rising CO2 levels. Later that year Lyndon Johnson became the first president to mention the threat in a message to Congress. President Johnson urged the circulation of the report, despite its controversial emphasis on the need for “economic incentives” to discourage pollution, including taxes levied against polluters. But one year later, largely preoccupied with the war in Vietnam, the president grew distracted, budgets for other priorities were squeezed, and the nation was fast polarizing. Through much of this period the then head of Exxon, Rex Tillerson, kept a secret email account under a different name in which to discuss the reality of global warming, a reality Exxon was denying in public. Our failure to act then and thereafter metastasized into the crisis of today. We face ecocide – like genocide – from the cataclysmic scope of the threat.

What we need is the acceptance of responsibility. Prayers can be a step in that direction – especially prayers of confession and petition. The prayers in this booklet are from many different traditions. These prayers, “Interfaith Just Peace Prayers for the Earth,” are prayers that

we might find a just and sustaining relationship with the Earth and with all that supports life. We face a moral crisis in relation to our environment. Prayers of confession open us to an honest assessment of our identity. Prayers of petition are an appeal to a higher moral order and, when done in concert with others, open the way to deliberative democracy and social cooperation. New experience brings an ever-widening understanding of ethical obligation. This affects our prayers as much as our sense of responsibility represented by new laws. Morality is the catchment for the rule of law. As the end of WWII was the occasion for new laws and political institutions to ensure the hard-won peace of that era, so Western mainstream religion and philosophy are now being challenged by the necessary inclusion of flora and fauna, the whole earth, as the occasion for prayer and an enlarged responsibility.

With whom are we in conversation about this existential crisis? We gain new experience and understanding through conversation. Roger Gottlieb (*Morality and the Environmental Crisis* [2019]). draws attention to the difference between atomistic and deliberative democracy, the latter being communitarian in orientation. He asks How wide is my community? and Where do I draw the line of inclusion and exclusion? He goes on to point out that our ethical connections with nature are not rights, “but bonds such as compassion, love, appreciation, gratitude, empathy, awe, and recognition. And that these connections, unlike the traditional conception of rights-based, autonomous, individualistic democracy, can be the basis for an ecological democracy – for a new conception of democracy that reaches beyond the purely human to the more than human.” (124-125)

Who are we as persons? Our identity as persons is defined by the scope of our conversations as much as it is by our prayer life. It is not simply a matter of finding identity in what we do but also by that with which we are in relationship. Gottlieb writes, “Recognition of the value of life either extends from people to nature, or it will be withdrawn from people as well.” (136) What does this mean? Whether we call the wider world with which we are in dialogue “nature”, “world”, “cosmos” or “creation”, its care is our oldest challenge and defines who we are. Personal and social salvations, just peace if we will, are aspects of a deeper ecological healing that is required of us and of our world. Calvin DeWitt draws attention to the interplay between the biosphere and human intent as he places importance upon putting our contemporary scientific understanding of the world into interactive relationship with moral purpose. Monastic life in many different traditions carry this forward. In the Christian tradition it is epitomized by the phrase “prayer and work” (*ora et labora*). It lays a foundation for present concerns with “Peace with the Earth.” Failure to foster earth care is as much a social disease as other areas of injustice. As we discover the courage of our spirituality, of our life of prayer, we become “stewards of the mysteries of God” and “stewards of the earth.” This is what the just peacemaking practice of just and sustainable development is pointing to for all creation.

With humility we listen to life around us. Bill Moyers asked recently, what is “fake news” as Houston is inundated and Paradise burns; as San Juan blows away and saltwater creeps into the subways of New York? How do we connect the dots that include Indonesian oil-palm growers and commodities companies that are stripping away forests vital to carbon storage with Houston

and Paradise? In the Amazon plans go forward to open indigenous reserves to industrial exploitation, threatening the lungs of the Earth. In India destructive development is embraced. In China the Belt and Road initiative, the biggest transportation-infrastructure program in the history of the world, threatens disaster for earth systems. The Arctic and the Antarctic report melting ice as the shores of African cities, Pacific atolls, and poor Miami neighborhoods are swallowed by rising oceans and American Midwest farmers and their families grieve their losses. Is this fake news or a denial of the truth nature is telling us?

Do Christian, Muslim and Jewish voices embrace a theocratic theology that welcomes catastrophe as a sign of the returning Messiah? And, what of other traditions? What does this say of the human experiment however long we may date it? Is catastrophe what the Apocalypse is all about? Or, is it about how we get to the beloved community? It is at least a call for a spirit of humility so as to listen to ourselves as well as to the world around us. The leverage we bring to the table is that of altruism or libertarianism; the spirit of the *beloved community* or that of selfishness with its environmental and social consequences. For Bill McKibben (*Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?* [2019]) we work in the direction of our prayers. We enlarge deliberative democracy and cooperate as kindred spirits on a mission of public service. We create partnerships to share resources. We keep the whole picture in our heads—how global warming undermines the Great Salt Marsh of Massachusetts. We look at our children and are reminded of the stakes. Bill Moyers asks, “With no silver bullet, what do we do?” “Bolstered up by prayer we tell the liars, deniers, and do-nothings to shove off: There’s no future in naysaying.”

A PROTESTANT, LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE

Rev. Gunnthor Ingason was born on September 9th, 1948. He is married to Thorhildur Ólafsson, Dean of Kjalarnes Deanery of the National Church of Iceland and has 4 children. Rev. Ingason graduated from the University of Iceland, Reykjavik, with a Cand.Theol./M.A. degree in Theology and at the same time studied psychology and social sciences. He studied Christian Mysticism and Third World Theology at the Clerical Seminary in Lögumkloster, Denmark, and Celtic Christianity and Medieval Latin at the University of Wales, Lampeter, where he received an M.A. degree in the former subject. After having served for 33 years as a rector within the Evangelical Lutheran National Church of Iceland, he served for 9 years as a specialized minister within the field of liturgy, national heritage, and culture attached to the office of the Bishop of Iceland in Reykjavik.

Historical Background in Iceland for Just Peace and Respect for Nature

The honored legacy of the Republic of Iceland, for its long standing parliamentary traditions and peaceful solutions to conflicts, can be traced back to the establishment of the Icelandic parliament, *Althingi*, in 930, at a central site of natural marvels consequently named *Thingvellir*, the Parliamentary Field, but also to the peaceful adoption of Christianity there by the Icelanders in 1000. In the following centuries the Church succeeded to have disruptive blood feuds abolished. In the 13th century, however, a few rivalling families' accumulated power and wealth resulted in bloody collisions and led to the collapse of the Icelandic Commonwealth, which in 1262 was overtaken by the Norwegian King. Iceland came under the Danish King before the Lutheran Reformation overtook Catholicism in the country, which sadly caused bloodshed. Since then, peace has prevailed in the country, the survival battles there, however, have been numerous both on land and sea. The repeated cod strife with Great Britain for Iceland's fishing limits starting a few years after the founding of the sovereign Icelandic Republic in 1944, can be classified in this category as happily no deaths occurred. Iceland's location mid-way between the former USSR and the USA was the reason for U.S. President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev, to hold the Reykjavik Summit in 1986. Although the outcome appeared ambiguous it certainly had its impact on breaking down the Iron Curtain. Iceland is still a member of the NATO alliance. Though, no standing army is located in Iceland. But voluntary, well-trained and equipped rescue teams are serving all around the country and are much admired for their heroic deeds.

Just Peace with Earth Events

The turning year of millennia, 2000, occasioned the 1000 year's anniversary of the Adoption of Christianity in Iceland. The peak of the celebrations took place in mid-summer at *Thingvellir*. In the wake of that event, around 150 top world scientists, theologians, and philosophers from various faith communities, who participated in a conference on Faith in the Future held in Reykjavik, convened at *Thingvellir* to experience this historic site. They discussed the opportunities and future roles of religion and science and felt that the central location of Iceland

in the middle of the Atlantic and its impressive nature exemplified at *Thingvellir*, along with a highly educated population enjoying an advanced social welfare system, made it optimal for international conflict resolutions and gatherings to increase ecological awareness.

The American peace and reconciliation veterans, Rev. Dr. Rodney Petersen and the late Jesuit Fr. Raymond Helmick, SJ felt the same when they both, in 2006 and 2014, visited Iceland and lectured on their reconciliation work and social healing in the world's conflict zones, and had meetings with Church leaders, governmental officials and media reporters. They were well received when they proposed to arrange in Iceland, with the support of these agencies, a World Council of Churches (WCC) Conference on just peace, and climate changes as root causes of conflicts.

These ideals were realized in Iceland as an integral part of the celebrations in 2017 of the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation of Martin Luther, by holding a WCC Just Peace with Earth Conference, Oct 11-13, with leading delegates from the various Christian denominations in both the northern and southern hemispheres. In her opening speech, the Lutheran Bishop of Iceland, Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir, said: 'Our unity has never been more important than now as we face the serious challenges of our times, and particularly the impending climate crisis...Iceland is surrounded by the sea. It borders to the north the arctic areas, but to the south only the vast ocean is found until it reaches the Antarctica. It also feels like this country stretches out its arms to both continents in the east and the west. The Eurasian tectonic plate and the North American tectonic plate meet in Iceland, so at least geologically speaking, the easiest way to bridge the continents would be here. This kind of mind mapping draws by imagination a cross through Iceland on the global scene. To see in the light of Christ is indeed always to look from his cross, as the central vantage point, feel there his sacrificial love and be also grasped by the light of his resurrection to clearly realize the darkness of evil, misery and suffering in this world, without, however, despairing, and simultaneously be grasped by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit to relieve the hurtful bondages of human miseries and evil and now also to alleviate the heavy burdens of the exploited and maltreated earthly ecosystem.'

In the Conference Message, which was solemnly accepted at *Thingvellir*, it states: 'The contribution of faith must be to confront the essential immorality of lifestyles and economic systems that are based on the conquest and selfish abuse of nature and of others, and that are indifferent to injustice and ecological repercussions...We also underline the inextricable connections between peace with the earth and peace on earth, rejecting the insanity of spiraling military expenditure and the continued reliance on nuclear weapons...We encourage the recognition of the wisdom of Indigenous Peoples who have deep and longstanding traditional knowledge of the environments that are their ancestral homelands. Such spirituality and wisdom is for the wellbeing of all created life and the earth and cosmos intended for the generations to come.'

The WCC conference served as a pre-event to the Arctic Circle Assembly (ACA) of 2017, in Reykjavik, which the conference participants actively attended. The Arctic Circle, which was

instigated in 2013 by Dr. Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, the former president of Iceland, has become the largest annual international gathering on the Arctic. It aims at promoting ecological concerns and responsible actions to preserve its sensitive biosphere and nature and is now attended by more than 2000 participants from around 60 countries, heads of states and governments, ministers, members of parliaments, officials, religious leaders, scientists, entrepreneurs, indigenous representatives, environmentalists, and others from the growing international community interested in the future of the Arctic. As invited by the AC, the Icelandic Government and the National Church of Iceland, His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Orthodox Patriarch, Bartholomew I, gave an intriguing key note speech at the 2017 assembly and notably said: ‘Discussion of climate change frequently tends to focus on political, economic, and technical issues rather than human influence and impact. However, the truth is that creation care is a profoundly religious, even spiritual matter... Scientists tell us that the Arctic is a vibrant image and vivid mirror of the state of our planet as a whole... Creation is an intricate web of life, and the actions of human beings can either develop or destroy it... It should now be more obvious than ever that no national state or ethnic group – and certainly no economic class – can hope to advance its own interests indefinitely at the expense of the remainder of humankind and the planet’s resources. We need leadership from government; and we depend on inter-disciplinary collaboration. ...We all have a unique opportunity – for the first time in history – to change and direct the course of our future and planet. Therefore, on behalf of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which is endowed by history with a distinct responsibility for the welfare of the whole inhabited earth, we pledge to you that we stand with you in conscience and conviction. We stand with you in prayer and persuasion. And we stand with you in partnership and solidarity. May God bless you all.’

At the ACA 2018, a panel of Nordic Bishops and Archbishops representing the respective National Churches of Sweden, Norway, Finland, the Faroe Islands and Iceland discussed the role of faith communities in the transformation of societies and the promotion of lifestyles of responsible stewardship, as necessary for a sustainable future, and also their concerted witness for these aims in Christ’s name.

Perhaps the most poignant and outspoken contemporary voice on the climate scenario is that of the Swedish teenage girl, Greta Thunberg, who repeatedly called a strike from school to protest in front of the Swedish Parliament against the bluntness of politicians concerning the climate threats. She has now influenced hundreds of thousands of youngsters around the world, also of course in Iceland, to similarly strike on schools to wake up the authorities to offer them a better future than the dire climate prospects do. Greta has presented her views in the prophetic spirit of Joan of Arc of former times in front of audiences of UN Assemblies, in a Ted talk and at ecological conferences and even caused debates in the British Parliament. ‘What is the point to learn facts in the school system’, she asks, ‘when the most important facts given by the finest science of the same school system clearly mean nothing to our politicians and society? I think if a few children can get the headlines all over the world by not coming to school for just a few weeks imagine what we all could do if we really wanted to... Today we use around 100 million barrels of oil every single day. There are no politics to change that. There are no rules to keep

that oil in the ground so we cannot save the world by playing by the rules because the rules have to be changed. Everything has to change and that has to start today.’

‘See, I have set before you today, life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways and keep his commandments (*Deut. 30. 15-16*)’ Undeniably mankind in both hemispheres stands now at the decisive crossroads of either to proceed to fatal ecological disasters or use the emergency brakes to take quite a different road for climate rescue. To do so both scientific and prophetic voices that call for a drastic paradigm shift toward sustainable energy uses and lifestyles must be heard and consequently responded to. That also means confessing both personal and structural misdeeds and sins and cultivating concern and care in the Christian Spirit towards humanity and all the created order, not at least in the educational systems. That also entails exposing augmented weapon production and militarism as adding to mistrust and fear, feeding conflicts and wars and wasting both human and natural resources. The World Christian Church as well as all other constructive faith communities are now divinely called and obliged to show their worth by unhesitatingly uniting their forces to enlighten hope and mobilize ground-breaking actions for Just Peace with Earth.

Rev. Gunnthor Ingason [and Einar Karl Haraldsson]



Kærleikskraftur

Blessaður kærleikskraftur
sem Kristur gefur jörð
ber með sér blómgun aftur
er breiðist vor um svörð

Upprisu undrið bjarta,
upplífgar kalin börð.
Kærleikur hans í hjarta
heldur um lífið vörð

Verk sem hans viðmót bera
vetrarbönd leysa hörð
svo lifnar fegurð úr frera
og flytur þakkargjörð

Rev. Gunnþór Ingason

Force of Love

The blessed force of love
that Christ bestows on earth
again brings forth its flowering
as spring spreads over soil.

The bright wonder of resurrection
enlivens barren leaves.
His heartfelt love
gives protection to life

Works that carry his stamps
unloose the hard bonds of winter
so that beauty is born of frost
bringing its gratitude to life

Prose Trans: Sigurður A. Magnússon

A PROTESTANT, PRESBYTERIAN PERSPECTIVE

The Rev. Christian Iosso, PhD, is Coordinator for Social Witness Policy in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and co-convenor of the National Council of Churches of Christ Peace and Justice Table. A former pastor in the NYC metro area, he is co-editor of Prayers for the New Social Awakening: Inspired by the New Social Creed (2008) and authored Five Risks Presbyterians Must Take for Peace (2017).

A word on the approach here: combining sustainability and peacemaking is crucial at this time. Though we can think of all the ways we make war on the earth – and implicitly our own health and well-being – this approach starts from the more positive side, and from what some might call, “appreciative consciousness.” It is also an approach that is implicitly hopeful, though the word is not used, and some apocalyptic imagery is. Scripture is the source of positive images, though I know that there is also judgment, disruptions, crises and need for repentance in the Bible. This assumes we will face ecological disruptions, even catastrophes, but that “Nature” and “Grace” should be coming ever closer.



Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471–1528), Noli me tangere, 1511. Woodcut. British Museum, London. From the Gospel of John 20: 14-15, where Mary Magdalene mistakes the risen Christ for a gardener.

Great Lord of all worlds, visible and invisible,

Our faith is deeply emmeshed in our imagination and intuition. Sometimes we try to un-mix our faith from desires that would make others our instruments or objects of our pleasure. Yet You

are the source of great longings and greater awareness, and we find ourselves in an on-going conversation with You. You are with us in times of loss, and also when we forget ourselves, and hear that deep “laughter from the heart of things” (Luke, 2001). You are the stranger who becomes a friend; we know You better the more we know ourselves and become unafraid of mystery.

In the Gospel of John, on the first Easter morning, Mary Magdalene mistakes the risen Christ for a gardener. But from an ecological viewpoint, is it a mistake? In the liminal space of that first Easter morning, and before Jesus speaks, we have a person still in shock and grief looking for a dead body, not a being standing up and moving around. She thus imagines the figure she sees to be a gardener. She recognizes Jesus when he speaks, but it is partly to say that he cannot be held. In John’s presentation, Jesus seems to be in a transition or ascension to be with You, God.

Indwelling Spirit, what if You were asking us to see Christ in the garden again? You call us sometimes into wilderness, to fast and pray and seek visions, as Jesus did in beginning his ministry. But we know the presence of gardens at the beginning of Genesis, at the site of the empty tomb, and at the end of Revelation is no accident. So much of our lives are quests to re-enter unspoiled gardens of beauty and joy. Even for those who live close to subsistence, those gardens live in dreams. In those quests and dreams, are You calling us to make the world again a garden?

More than imposing our order on Your creation, gardening speaks to nurture of vulnerable, growing things. Sun and rain should never be taken for granted. That they may be more uncertain in some places creates an undercurrent of fear, as climate change shakes the foundations of our agriculture and threatens many creatures with extinction. O God let us not be the ultimate invasive species, unable to control our numbers or our appetites.

The threat of nuclear winter continues to hover over our arms races, driven also by fear, but perhaps more by greed. Living God, we who live by the sword of fossil fuel war-making, and the cruel dreams of retaliation should deterrence fail, do we not mistake Christ for the soldiers and for Pilate? Let us not wash our hands in small eco-niceness while the green earth is crucified, or perhaps asphyxiated with carbon. Let not nuclear winter be a death icon of a clouded horizon that finally dooms most species, including us.

Jesus emerges for Mary out of devastation, he rises to fulfill our archetypal hopes of renewal, and we dream to follow his footsteps and flight plan. But we imagine first his peace plan, to live with the grain of nature, to grow sometimes where we are planted, and other times to cross-pollinate with cultures and places where we land. So long as we are rooted and grounded in Your love, let us also be Your gardeners, in green grace, and the light of truth.

Until that day when seeing, and touching, and imagining are one,
Amen

A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

*Rabbi Shoshana Meira Friedman is the Associate at Temple Sinai of Brookline. She works to engage members meaningfully with each other, the temple, and Judaism. In addition to her work leading worship, teaching, and building relationships, she is the primary clergy member for Tzedek@Sinai, the community's social justice arm, and she directs the temple's Sinai U teen programming. She feels blessed to bring her love of Judaism and the Boston area to serve this wonderful community. Rabbi Shoshana is a leader in the interfaith climate justice movement in New England. She and her husband Yotam Schachter co-wrote *The Tide Is Rising*, an anthem for the climate movement that has been sung in congregations, climate rallies, and gatherings in the US, Brazil, and France. Most recently she started *ClergyClimateAction.org*, a project of the Climate Disobedience Center, to organize religious leaders to take direct action for climate justice.*

The Front of the Human Spirit

I used to think that unless climate activism was guaranteed to bring down parts per million of carbon, and therefore physically mitigate the climate crisis, it wasn't worth doing. It turns out, very little in activism is guaranteed, and so this outlook left me stuck for some years.

I have since discovered that physics is not the only front of the ecological and climate crisis worth fighting on. On what I have come to call the front of the human spirit, we can win no matter what destruction comes our way. On this front, we fight with compassion, joy and community. On this front, we build resilience and resist the forces that continue to destroy the future. On this front, we practice radical compassion for ourselves and for others, even for those with whom we passionately disagree or perceive as villains. On this front, we stand on the solid ground of shared song and prayer, and we work hard to bring down divisions – including the entrenched divisions between right and left in American society – because we are, truly, in this mess together.

We win on the front of the human spirit when our children can say, “They fought for us.” We win on this front when a community ravaged by fire or flood can say, “Calamity befell us, but we were cared for by our neighbors and by strangers.” We win on this front when we can say, “My heart is breaking, and I am letting myself feel the pain and I continue to show up.” This front, the front of the human spirit, is winnable, regardless of the tragedy happening around us. Here, we can follow Wendell Berry's sound advice: “Be joyful, though you have considered all the facts.”

The *Amidah* is a sequence of blessings that are said three times a day in Jewish liturgy. Each blessing praises God for a specific attribute connected to human life and concerns. Read as a unit, the weekday version of the *Amidah* is kind of liturgical audit, helping us to bring attention to various important areas in our lives. Some years back, I wrote an interpretive translation of the *Amidah* using the traditional themes but dealing with the themes of ecological crisis. The

words are meant to flow with the chanting motif for weekday morning and afternoon liturgy in Hebrew. Everyone is welcome to use these words in your own prayer.

Excerpts from the Earth Amidah by Rabbi Shoshana Meira Friedman

(Full text can be found at rabbishoshana.com)

Forgiveness: Forgive us, God, for all we have done. Forgive us. For clear-cutting Your forests, for enslaving Your animals, for causing rapid change in Your planet's climate, for pouring toxins into Your water, ground, and air, for causing species and habitat loss. Blessed are You God, who forgives what cannot be forgiven.

In-Gathering of Exiles: Call us home, God, to Your earth. Gather us in from the exile of a life spent indoors not knowing the cycles of seasons or the moon. Bring us close in love to our bioregion, our watershed, the wildlife we live with. End our spiritual exile from land and end the physical exile of Indigenous Peoples from their homelands. Blessed are You God, who gathers home the exiled.

Judges and Justice: Bestow justice, God, in this crisis. Let the courts decide on the side of the children, the earth, animals, and Indigenous Peoples – and in their flourishing let us all flourish. Let laws be passed that pass power into the hands of those who steward their homes and land. Let the population responsible for destruction be the first to bear the costs and offer solutions. Blessed are You God, lover of justice.

Evil: For all that oppresses and destroys, God, we pray for Your attention and Your help. May greed, fear, envy, corruption, violence, despair, apathy and depression be transformed into forces of healing and good. May entrenched systems of extraction and abuse be swiftly and compassionately destroyed. Blessed are You God, force of destruction and transformation.

The Righteous: Dear God, we know we are all complicit, we cannot claim to be righteous. Yet we pray for all those doing their best to help – the activists, journalists, writers, farmers, artists, lawyers, parents, tribes, businesspeople, Youth, organizers, politicians and visionaries who are doing their best to make good change. Bestow on them wise action, loving-kindness, strength, compassion, courage, and reward for their work. Put our lot with them, that we may not be ashamed. Blessed are You, who supports and protects the righteous.

Jerusalem: And to Your City of Jerusalem and to all cities, please God, return with compassion. May centers of human population be places of justice, love, mercy, human rights, open green spaces and urban farms, clean air and good water and food, healthy buildings, healthy animals, families and neighborhoods. May healthy human civilization be established quickly and be sustained. Blessed are You, God, builder of beautiful cities.

Redemption: May Your beloved sprout of redemption grow in us now! May we each plant seeds every day of the world we wish to live in, for we long for that world all day, every day. Blessed are You, God, gardener of a better world.

Accept our Prayer: Accept our work in the world, God, as a sacred offering to You. May the stuff of our days – our work, our learning, our interactions, our activism, our meetings, our prayers, our music, and the work of our hands be acceptable to You, for we lovingly bring our most prized possession - our time and our love – as offerings before You to heal this world. Blessed are You, God, who is present through our good deeds.

A DINÉ NATION (NAVAJO) AND TSÉTSÊHÉSTÂHESE (CHEYENNE) PERSPECTIVE

Lyla June is a nationally and internationally renowned public speaker, poet, hip-hop artist and acoustic singer-songwriter of Diné (Navajo) and Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne) lineages. Her music and message centers around intergenerational and inter-ethnic healing, as well as an articulation of Indigenous Philosophy. Her life story of addiction, abuse, discrimination and eventually overcoming these battles gives her a powerful vantage point from which to share a message of love, unification and healing. Lyla's urgent, vibrant stage presence and ability to convey paths forward for indigenous liberation have brought her to universities, school assemblies, conferences, music festivals, and community centers across the United States and over ten nations around the world. She is a walker within the Nihigaal Bee Iiná Movement, a 1,000-mile prayer walk through Diné Tah (the Navajo homeland) that is exposing the exploitation of Diné land and people by uranium, coal, oil and gas industries. She is the lead organizer of the Black Hill Unity Concert which gathers native and nonnative musicians to pray for the return of guardianship of the Black Hills to the Lakota, Nakota and Dakota nations.

Yá'át'ééh shik'é adoo shidiné'e. Shi éi Naaneesht'ézhi Táách'iinii nishlí, Hálgai Diné'e (Cheyenne) Bashishch'íín, Ashíí'hi da shicheii, dóó Biligaana ei da shinaali. Taos, New Mexico déé' naashá, Lyla June da shijini.

Translation: Hello beloved my beloved kin and my beloved people. I am of the Black Charcoal Streak Division of the Red Running Into Water clan of the Diné Nation (known incorrectly as Navajo). My father's mother is of the Cheyenne Nation. My mother's father's mother is of the Salt clan of the Diné Nation and my father's father's mother is of the Scandinavian clan. I am from Taos, New Mexico and my name is Lyla June.

I love to write in my own language, and it is customary to introduce your clans before speaking, so thank you for letting do so.

As Diné, we are Indigenous to what is now called Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. We are a Nation that comes from cracked mud and hard lessons, learned through trial and error over many thousands of years. After all that time, finally, we perfected a mode of sustainable existence in the desert. A few millennia afterward, the conquistadors (conquerors) came and changed everything. Although we have been shattered (98% of us have been annihilated by Spanish and American forces), remnants of our sustainable culture continue to live onward.

An integral part of sustainability in our communities is the concept of “k'é”, or *universal kinship*. I will write it again: *universal kinship*. I treat you as kin. I treat my neighbor as kin. I treat the elder I have never met as I would treat my own grandmother. I treat the wind as kin. I treat the corn as kin. I treat the rain as kin. I treat the stars as kin. This is not so much a “philosophy,” as my elder Patricia Davis says. More so, it is natural fact that, indeed, we are all related. As MLK stated: “In a real sense, [we] are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all

indirectly.” Thus, we even recognized evil as kin and love it, as with our Coyote stories. We thank Coyote for the lessons he teaches us and all the ways he makes us stronger, wiser and more loving.

Universal kinship is a simple yet powerful tool we can use to heal our planetary wounds, both social and ecological (in Diné thinking, they were one and the same). When I move about the world I try not to say, ‘Hey Bill! Hey Jill!’ Rather, I say, “Hello my dear uncle! Hello my dear sister!” I love watching people’s eyes light up when, even though they have a different color skin from me, even though they speak a different language, I honor them as my precious family. I have even gone so far as to call Donald Trump my Uncle Trump. Many eyebrows are raised when I do this in liberal contexts: “How could you take in someone as your family who disrespects women?,” they ask. “How can we not?” I respond. How are we to ever make headway in bringing love into the world if we treat alienation with more alienation? We urgently need to confront those who perceive us as enemies with a conviction that at the very foundation, we are not enemies, we are family.

As Einstein has stated: “A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space...Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

Is this an easy task? Not always. Is it worth it? Absolutely. Future generations are beckoning us to fight for their existence with love in our hearts. Fight the good fight, yes, but do so with love for those you oppose and recognize they have their own reasons for their own struggles. When we are liberated in this state of unconditional love, Creator flows through fluently and all things are possible.

PRAYER OFFERING:

We call upon the Four Sacred Mountains: Sisnaanjiní, Tsoodzil, Doo’ko’osliid, DibeNitsáá. We call upon the Diyin Diné’e, the Holy People. We call upon Yadiłhił Nihitxaa (Father Sky) and Nihima Nahaasdzáán (Mother Earth). Hear us now. Niyázhí nishlǫ́, hear your child reaching out to you in this moment and every moment. We are in a big mess over here in the human world. Coyote has tricked us good this time. We need your assistance to see clearly again. Help us have the courage to look at the past, feel it, and then forgive it and let it go. Help us have the courage to heal ourselves and all the pain inflicted on us as children. Help us be compassionate, patient and helpful towards those who are struggling with their own childhood trauma.

Teach us to be healthy, loving stewards of the earth once again. Teach us your ways so we can help you operate in a smooth and functioning manner. Help us plant your seeds. Help us bring your rain. Help us make space for all other lifeforms to live, all the other people, because they are people too, whether they have wings or hooves or leaves. Help us eat in a way that is respectful, kind, sensitive and aware of the cycles of life.

Help us understand our own beauty. Help us forgive ourselves. Help us forgive each other. Help us be brave. Help us over here on Earth, we are having a hard time. We have forgotten the lessons of the stars. We have forgotten the lessons of the stories. We have lost all we gained. We are lost, pitifully lost, and in great need of help. Come, come down to us Yadiłhił Nihitxaa (Father Sky). Come, come up to us from the roots, Nihima Nahaasdzaan (Mother Earth). Teach us. Reach those farthest from your warmth. Make us your fit instruments so that we may shine your truth into the darkest corners of the earth and prepare the ground for future generations. Give us the joy of selflessness once again. We are here. Open armed, and never armed, ready and willing to be used by your great beauty.

Use us now in this time and show us the way, that many may be healed and their suffering relieved. In the name of all things we make this prayer. Find us, please come crashing through all the walls we have consciously and unconsciously built against you. Let us be your willing students and teach us the way of *hozhó*, beauty and joy. We give great thanks for all the ways these prayers will be heard and answered. *Hozhó Naahaasdlíí, Hozhó Naahaasdlíí, Hozhó Naahaasdlíí, Hozhó Naahaasdlíí.*

A MUSLIM PERSPECTIVE

Fay Khudairi is a member and volunteer of the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center (ISBCC) in Roxbury, MA. She started the ISBCC Green Team to educate community members on the Islamic tradition of tending to the earth. The Green Team focuses on environmental justice to improve the health of the surrounding land and implement sustainable practices institution wide. Most recently the Green Team led a successful month-long initiative to minimize and divert waste with intensive education and a composting and recycling program. Fay currently works as a registered nurse at Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program and is pursuing a masters in public health with a focus on environmental health.

The natural unity of all creation is a profound reflection of God's Oneness. God has created Earth as a sign for mankind to reflect on God and be grateful. The more we understand the natural world order-- studying and predicting patterns and then standing back in awe of the anomalies-- the more deeply we understand Him as the great Creator.

I am drawn toward deepening my relationship with the earth as a way to learn of my place within the oneness of God's creation. Through nature's cycles of life and death do we learn of God's divine qualities, as both the Giver of Life (*Al-Muhyiy*) and the Bringer of Death (*Al-Mumit*), **"And it is He who sends the winds as good tidings before His mercy until, when they have carried heavy rain clouds, We drive them to a dead land and We send down rain therein and bring forth thereby [some] of all the fruits. Thus will We bring forth the dead; perhaps you may be reminded"** (Qur'an 7:57). God frequently describes natural occurrences in the Quran as a reminder of God's mercy, calling mankind to remember Him and be grateful. Reflecting on our interconnectedness with all of God's living creation, we realize God's closeness and yearn to draw nearer to Him, mirroring our eventual return. **"And there is no creature on [or within] the earth or bird that flies with its wings except [that they are] communities like you. We have not neglected in the Register a thing. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered"** (Qur'an, 6:38).

God's gifts – our planet and the food grown in its soil, and the water harvested from its reservoirs and our families and communities with whom we enjoy these blessings – are also a responsibility and we are accountable to God for our treatment of them. **"And it is He (God) who has made you successors (*khala'ifa*) upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful."** (Qur'an 6:165). As humans, we have the intellect and free will to either share and appreciate God's gifts or destroy them in ignorance. Our responsibility to the earth and caring for the worldly gifts God has granted us is one of the fundamental reasons for our very existence. In Islam we are told to enjoy the good and forbid the evil, so we call one another to more peaceful relations with the earth.

We are told not to abuse our power over others and take advantage of one another for material gain. As God commands in the Quran, **“And eat up not one another's property unjustly (in any illegal way e.g. stealing, robbing, deceiving, etc.), nor give bribery to the rulers (judges before presenting your cases) that you may knowingly eat up a part of the property of others sinfully” (Qur'an, 2:188)**. We are concerned not only for the security of our individual rights, but we must also consider the wealth distribution of our larger community. Obligatory charity giving and protection of property go hand in hand in ensuring continuous redistribution of wealth within an Islamic society. All the while, God is also fully knowing of our shortcomings as humans and generously and continuously extends His mercy on us.

Singularly capitalist tendencies that venerate capital growth at the cost of the livelihoods of workers and the health of consumer and planet alike are antithetical to the ethical principles of Islam. Currently the way we mass slaughter animals is inhumane as well as destructive toward the environment. The polluting effects of the meat, dairy, and fast fashion industries can be slowed down by reducing the demand from reflective consumers and demanding ethical business practices. Harm caused by these industries are already in effect from forest fires in California, to hurricanes in the Caribbean, droughts in East Africa, floods in South Asia, and unprecedented heat waves in India and Pakistan. The place of faith in this conversation is central for there is no entity more powerful and merciful than God who can guide and unify our hearts and minds in addressing this issue.

Just peacemaking entails actively cultivating a deep respect and care for the earth and calling each other toward sustainable practices. Specifically, we can encourage recycling, composting, minimizing wasteful consumption and raising awareness on the harmful effects of fast fashion, plastics, and food industries that are contributing to global warming. Furthermore, community gardens are a powerful investment in the bounties God has provided. Through gardens, we can improve food security, accessibility to nourishment, and provide spiritual refuge. The deeper I connect to plants through gardening at the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center, the more I rectify my relationship to the earth. By rooting sustainable practices in our faith traditions and tending to the earth, we can transform our relationship to the earth and each other.

PRAYER OFFERING:

Oh God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind, guide us toward Your light. Purify our hearts and bring them together so we may serve in Your cause. Make the truth clear in our minds. Loosen our tongues and bring tranquility to our hearts that we may call one another to what is just. Guide us to treat the earth, all its creation, and one another with mercy and patience. May the work we do be pleasing to You for You are the ultimate Judge. May we walk on the path of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) bringing light to darkness, truth to ambiguity. May our only desire be to serve and please You. All is created from You, and to You we shall return.

A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

Rabbi Katy Allen is the co-founder and President pro-tem of the Jewish Climate Action Network-MA and the founder and rabbi of Ma'yan Tikvah - A Wellspring of Hope in Wayland, which holds services outdoors all year long. She is a board-certified chaplain and a former hospital and hospice chaplain and considers herself an eco-chaplain. She is the Facilitator of One Earth Collaborative, a program of Open Spirit in Framingham. She received her ordination from the Academy for Jewish Religion in Yonkers, NY, in 2005 and lives in Wayland with her spouse, Gabi Mezger, who leads the singing at Ma'yan Tikvah.

Prayers for health and welfare are a regular part of the Shabbat morning Torah service. After the Torah readings, prayers are recited on behalf of people who chanted the Torah blessings, the ill in the community, anyone about to be married or having just given birth, and young people celebrating their bar or bat mitzvah. After the reading from the prophets, special prayers are recited for the wellbeing of the congregation, the country in which the congregants live, and the State of Israel, and for world peace.

Judaism's indigenous roots and many connections to Creation together with the perilous state of our planet call out for a new prayer to be added to this list. The Prayer for the Earth does not use the format of the existing traditional blessings, but it does contain phrases from traditional prayers as well as traditional names of G!d in order to highlight the multi-faceted nature of both the Holy One and our need to be supported and thrust forward.

A phrase repeated in the prayer, *El na*, “Please G!d”, is from Numbers 12:13, when Moses cries out to G!d after his sister Miriam has been stricken with scales as punishment for speaking against him. (Although their brother Aaron also spoke out against Moses, he does not receive this punishment.) In response to her affliction, “Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, 'Please G!d, heal her!’” Moses' words, *El na, refana la*, are often used in prayers for personal healing. The short words in this succinct but pointed phrase are a powerful prayer of pleading to G!d from the depths of one's heart. This desperate call for healing resonates with the desperate need we have to take seriously our responsibility to repair the damage we have done to this world before it is too late. The magnitude of what we must do requires all the strength, courage, and energy we can muster. It requires calling out from the depths of our hearts that our prayers may be answered, that we may, indeed find the personal and political will to take the actions demanded of us all.

Prayer for the Earth
תפילת העולם

Ribbono shel Olam, Oseh V'reishit,
Master of the Universe, Creator of All,
may it be your will
to bless with compassion your Creation.
Please G!d,
bless this sacred Earth,
from the ant to the whale,
from the giant redwoods to the bacteria;
from the sand at the edge of the sea,
to the mountains, rivers, and streams,
from each one of us
to all humanity--
all that exists in this world,
we ask,
from the depths of our hearts,
El na,
please O G!d, bless it all,
please O G!d, please heal it all.

Tzur Kol HaOlamim,
Rock of All Worlds,
please, place in our hearts
understanding of the impact of our actions
upon Your Creation.

Eloheinu v'elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu,
El na!
G!d of our ancestors,
O G!d, please!
help us!
Renew within us courage and strength,
to do your will with a full heart.
Help us
to heal with wisdom, your Earth.

Goaleinu, Matzileinu,
Our Savior, our Redeemer,
teach us to live with each other,
with love and with peace,
in compassion and in lovingkindness.
Baruch Atah Adonai
Oseh nifla'ot
U'vorei et hakol.
Blessed are You, Adonai,
Doer of wonders
and Creator of all.

רבונו של עולם, עושה בראשית,
יהי רצון מלפניך
שתברך ברחמים את בְּרִיאָתְךָ.
אֵל נָא,
ברך את העולם הקדוש הזה--
מהנמלים עד הלווייתנים;
מעצי הסקויות הענקיים
עד החיידקים,
מהחול על שפת הים
עד ההרים, הנהרות, והנחלים
מבן האנוש
עד האנושות כולה--
כל מה שקיים בעולם הזה,
אנחנו מבקשים,
מעומק הלב,
נָא אֵל, בֵּרַךְ הַכֹּל,
אֵל נָא, רַפֵּא נָא לְכֹל.

צור כל העולמים,
נָא, תֵּן בִּלְבָנוּ
את הבנת ההשפעה של פעולותינו
על בְּרִיאָתְךָ.

אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו ואמותינו,
אֵל נָא!
עֲזֹר לָנוּ!
חֲדָשׁ בְּתוֹכֵנוּ אוֹמֵץ וְכֹחַ,
לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת רְצוֹנְךָ בִּלְבָב שָׁלֵם,
עֲזֹר לָנוּ,
לְרַפֵּא בְּחִכְמָה אֶת עוֹלָמְךָ.

גואלנו, מצילנו,
למד אותנו
לחיות אחד עם השני,
באהבה ובשלום,
ברחמים ובחסד.
ברוך אתה יה
עושה נפלאות
ובורא את הכל.

A MUSLIM PERSPECTIVE

***Martin Bentz** is the Outreach Coordinator for the Islamic Society of Southeastern Massachusetts. In this role he has participated in numerous interfaith services and conferences. He writes for the Herald News, Fall River, and the Standard-Times, New Bedford on Muslim and interfaith matters. Martin worked for the United Nations for 30 years, including assignments with UN Peacekeeping in Morocco, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea and Ethiopia, capping his career as Chief Administrative Officer and Head of the Kuwait Support Office for the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. Throughout he worked on interfaith and intercultural cooperation and understanding. He is also on the Advisory Board of CAIR MA, working with CAIR Volunteers.*

The Earth, God's Gift to Humanity

In the Bible, God gives man dominion over the earth and all the beasts therein to serve him that he (mankind) may prosper and multiply (Genesis 9:1-3). Western culture has led us to believe that we are masters over the earth, and some say, even “Masters of the Universe.” We have imposed our will on Earth. We can do whatever we wish on Earth for our benefit. We ignore the Earth’s warnings to us – at our peril –that the Earth is too fragile.

In Islam, we see the Earth and its resources as God’s gift to humanity. God has given us endless bounty. But this life on Earth is a test to see who among us is best in doing good works and in serving God. Will we use the Earth, and our life therein, for our pleasure, or do we live on Earth as a means of remembering God’s Mercy for us?

We Muslims are reminded in the Holy Qur’an, Chapter 6, “Cattle,” verse 99, “And He is the One Who sends down rain from the sky – causing all kinds of plants to grow – producing green stalks from which We bring forth clustered grain. And from date trees come clusters of dates hanging within reach. Also, gardens of grapevines, olives and pomegranates, similar but dissimilar. Look at their fruit as it yields and ripens. Indeed, these are signs for people who believe.” The same chapter repeats these same provisions in verse 141, and adds, “But waste not by excess, for Allah does not love the wasteful.”

Allah warns us not to be arrogant. We think we alone are responsible for our actions. We forget that our wealth can be taken in seconds. The Holy Qur’an in Chapter 18, “The Cave,” reveals a parable of a rich man boasting to his companion that he alone has the best set of gardens and that he expects even better in the future. He scoffs when his companion cautions him not to be so sure of himself and that all bounty comes from Allah. Turning a corner, he discovers his precious gardens are in ruins, destroyed overnight, and that he is helpless to alter his fate. He realizes his pride was misplaced. The Qur’an reminds us often of the numerous past prosperous civilizations that are now dry ruins.

Allah created man and jinn for one purpose only: to worship Allah. Worshipping Allah is remembering repeatedly, as much as we can, Allah's Grace and Allah's Glory on Earth and in Heaven. Remembering Allah, we do good on earth. Doing good on earth includes taking care of the earth. The Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) encouraged planting trees to increase prosperity and to use water frugally. He also forbid cutting down trees wastefully. The Prophet was a model conservationist centuries before it was a dire necessity because he valued the preciousness of Allah's Creation. As Muslims we strive to follow his example. We, as he reminded us, are stewards and beneficiaries of Allah's Creation.

This edition is published just after the holy month of Ramadan. As I prepare these reflections, Muslims are fasting. While fasting we relearn the virtue of self-restraint and self-control. We have to delay satisfying our impulse for immediate gratification. We are mindful of our dependence on Allah for sustenance. At the end of the day, when Muslims break our fast, we are grateful to take a sip of water and eat a morsel of nourishing food. We are reminded of those who are poor and suffer like this daily. Realizing this, we are compelled to give to those less fortunate and redouble our efforts in charity. We are humbled that we live on the Earth only for a short time. We acknowledge that the Earth and Heavens are sustained by Allah alone and we are thankful for the opportunity to be part of Allah's Creation.

PRAYER OFFERING:

May Allah help us remember Your endless Mercy and Bounty on Earth.
May Allah remind us to be thankful for Your Grace and Sustenance.
May Allah help us to be ever mindful of Your precious Creation.
May Allah guide us and lead us to be stewards of Your Creation.
May Allah increase our ability to do good in Your Creation.

May Allah keep us from being heedless and wasteful.
May Allah keep us from being forgetful and arrogant.
May Allah keep us from doing mischief in the land.
May Allah keep us from doing harm to others.

May Allah not give us a burden greater than we can bear.
May Allah forgive us, pardon us and have Mercy on us.
May Allah accept our sacrifices and our prayers.
May Allah count us amongst the righteous.
May Allah keep us from going astray.

Ameen

Supplications drawn from lines in the Quran

A PROTESTANT, UCC PERSPECTIVE

Rev. Dr. Jim Antal is a denominational leader, climate activist, author and public theologian. He serves as Special Advisor on Climate Justice to the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. Antal's book, CLIMATE CHURCH, CLIMATE WORLD, was featured in the Chicago Tribune on Earth Day 2018, and in Christian Century Magazine on Earth Day 2019. Antal received the 2019 Steward of Creation award from the National Religious Coalition for Creation Care, joining the Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley and Prof. Katharine Hayhoe, and previous awardees HAH Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Bill McKibben, the Sioux Nation, James Hansen and Wendell Berry.

And a little child shall lead them...

Our children are birthing a new world. They know that they are the future, and they know what few of us can admit: that a viable future requires our generation to make the most fundamental changes society has ever seen.

Their alarm is ringing across the globe. On the days before and after Easter, much of London was brought to a halt by a group of young people called **the Extinction Rebellion**. Over 1,000 arrests were made. Several of them had glued their hands to the top of diesel locomotives and trucks. Many grownups dismissed them as extremists who were deluding themselves that they could make a difference. But a week later, the British House of Commons became the first leadership body of any government in the world to declare a “CLIMATE EMERGENCY.”¹

And then, here in the U.S., there's **the Sunrise Movement** – an army of young people committed to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process. They are the ones whose urgency provided impetus for the Green New Deal. In January 2019, dozens of them were arrested outside of Nancy Pelosi's office. Their actions were derided as ineffective. And then, lo and behold, by the end of April a [CNN poll](#) found that, in the United States, Democratic voters care more about climate change than they do about any other issue in the upcoming Presidential election: more than health care, more than gun control, more than free college, more than impeaching the President.

And then there is 16-year-old Greta Thunberg from Sweden. She has been focused on climate change since she was eight. In August 2018, Greta embraced a new vocation: she initiated a school strike for climate. First it was only her, out in front of Sweden's Parliament, every Friday. After a few months, tens of thousands of students throughout Europe were joining her.

In November, she explained her urgency in her TED Talk. She said, if we thought climate change were real, “we wouldn't be talking about anything else. As soon as you turn on the TV,

¹<https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/notes-from-a-remarkable-political-moment-for-climate-change>

everything would be about that. Headlines, radio, newspapers: You would never read or hear about anything else. As if there was a world war going on...”²

In January, she was invited to address the UN climate change talks in Poland. In March, she took a 32-hour train ride to Davos, Switzerland, and told the richest people in the world: “We must change almost everything in our current societies. The bigger your carbon footprint, the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform, the bigger your responsibility.... I don’t want your hope.... I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is.”³

The day after the Cathedral of Notre Dame burned, Greta addressed the European Union. A week later, she concluded her address to the British Parliament by saying: “I’m sure that the moment we start behaving as if we are in an emergency, we can avoid climate and ecological catastrophe. Humans are very adaptable: we can still fix this. But the opportunity to do so will not last for long. We must start today. We have no more excuses. We children are doing this to wake the adults up. We children are doing this for you to put your differences aside and start acting as you would in a crisis. We children are doing this because we want our hopes and dreams back.”

Young people get it. It is time for grownups to embrace the reality that God has blessed, shaped and called our generation to “just such a time as this” (Esther) – to take action as God’s agents – as Jesus’ disciples – to address the greatest moral crisis humanity has ever faced.

PRAYER OFFERING:

The following prayer is adapted from an address given by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel in March 1938, just before Hebrew Union College brought him to America. Heschel addressed a group of Quaker leaders in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. He titled his brief talk, “The Meaning of this Hour.”

Forgive us, Gracious God, for profaning your word and giving the wealth of our land, the ingenuity of our minds and the dear lives of our youth to tragedy and perdition. There has never been more reason for humanity to be ashamed than now. We have bartered holiness for convenience, loyalty for success, love for power, wisdom for information, tradition for fashion. Let the blasphemy of our time not become an eternal scandal. Let future generations not loathe us. God is waiting for us to redeem the world. Let us not spend our lives hunting for trivial satisfactions while God is waiting constantly and keenly for our effort and devotion. The almighty has not created the universe that we may have opportunities to satisfy our greed, envy and ambition. Let us renew our covenant with God. Amen

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAmUIEsN9A>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/25/our-house-is-on-fire-greta-thunberg16-urges-leaders-to-act-on-climate>

A PROTESTANT, EPISCOPAL PERSPECTIVE

*Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas serves as Missioner for Creation Care in the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ. An Episcopal priest, author, and climate activist, she leads retreats in the U.S. and Canada on spiritual resilience and resistance, and for many years taught courses on prayer and spirituality at the Episcopal Divinity School (Cambridge, MA). In 2001, Margaret was arrested with other religious activists outside the U.S. Department of Energy in Washington, D.C., the first of several interfaith acts of civil disobedience in which she has engaged to stop construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure. Her latest book, *Rooted and Rising: Voices of Courage in a Time of Climate Crisis*, co-edited with Leah Schade, will be published in November 2019 (Rowman & Littlefield). Her Website, RevivingCreation.org, includes blog posts, sermons, and articles.*

Pray for Boldness

The path that most of society has traveled for the past two hundred years has led to an unprecedented human emergency: we are hurtling toward climate catastrophe and watching the web of life unravel before our eyes. Great populations of creatures – even entire species – have vanished in less than 50 years. In what scientists call a “biological annihilation,” human beings have wiped out more than half the world’s creatures since 1970. The relentless burning of coal, gas, and oil, and the logging of forests are pushing our planet to break records for heat, causing droughts, floods, and monster hurricanes, drowning cities and accelerating wildfires. Low-income communities are the people hurt first and hardest by a changing climate, but everyone will be affected: unless we change course fast, we will not leave our children and our children’s children a habitable world. Civilization itself is in peril.

A poignant prayer of confession in the Book of Common Prayer puts it like this: as a society we “have wandered far in a land that is waste.” It is easy to feel overwhelmed and to become stuck in anxiety or inertia, wondering if it is worth taking action: maybe it is too late to change course and maybe we are too far gone. Besides, what difference can one person make? Paralyzed by fear, we can get caught in a sort of death spiral, in what U.N. Secretary General Ban-ki Moon denounced as a “global suicide pact.”

Climate change brings us to our knees. It takes moral courage to face the predicament in which we find ourselves and to recognize the part we have played in creating it. How do we pray about ecocide? How do we pray with our fear and anger, our grief and guilt? One place to begin is with our bodies; to develop prayer practices that slow our racing heartbeats and quiet our agitated minds. In the midst of trauma – and directly or indirectly, all of us are experiencing trauma – we need contemplative practices such as Centering Prayer or mindfulness meditation that bring us into the present moment. Breath by breath, we breathe in the presence of God, who has loved us into existence and who sustains us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Breath by breath, we release our struggles and fears into God’s loving embrace. With every conscious

breath, we experience the divine Presence more fully as we touch into the still center that abides within us, beneath the turbulence of our lives.

Contemplative prayer can teach us trust and patience. We learn to sit quietly, maybe even serenely, in the midst of uncertainty, to wait in the darkness, to relinquish our anxious and futile quest to stay in control. We learn to listen for the inner voice of love that we can only hear when our thoughts lie as quietly as leaves that drift on a tranquil pond. “Be still... and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:11).

Yet we also need vigorous and visceral forms of prayer – expressive, noisy prayers of protest and lament. Again, our bodies can lead the way. How will we declare our love for a world that is in such desperate peril? How will we name our need for God and our fierce desire to be of use? We may need to drum and dance, to weep and groan, to sway and stamp our feet. We may need to sing or wail, to write poems and read them aloud, to call out prayers of petition and intercession, to light candles or to walk in pilgrimage or procession. In these precarious times, we need to sink our roots deep into the love of God, to remember how loved we are, how cherished we are in God’s sight, how nourished we are by a love that will never let us go and that will give us strength for the journey ahead. We need to join hands with our brothers and sisters in other faiths, for together we form one human family, all of us created by the one God who yearns for our flourishing and for the flourishing of all Creation.

When we open ourselves to contemplative and expressive prayer, to solitary and collective prayer – when we come to our senses and awaken from a dulled acceptance of things as they are – who knows what the Spirit of the living God will be able to do through us? Our prayers will be manifest in faithful actions, as we march and lobby, push political and corporate leaders to keep fossil fuels underground and continue to advocate for a fair price on carbon, massive investments in green technology, and a just transition to a clean green economy that provides decent jobs and improves public health.

Climate change brings us to our knees, but it also brings us to our feet. I can think of no more beautiful way to spend one’s life than to participate in what leaders like Joanna Macy and David C. Korten call the “Great Turning,” the epic transition from a deathly society to one that fosters life. Our wholehearted effort to create a more just and life-sustaining society is what philosopher Thomas Berry calls the “Great Work.” Archbishop Desmond Tutu calls it the “supreme work” of Jesus Christ, who came to reconcile us to God, each other, and the whole of God’s Creation.

PRAYER OFFERING:

The first followers of Jesus were filled with a wave of Easter hope. When they saw that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, and when they met the Risen Christ in their midst and in their hearts, they realized that life and not death would have the last word. Nothing could separate them from the love of God.

Their lives were now filled with fresh meaning and purpose. They realized that they belonged to a sacred mystery that was larger than themselves: to a love that would never let them go. Although they were still mortal and frail, still imperfect and vulnerable people in a big, chaotic world, they understood that they participated in a long story of salvation to which they could contribute, every moment of their lives, by choosing compassion over indifference, kindness over cruelty, love over fear. Their inner liberation gave them courage to resist the forces of death and destruction, and to obey God rather than any human authority (Acts 5:29).

Their prayer and witness got them into all kinds of trouble. The early Christians were accused of “turning the world upside down” and “acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus” (Acts 17:6-7). Their commitment to God apparently led many of them to spend as much time inside as outside the walls of a jail. Their witness to a transcendent, all-embracing Love shook the foundations of their society.

That same wave of Easter hope fills Christians today and carries us now, every one of us who feels impelled to join our Creator in re-weaving the web of life and in building a gentler and more just society. Like the early Christians, we pray for boldness as we face the many threats that imperil our precious world. Like them, we turn to the God “who made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and everything in them” (Acts 4:24), and we pray:

“And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:29-31)

The Christian community, and people of faith everywhere, were made for a time like this, a time when God is calling us to become an Easter people, to step out of despair and inertia and to join, even lead, the joyful, prayerful, justice-seeking, Spirit-led, unstoppable movement to protect the world that God entrusted to our care.

A PROTESTANT, UCC PERSPECTIVE

Vince Maraventano, as executive director of MA Interfaith Power & Light, has primary responsibility for fund raising, staff work, administration and oversight of a dedicated corps of volunteers. Following the successful implementation of the federally funded Noah Challenge in 2010 & 2011 Vince worked on and managed the 2-year \$110,000 CARES project funded by the Barr Foundation. More than 6,600 metric tons of carbon pollution are being avoided by the energy upgrades done under CARES at houses of worship and homes. The project also provided leadership and community organizing training. Vince has also elevated MAIP&L's public policy education and advocacy. He has provided written and verbal testimony to the state legislature, the New England EPA and the MA Energy Efficiency Advisory Council. Before joining MA IP&L as a community organizer in 2008 Vince was Senior Counsel to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for 12 years, working on air pollution, energy efficiency and litigation. Vince holds a law degree from Boston College Law School, and an M.Div. from Andover Newton.

The beginning of Jesus' public ministry is described this way in the gospel of Luke:

“He stood up to read and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the
poor.
He has sent me to proclaim
release to the captives
And recovery of sight to the
blind,
To let the oppressed go free,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Luke 4:16-18

In the place of poverty, captivity, blindness and oppression Jesus comes to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor: time of rest, forgiveness and reconciliation.

In contrast, those of us born in the middle of the 20th century bear witness to a dark era when the many millions who fought and died in wars were accompanied by many million innocents killed at the hands of Nazi, Communist, religious, racial and tribal oppression. Today, we live in a conflicted society in which great wealth is concentrated among the few, high rates of incarceration coexist with mass shootings, and animosity towards racial and religious minorities, and immigrants. The horrors of world wars, holocausts and ongoing economic and

racial oppression are intuitively shocking. But they must not blind us to the immensity of our abuse and neglect of creation. Rather, the need for action on both should reinforce one another.

Now that the whole of creation is threatened by the climate crisis, people of faith recognize the urgent need for action. The times confront us with the glaring truth that our salvation lies in faith, hope and love. For me that faith means not only trusting the creator, but also trusting the God that is within our fellow humans and within our relationships with the rest of creation.

This isn't just a matter of valuing the inherent integrity of animals and plants, as important as that is. Pope Francis and the leaders of Protestant denominations and world religions all recognize that solutions to the evils of social justice must include care for creation, and care for creation must address social, racial and economic justice.

This is a true story of injustice I witnessed as a hospital chaplain. Mark was a 24-year-old special education teacher who had leukemia caused by chemical pollution of the water in the town where he lived. When I first met Mark, he was unconscious in an intensive care unit and his mother had been visiting him every day for several months. She told me that his students had sent him cards including one that said, "I hope Jesus is taking care of you as good as you took care of us."

Mark's uncle was a priest who performed faith healings. He came to the hospital and prayed over Mark for healing, but those prayers were not answered. His mother commented that perhaps her faith wasn't strong enough. Kindly, the priest disagreed, adding that it was *his* faith that wasn't strong enough.

That same day I sat with the parents as the doctors explained that although they could keep Mark breathing on machines, his lungs and other important organs were not functioning, and he was not aware of his surroundings. His parents made the painful decision to let him go, and I stood with them, his brother and the priest as Mark died.

It was a heart wrenching and tragic case of the suffering and death of an innocent. Today, many innocents die as a result of the fires, storms, and floods caused or worsened by climate change. We need faith in our ability to work together to incorporate the changes needed into **both** our daily decisions **and** our economic and political systems. We must do the hard-day-to-day work of changing quickly enough to catch the accelerating rate of global warming. Our faith must sustain our efforts to do this work before the damage is irreversible, and in the face of uncertainty about when that occurs. And we must speak the truth in love.

Mark's death recalls this reflection of St. John of the Cross:

And I saw the river over which every soul must pass
to reach the kingdom of heaven
and the name of that river was suffering.

And I saw the boat which carries souls across the river,
and the name of that boat was Love.

To be followed by prayer of Mary Rogers (Deep peace of the running wave):

*Deep peace of the running wave to you,
Of water flowing, rising and falling,
Sometimes advancing, sometimes receding
May the stream of your life flow unimpeded!
Deep peace of the running wave to you!*

*Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
Which fans your face on a sultry day,
The air which you breathe deeply, rhythmically,
Which imparts to you energy, consciousness, life.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you!*

*Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,
Who, herself unmoving, harbors the movements
And facilitates the life of the ten thousand creatures,
While resting contented stable, tranquil.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you!*

*Deep peace of the shining stars to you,
Which stay invisible till darkness falls
And discloses their pure and shining presence
Beaming down in compassion on our turning world.
Deep peace of the shining stars to you!*

*Deep peace of the watching shepherds to you,
Of unpretentious folk who, watching and waiting,
spend long hours out on the hillside,
expecting in simplicity some Coming of the Lord.
Deep peace of the watching shepherds to you!*

*Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you,
Who, swift as the wave and pervasive as the air,
Quiet as the earth and shining like a star,
Breathes into us His Peace and His Spirit.
Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you!*

MARY ROGERS, Adapted from the Gaelic

A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Edward “Joe” Holland, III, is an eco-philosopher and Catholic theologian exploring – at the deep level of philosophical-scientific Cosmology and symbolic-mythic grounding – the correlative intellectual-spiritual breakdowns of Modern Industrial Civilization and the Modern Industrial Evangelization, as well as the intellectual-spiritual seeds of a regenerative Postmodern Ecological Civilization and of a regenerative Postmodern Ecological Evangelization. Joe has published 17 books and many articles. His book with Peter Henriot SJ, Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice, has more than 100,000 copies in print, including 2 US editions, 5 foreign-language editions and 2 foreign English editions. He was also the consultant-writer for the 1975 document This Land is Home to Me: A Pastoral Letter on Powerlessness in Appalachia by the Catholic Bishops of the Region, and for the 1995 document At Home in the Web of Life: A Pastoral Message from the Catholic Bishops of Appalachia on Sustainable Communities. The following is adapted from a section in his 2017 book titled, Postmodern Ecological Spirituality.

The growing late-modern cultural triumph of Scientific Materialism and Nietzschean Nihilism is not simply an intellectual-spiritual problem. It is also an ecological-societal problem. The reason is that those doctrines claim to strip all creatures across planet Earth (including humans), and throughout the Cosmos, of spiritual meaning. They then undermine ethical guidance by eliminating traditional intellectual-spiritual restraints on economic, political, and cultural power.

As a result, we now watch, and so often in a helpless fashion, as endless numbers of our loving Creator's beloved creatures – including within our loving Creator's beloved human family – suffer devastating late-modern assaults. Those assaults include:

- **Global economic plundering** of our planetary ecosystem, for the competitive accumulation of money, power, and fame;
- **Global political violence** from international campaigns of crime, terrorism, and endless war which is often for access to oil and other 'strategic resources';
- **Global cultural degradation** from competitive international commercial consumerism and entertainment media, as well as from lucrative international criminal networks of drugs, pornography, and human trafficking.

So great are the late modern global assaults on ecology that they have already begun to inflict on our loving Creator's beloved garden-planet Earth what has been called "*the sixth great extinction of life.*"

Yet, although we may feel lost within the late modern "Dark Night," we have not been spiritually abandoned. For, within this "dark night," there is a small spiritual light akin to what Saint Francis of Assisi called "Sister Moon." In this small spiritual light, we discover a haunting and symbolically feminine spiritual presence, whose name is *Holy Spirit*.

As we seek healing paths toward a regenerative postmodern global ecological future, the Holy Spirit's warm spiritual light seeks to guide us toward integral-ecological regeneration. Yet, like our physical Sister Moon, her guiding light waxes and wanes, and in the present moment of that passage her light does not yet shine full.

Such is our current Western spiritual situation. We have entered the spiritual dark night of Modern Industrial Civilization. To guide us through its spiritual darkness, the Holy Spirit as our spiritual "Sister Moon" is only beginning to illumine the way toward a regenerative postmodern integral-ecological future. Yet we may be confident that, when her warm and guiding light does shine full, she will clearly show us the fullness of her regenerative path. But, before that happens, she is calling us to plant seeds of regeneration for life's integral ecology.

Generations ago, the great English Catholic and Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, in his famous 1877 mystical poem "God's Grandeur", foresaw the Holy Spirit's light-bearing appearance within the "dark night" of Modern Industrial Civilization. Thus, wrote in a poetic and prayerful manner:

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; Bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
And for all this, Nature is never spent;*

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;

And though the last lights off the black West went,

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent World

broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.^[1]

[1] Gerard Manley Hopkins: *Poems and Prose* (Penguin Classics, 1985) Gerard Manley Hopkins: *Poems and Prose* (Penguin Classics, 1985). Gerard Manley Hopkins: *Poems and Prose* (Penguin Classics, 1985)

A MUSLIM PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Abdul Cader Asmal is a retired physician who was credentialed to practice Medicine in South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. He is an activist for Islam condemning both ISIS and Islamophobia alike. In promoting the 'middle path' of Islam Asmal has partnered with interfaith coalitions of many traditions. In the medical field, he was recognized for his academic achievements in obtaining the following credentials: an MB BS, MD, PhD, FCP, and FRCP and Board Certification in Internal Medicine, and in Endocrinology and Metabolism. In his pursuit of promoting the image of Islam he was elected as President of the Islamic Center of Boston, the Islamic Council of New England and its Communications' Director. For his Interfaith work, he was a Director of Inter-Religious Center for Public Life, is on the Board of the Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries and serves on the Needham Clergy Association and the Human Rights' Committee.

Peace and Justice are inextricably bound. Either in faith-based or secular societies, one cannot exist without the other. They are prerequisites for the harmony in the earth we all share. To this end there needs to be a coalescence of certain universally accepted values such as Gratitude for our boundless bounties, Respect for all creation, Repentance for individual short-comings, and seeking Forgiveness from those subjected to injustice, and offering it with Compassion to those abused.

I have chosen four key elements in my journey through life through the indispensable guidance provided by the combination of my Islamic teaching and the secular milieu, to illustrate a path to harmony.

1. God Regulates our Destiny

I can find no words to describe my emotional turmoil that God Almighty in His Infinite Mercy and Wisdom gave life to me when He deemed that at my birth it was time for my biological mother to return to His care. We are told that 'God works in mysterious ways. It is all a part of "God's plan."' *The Quran* offers the following solace and succor to a family so torn apart: "Verily, unto God do we belong and, verily, unto Him we shall return." 2:156*

2. All Creation is God's and We Share a Common Humanity

I am grateful for my basic Islamic teachings, even as I am, for the multiculturalism imparted to me at an early age, ironically in apartheid South Africa. Two of my earliest best friends were Hindu and my longest for over 60 years is Christian. *The Quran* states, 'O mankind! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of GOD is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him'. 49:13*

“For, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, all monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques - in [all of] which Gods name is abundantly extolled - would surely have been destroyed [here now]” 22:40.* Sadly, the recent evil displayed in Pittsburgh, Christchurch and Sri Lanka where worshippers were massacred bears testimony of God’s warning.

‘I believe in the Book which Allah has sent down; and I am commanded to judge justly between you. Allah is Our Lord and your Lord. For us (is the responsibility for) Our deeds, and for you for your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is (Our) final goal.’ 42:15.* This verse cautions against anti-religious malevolence contrived by evil-doers in all religions.

“Remember that people are of two kinds, they are either your brothers in religion or your brothers in mankind.” Ali Ibn Abi Talib (RA)

The Roman playwright Terence had conceived the notion of the fundamental unity of humankind over 2000 years ago: *“Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto.”* “I am human: I consider nothing human is alien to me.”

To which Maya Angelou’s response might be, “We are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike.”

Even at the height of the exclusive British Empire, Rudyard Kipling was able to recognize the equality of man:

*“If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
... Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it.’*

Leigh Hunt left no doubt that to gain the love of God, a person had to show his concern for his fellow beings:

*‘The angel...showed the names whom love of God had bless’d,
And lo! Ben Adam’s name led all the rest.’*

3. The Quest for Peacemaking

Bearing testimony to God's expected respect for all His creation is just the beginning of His quest to establish peace and justice on earth: Gratitude Forgiveness, Repentance, Generosity, Love of Mankind, and God's Mercy are indispensable elements.

But for the GENEROSITY of my fellow men and God’s Will, I would never have been able to study in London:

*'Those who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah and afterward make not reproach and injury to follow that which they have spent; their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve. A kind word with forgiveness is better than almsgiving followed by injury.' 2:262**

*'O ye who believe! Spend of the good things which ye have earned, and of that which We bring forth from the earth for you, and seek not the bad (with intent) to spend thereof (in charity) when ye would not take it for yourselves save with disdain', 2:267 **

*'Lo! those who believe and do good works and establish worship and pay the poor-due, their reward is with their Lord and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.' 2:277**

And as part of God's plan I was able to come to the U.S. and succeed both academically and as a spokesperson for Muslims. I have nothing but Gratitude for God's beneficence that allowed me this worldly success both in the religious and secular fields and with it the privilege to interact and treat patients from almost every socio-economic, religious, cultural, ethnic and national background.

While from a personal viewpoint, it was a spectacular experience for me in the fields of medicine, ecumenism and community relations, there were many human failings that fill me with contrition. I forgive unconditionally those who had attempted to demoralize me, as I plead out of remorse to the one and all I had inadvertently demeaned, for Forgiveness, and God's Mercy.

Justice and peace among individuals and countries rests upon the constant expression of Gratitude to God for all His bounties and the display of mutual Respect toward one another. As I prepare to face my Maker, I can reiterate that everything good that I did came from our Creator and every short-coming on my part was through my own misguided choice.

The following attributes are integral to the promotion of harmony or just peace:

GRATITUDE: *"He who is grateful [to God] is but grateful for his own good; and he who is ungrateful [should know that], verily, my Sustainer is self-sufficient, most generous in giving!" 27:40**

JUSTICE: *'O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do'. 4:135**

MERCY: *'O you servants of Mine who have transgressed against your own selves! Despair not of God's MERCY: behold, God forgives all sins - for, verily, He alone is the dispenser of Grace!'* 39:53*

'Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: if Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy we shall certainly be lost.' 7:23*

'Our Lord! Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith and leave not in our hearts, rancor (or sense of injury) against those who have believed Our Lord! Thou art indeed Full of Kindness, Most Merciful.' 59:10*

GOODNESS: *'Could the reward of good be aught but good?'* 55:60*

'Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong; they are the ones to attain felicity.' 3:104*

PEACE: *'Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace.'* 13:28*

What better way to remember God than by greeting one another with the word 'PEACE'?

HATE: *'Hate no one, no matter how much they've wronged you. Live humbly, no matter how wealthy you become. Think positively, no matter how hard life is. Give much, even if you've been given little. Keep in touch with the ones who have forgotten you and forgive who has wronged you. And do not stop praying for the best for those you love.'* Imam Ali Ibn Talib

4. A Chance for Redemption

As I enter the final chapter of my life which has been full, enriched by all those who I met on the road of life, but also marred by personal missteps, I have been gifted the opportunity to REDEEM any and all of my shortcomings by serving God in the capacity of a Care-Giver.

I pray with deep gratitude for this His final Blessing to me; and I pray that I conduct my responsibility with love and devotion.

I pray that may we all be given the second chance of being compassionate Care-Givers to one and all.

I thank God for all the bounties He has provided His creation, with the necessary "manuals" to deliver guidance, to live with one another in harmony.

I recognize, *'He who is grateful [to God] is but grateful for his own good; 27:40**

I regret that I have missed many opportunities to be a better person. God states: *'Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong; they are the ones to attain felicity.'* 3:104*

I beseech God to remove the intense evil of hate, bigotry racism and terrorism that give some the deviant conviction that God did not create humanity as one, culminating in recent acts of utter depravity such as the massacre of worshippers in their sanctuaries.

I pray to God to cleanse our minds, soften our hearts and purify our souls so that we stand up against oppression, injustice, wars, starvation, and the exploitation of the down trodden, remembering the Injunction, *"O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah."* 4:135*

God declares: *'Lo! those who believe and do good works and establish worship and pay the poor-due, their reward is with their Lord and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.'* 2:277*

'A kind word with forgiveness is better than almsgiving followed by injury.' 2,262*

'Could the reward of good be aught but good?' 55:60*

*'Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of GOD is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him'.49:13**

*'Verily in the remembrance of God do hearts find peace,' 13:28**

'Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: if Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy we shall certainly be lost.' 23:7*

Paraphrased, *'There but for the Grace of God go I'*

‘Abdul Cader Asmal MD

*Quranic source

A PROTESTANT, UCC PERSPECTIVE

Rev. Susan Brecht is retiring from being senior pastor at the Eliot Church of Newton, UCC. Since being invited by friends to their UCC church when she first moved to L.A. years ago, she found a new home and church family from her background within the arts (though she still utilizes her creativity). It is also where she became impassioned about issues of social justice like, peace and non-violence, human and civil rights, and economic and environmental justice.

Psalm 104 from *Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness* by Nan C. Merrill, a companion, a dialogue to the psalms of the Hebrew Scripture:

Bless the Radiant One, O my soul!

*O Heart of my heart, You are
so very great!*

*You are clothed with justice and
mercy,*

*arrayed in Light as your
fine attire.*

*You stretch over the heavens
like a tent,*

*your Radiance covering the
waters;*

*You shine through the clouds, and
ride on the wings of the wind;*

*The wind, like the Breath of Life,
carries your Word,*

*Fire refines the dross of
our souls.*

*You set the earth on its foundations,
strong and secure.*

*You covered it with the deep
like a garment, with
many waters that life might
come forth.*

*At your word, the waters divided,
becoming rivers and lakes and
mighty oceans;
storms came to ensure the balance
and to renew the earth.*

*The mountains rose, and the valleys became
low
in the places that You did appoint. vs. 1-8*

*You created the springs to flow into the
valleys;
they flow between the hills,
Giving drink to every creature of
the field,
quenching their thirst as your
Living Water quenches ours.
With the air, You have given birds
their inhabitations;
they sing among the branches.
The majesty of Creation is seen
throughout the land,
the sounds of Creation mingle
with the music of the spheres.*

*Through your Word, grass came forth
for the cattle,
and plants for us to cultivate,
That we might have food from the earth,
and wine, the fruit of the vine,
Oil and healing herbs of many varieties,
and bread, our daily sustenance.
The trees are watered abundantly and
with the sun,
provide the air we breathe.
Every living creature has its home;
the birds nest in trees, the wild
goats upon the mountaintop;
even the rocks provide protection.
You created the moon to mark the
tides and seasons,
the sun, that rises and sets in its
in beauty. vs. 10-19*

Beautiful, isn't it? This world we live in! How many times have you experienced one of those magical, awesome moments in nature, a sunset over the ocean, a rainbow after a storm – or, an approaching tornado, when all you can utter is “Oh my God!” It's at those moments that we reach out, in thanksgiving – or fear, to something beyond ourselves.

Over the course of roughly the last 500 years, the cosmos sadly has been voided of Spirit in our modern world. It certainly wasn't true for the person writing this beautiful psalm of praise and thanksgiving. He, or she, wrote this prayer thousands of years before smog, acid rain and

global warming threatened our planet. It was written before the expression “the butterfly effect,” an awareness that a butterfly flapping its wings has at least some tiny physical impact on the other side of the planet. Wow, that’s a hard concept to get your brain around!

Chief Seattle echoed the psalmist’s words when he said, “The earth does not belong to us, we belong to the earth. ...Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons and daughters of the earth. We did not weave the web of life, we are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the earth, we do to ourselves.” Chief Seattle was an environmentalist at heart.

The psalmist was an environmentalist too, long before the word was invented. He, or she, understood the intricate interconnectedness and subtle interdependence of air, soil, water, plants, animals and humans, that humankind's origin and destiny is inextricably linked to that of the Earth’s. This psalmist knew nothing of physical sciences. No, his, or her awareness, was grounded in theology, in a belief that everything is derived from God. Nature is not divine, but it is sacred. It does not exist apart from God, so everything we do has an effect on God’s world and thus on God. Ecology and theology are inseparable.

*You brought harmony to all the earth,
that life might spring forth
in abundance... vs.9*

Today that harmony has been disrupted.

*O, that we might receive your gifts,
taking only what is needed
with grateful hearts...vs. 26*

How much do we really need? And how grateful are we – really?

Those in the U.S. seem to be more focused on consumption, on maintaining our current life style.

What if we changed our focus, as the psalmist demonstrates here, and begin by praising God – seeing God’s handiwork in the wonders and complexity and interconnectedness of this magnificent universe we live in?

What if we focused outward, instead of inward, to see how our lives and life style impact, not only our environment, but those we share the planet with? Could this change the way we see the world and act in it?

I took myself to the Cape one day, to walk the beach, inviting God to walk along with me.

I wrote in my journal:

*Here I have it all - the ocean seeming to stretch into infinity -
the steady sound of waves lapping up on the shore -
the gentle breeze, the breath of God blowing across my body -
the warmth of the sun, it's light reflecting off the sand and water,
the plants blowing gracefully in the wind -
the squish of the sand under my feet -
the graceful glide of the birds overhead -
a dog approaching me as if asking why I'm not throwing the drift wood stick I am carrying for
him to go fetch -
an excited child showing me a tiny jelly fish he had found resting in a shell - a caterpillar
crawling up the sand embankment and perching on my shoe.*

As I sat on the beach, where I had stopped to meditate and give thanks, a woman's voice interrupted my prayers, "Isn't it beautiful?!!" "Yes!!" I had to agree. We are all interconnected, part of the web of life, and we need each part to survive. Thank you, God, for showing me this.

But along with my awe and praise, I hear God's pain each time I hear of another natural disaster.

*When we are in harmony with You,
the earth provides;
yes, a bountiful harvest to be
shared with all.
When we misuse what You have created
for us,
we blame You for the famine and
destruction that ensues,
and feel alienated from You. vs. 27-29*

Over 2,000 years, and many are still blaming God, while others are denying what most of the best scientific minds are telling us about climate change and our participation in it. Why? Maybe it hasn't touched their lives enough to make them stand up and take notice. But it will. Maybe they're holding on for dear life to that life style they want to pass on to their children and grandchildren. It's just easier to live in denial of what lies ahead.

After my day at the Cape, God was feeling pretty close. "All things are connected. What we do to the web, we do to ourselves." Keep remembering that.

A PROTESTANT, NON-DENOMINATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The Rev. Vernon Walker is Program Manager for Communities Responding to Extreme Weather (CREW), based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Originally from Philadelphia, he completed a BS degree at Penn State University, followed by theological studies at Boston and Harvard Universities. Focusing on non-profit leadership, he has brought his skills to the Berachah Church and as Public Policy Director for the Young Democrats of Massachusetts.

In the book of Genesis, we read that God gave Adam the charge to be a good steward and to care for the Earth (Genesis 2:15). The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are clear, the earth was created by God and belongs to God. In Psalm 24:1 we read, “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” As a result of the Fall, we face many real environmental problems such as pollution, extinction, and deforestation because of the Curse. When Adam sinned, the ground was cursed, (Genesis 3:17) and the whole of creation now groans (Romans 8:20–22). Because of sin, we no longer tend and keep creation as was intended. Our stewardship is distorted by selfishness, greed, apathy, or even laziness. This is not a sin against the planet, as many believe, but a sin against the Creator. When Christians view Christ as the focus of life, we should desire to care for creation as we fulfill our mandate from the Creator: to share the good news of the gospel, protect human life, and care for his creation until Christ comes again and restores creation to its original state before Adam disobedience.

Human civilization is in the midst of difficult and unprecedented times, the likes of which we never have seen before. With many injustices happening in our world today that manifest in forms of racism, sexism, ageism, classism, xenophobia, environmental devastation, and other forms of oppression. However, the greatest issue I see in the world today is that of climate change. Our planet is in a great state of distress because of climate change. The climate crisis represents an urgent and existential threat to civilization, with an international consensus of scientists agreeing that humanity must drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions 45 percent by 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2050 if the world is to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius with endangering the existence of humans.

Climate change is not a single special interest issue but rather a multi-faceted and complex crisis affecting public health, foreign policy, jobs and the economy, labor, civil rights, immigration, agriculture and the food supply, housing, transportation, the survival of nature, and every facet of human life. Achieving the goal of limiting warming to 1.5° C will protect 10 million people from losing their homes to extreme weather and sea level rise, assist the many Massachusetts coastal communities that are already being damaged, reduce the portion of the world’s population experiencing water scarcity by 50%; save hundreds of millions of people in frontline communities from climate-related poverty; impede catastrophic storm and wildfire damage; and will prevent the extinction of many of the world’s insects, plants, birds, and other animals.

I am the Program Manager for Communities Responding to Extreme Weather (CREW), based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. CREW is a newly forming grassroots organization that aims to build equitable, inclusive neighborhood climate resilience in Massachusetts and New England through hands-on education, service, and planning. CREW works with communities of faith among other different kinds of groups to prepare people for extreme weather that will come as a result of climate change. We believe that by helping people prepare for the extreme weather changes, we can save lives of those who otherwise would have been surprised by extreme weather.

We see our work as intersectional and have relationship with many faith, community, labor and civic groups who are concerned about climate change. Together we believe we are helping build a movement that will change the narrative about climate change as being unreal or phony. Together we believe we can help awaken people prepare to deal with the threat of climate change by the grace of God. Together with the diverse movement we are building, we are working to provide emergency climate change kits for many people across Massachusetts in order to help prepare for when the storms come, the abundance of rain comes, and the floods of climate change threaten to overwhelm.

This prayer below is taken from Pope Francis' papal letter in 2015, named *Laudato Si*.

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.
Amen.

A QUAKER PERSPECTIVE

John Bach is a house painter and the Quaker Chaplain at Harvard. He spent 35 months in federal prison as a war resister during the American war in Vietnam.

Something else to be scratched on the wall of a cave to possibly be read in another 300,000 years if our species makes an unlikely come-back:

QUESTION: With all you knew of the certain destruction of the very planet that sustained you, why couldn't you have stopped the death star activity of your human family?

ANSWER: I dunno. But by god, we were really good with noble abstractions, and for a small number of us, it was a helluva party while it lasted. Luckily, most faith leaders focused on making us comfortable and not challenged. Precious little was said about direct action or, god forbid, civil disobedience.

Yet we were not hopeless, and laughter was heard frequently.

Quakers do not have "sacred" texts or a central creed, rather led by the inner light or the small still voice that speaks with clarity and force and finding elements of the sacred wherever we look. Two examples:

From Wendall Berry: "Be joyful, even though you have considered all the facts."

And Bruce Cockburn: "Little blue planet in a big universe ...
Sometimes it looks blessed, sometimes it looks cursed.
Depends what you're looking at obviously,
But just as important is the way that you see."

PLEASE WRITE IN YOUR OWN PRAYERS AND THOUGHTS