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## Moderator's Reflection and Updates

By Diane Waddell

**D**ear Colleagues in Earth Care, I come to you as moderator of Presbyterians for Earth Care (PEC), honored to serve in this capacity, and carrying a passion for spiritual reflection, environmental and social justice, and efforts toward peacegiving. My professional life has largely been in education and health care, as an RN and currently as a nurse practitioner in integrative health/medicine. However, I have spent at least as much time working with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and in other areas of spiritual growth. I have served as moderator of the Presbytery of Heartland and since then have moderated Heartland's Earthkeepers group. I am currently serving on the Environmental Ministries Action Network as well as being a member of the Presbyterian Hunger Program Advisory Committee, which works alongside PC (USA) Environmental Ministries towards social and environmental justice.

Our PEC conference at Highlands Camp gave participants opportunities for new and expanded insight and breadth of understanding about environmental and social justice with a very deep and rich theological rooting. It would take this whole article to begin to list all of those who made this possible (which included all those who planned, attended and prayed for the conference). However, I want to especially thank Dr. Bill Brown, Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, who provided great leadership to weave together the strands of science, culture, theology and Creation with grace and strength. Be sure to read his conference meditation, "From Hevel to Hope." Put it on your 'shelf' for repeated reflection.

'In such a time as this', we all need to be about the task of Creation care. We work in this pathway toward both environmental and social justice, as they are deeply intertwined. Thank you for being a part of our network and please feel a sense of ownership as we all work together. PEC needs you and your gifts to nurture, pray and work toward keeping it a rich and viable part of the Eco-Justice network -- a vibrant model for our congregations, communities and world.

Psalm 104 was our main conference text. This prayer, taken from "Water That Does Not Come Bottled" by Dr. Walter Brueggemann in *Prayers for a Privileged People*, offers a taste of this psalm.

Creator God, we celebrate you...beginning and end,  
first and last.

You—seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter.

You—whose patience we try.

You – whose sovereign will for good  
overrides our capacity for self-destruction.

Look to this world of need:

restore, recreate, enliven, give rain, give food, give peace.

For there is no other source.

None except you in your sovereign reliability.

Amen.

Diane Waddell, Moderator



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**PEC is on the web!**  
Visit  
[www.presbyearthcare.org](http://www.presbyearthcare.org)

## A POINT IN TIME: PC(USA) ADVOCACY, 1981-1990

- 1981 - The 193rd General Assembly pledges support of the United Nations Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade, 1981 - 1990, calling upon Presbyterians to develop life styles that are consistent with the necessity to conserve water.
- Europe's first high speed passenger train begins operation out of Lyons, France.
  - Washington University in St Louis develops the Flavr Savr Tomato, first genetically-engineered plant approved for sale.
- 1983- The 195th General Assembly urges the session of each congregation in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to consider making a "Commitment to Peacemaking" that included "making peace with the earth - involving the congregation in efforts to protect and restore the environment."
- El Niño phenomenon disrupts global weather patterns.
  - Crack cocaine developed in the Bahamas and brought to US.
- 1984- The 196th General Assembly calls upon the Congress of the United States to reduce the emissions of sulfur dioxide and the oxides of nitrogen to a level that will protect the most sensitive environment and states that human stewardship is not a 'dominion of mastery' and calls us to exercise respect for the integrity of natural systems and for the limits that nature places on economic growth and materials consumption.
- Toxic gas leaks from Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India, killing 2,000 and injuring 150,000 people.
  - British scientists report the opening of an enormous hole in the earth's ozone layer over Antarctica.
  - Major nuclear accident at Soviet Chernobyl power station
- 1987 - The 199th General Assembly votes to urge the United States government to assure acceptable disposal sites for high-level nuclear waste. It also votes to urge each Presbytery and local church to encourage and support alternatives to pesticides and support the victims of pesticide poisoning.
- An international treaty signed in Montreal calls for a 50% reduction in the use of CFC's (chlorofluorocarbons) by the year 2000.
- 1988 - The Environmental Justice Office is created to study past environmental policies of the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States to create a combined report of environmental concerns for Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Environmental Justice office is a ministry of the General Assembly Council of the PC (USA) lodged in the National Ministries Division, Social Justice Program Area, and is now actively involved in creation care and environmental justice issues.
- NASA scientist, James Hanson, warns congress of the dangers of global warming and the greenhouse effect.
- 1989 - The 201st General Assembly calls for governments to strengthen regulations and enforcement regarding transportation of oil and hazardous substances, in response to the Exxon-Valdez tanker spill in March, 1989.
- The Berlin Wall was opened and subsequently demolished.
  - First worldwide web server and browser developed in England.
- 1990 - The 202nd General Assembly passes 'Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice' affirming 'creation cries out in this time of ecological crises.' It calls the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to respond to this cry and engage in an effort to make the 1990's the 'turnaround decade,' providing the foundation for the work of the Environmental Justice Office. Also, the 202nd General Assembly calls attention to the problem of global warming and encourages the US government to take steps toward incorporating environmental damage and depletion into 'full-cost pricing.'
- President Bush signs the Clean Air Act, mandating a variety of pollution-reducing changes in the automobile and fuel industries.
  - Iraqi troops invade Kuwait.



*From a timeline of PC(USA) environmental policies developed by Karen Turney,  
PEC Advocacy Committee Member from Atlanta, Georgia for PEC.*



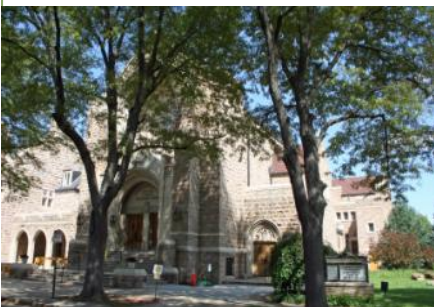
Bill Somplatsky-Jarman and Jenny Holmes, past PEC moderator

## Stories, Ideas and Inspiration:

### 2011 PEC Annual Leadership Awards

PEC gave two awards at its September 2 Annual Meeting held at the 2011 Conference, recognizing an individual and a congregation for leadership and accomplishments in caring for God's creation. The William Gibson Lifetime Achievement Award was given to William Somplatsky-Jarman, whose work has been crucial to the development of environmental ministry within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Bill has also been an ongoing source of vital insight and encouragement to the establishment and continuation of Presbyterians for Earth Care. Currently Coordinator for Social Witness Ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Associate for Mission Responsibility through Investment (MRTI) and Environmental Ministries, Bill is well known to PEC and many others for his wealth of knowledge about eco-justice, his thoughtfulness, vision and integrity. The ministries of PEC and PC(USA), would not be where they are today without Bill's influence. His eco-justice leadership in ecumenical circles, including the National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches is also substantial.

The Restoring Creation Award was given to Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church of Denver in recognition of its Caring for Creation ministry that touches all aspects of the life of the congregation including education, outreach, building and grounds, and worship. PEC's steering committee was especially impressed by



Montview's Season of Creation, a series of creation focused worship services that took place in the summer of 2009. Montview conducted field trips associated with the series that allowed people not only to think about issues but to experience God in creation and to move their

concerns to reside not only in their heads, but deeply within their hearts. Sandy Prouty, Minister of Children and Families for Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church and a person who was instrumental in making children a vital part of the care for creation ministry in the church, was present to accept the award.

### A Review of *Year of Plenty*

By Craig L. Goodwin,  
Copyright 2011 Sparkhouse Press.

Unhappy with their "celebration" of Christmas as American consumers, pastors Craig and Nancy Goodwin and their pre-teen daughters decided - in a few short days - to live differently for the coming year. Four shopping rules and one exception would guide them: Local, Used, Homegrown, Homemade or Thai!

In the foreword, Eugene Peterson, Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology at Regent College in Vancouver B.C., says that the book is a witness to the "sanctity of the everyday, the ordinary, the things we eat and clothes we wear, the names of our neighbors and the money we spend, which is to say, Jesus in our neighborhood."

The family centered story-telling is interspersed with Food Movement history, Wendell Berry quotes, and food growing and preservation information. One of the first real life challenges was carefully selecting a child's birthday party gift that adhered to the Four Rules. The handmade puzzle box turned out to be the birthday boy's favorite gift! The Goodwins adjusted to the reality that local and handmade was also more expensive.

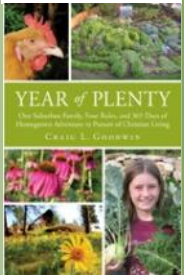
There were successes - learning by doing and teaching by example. The family turned part of the lawn in their planned community into a vegetable garden and chicken yard. The daughters entered both produce and chickens in the county fair, a new experience for them. After "getting to know" their chickens, the Goodwins eventually stopped eating chicken.

They began enjoying each season and its produce and became more resourceful and flexible. They learned resilience - watching their spring garden be stripped by a hail storm, recover and leaf out again. They chose a trip to Thailand over replacing their second car.

Reading *Year of Plenty* reinvigorated my motivation for creation care and for looking at additional changes that my family might make. I am adjusting to the idea of paying more for local and organic food and becoming more aware of where my food comes from. I'm taking part in a three-month survey of food choices, and I have in my freezer 30 pounds of locally grown, grass-fed beef.

Pastor Craig Goodwin manages a Farmer's Market on his suburban Spokane church's parking lot and blogs at [www.yearofplenty.org](http://www.yearofplenty.org) where a free 6-session study guide is available for download.

## REVIEW CORNER



## HEALTH, SPIRITUALITY, AND NON-TOXIC LIVING V: FORECARING – THE ART AND SCIENCE OF THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

By **Diane Waddell, RN, Family Nurse Practitioner in Integrative Medicine**

The concept of the “Precautionary Principle” was highlighted in the first session of our 2011 PEC Conference plenary session and then concluded the conference dramatically. Carolyn Raffensperger has worked to promote this concept for years through the Science and Environmental Health Network (SEHN). She is an environmental lawyer and owns biodynamically farmed acreage in North Dakota.

The term Precautionary Principle comes from a German term (Vorsorge-prinzip) meaning “forecaring.” The concept has been followed in Europe for over thirty years to help prevent toxic burden in the environment. An understanding of this principle is that people/governments have a duty to take anticipatory action to prevent possible harm (from a developing/developed product). Proponents assert that it is the responsibility of industry to test the product (for its toxic effect) before it is put on the market. Another goal is to look for the safest product, while developing alternative products to choose from. This ideally drives innovation in fields of green chemistry and green engineering.

Dr. Tyrone Hayes, professor of Integrative Biology at UC Berkeley, shared some of his extraordinary research on am-



*Dr. Tyrone Hayes*

phibians and fish, which have been drastically altered by toxins (such as atrazine) in streams and in their environment. Some have had their growth stunted, most have been feminized, there is decreasing fertility in males and changing of some physical sexual structures.

In 1976, Congress passed The Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). It is our nation’s main law aimed at regulating chemicals used in everyday products. It drastically needs to be updated. When passed into law, TSCA approved more than 60,000 chemicals that were in existence prior to 1976; only 200 of the original 60,000 chemicals have been tested for safety. Uses of only 5 of these toxic substances have been restricted. Today there are more than 80,000 chemicals on the market, which have never been fully assessed for toxic impacts on human health and the environment.

TSCA even allows chemical manufacturers to keep the ingredients in some chemicals secret — nearly 20 percent of the 80,000 chemicals are secret, according to EPA. In the

111th Congress, legislation to revamp TSCA was introduced for the first time in history. Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) sponsored the Safe Chemicals Act of 2010. The bill is unfortunately going nowhere, but there are things that you can do:

Work to decrease toxins in the environment. Become more familiar with how toxins affect our health and will affect the health of future generations.

Work within your family, congregation, and community. Become proactive.

Check out groups including Raffensperger’s group (SEHN), PAN (Pesticide Action Network), NCC Eco-Justice website, the Environmental Working Group (EWG), Collaborative on Health and the Environment, and Health Care Without Harm.

The precautionary principle follows the “Seventh Generation Rule”, which looks toward safeguarding generations to come. This type of ethic would easily reflect Jesus’ words from Matthew 7:15. “do unto others...” It also values empathy, compassion, humility, respect and simplicity, and reminds us that we are all connected as earthly beings sharing the planet. Certainly it seems to be the way we need to be.

### Events Calendar

- National Preach-In on Global Warming: February 11-13, 2012. Interfaith Power & Light is inviting faith leaders to give sermons and reflections on global warming. See [interfaithpowerandlight.org](http://interfaithpowerandlight.org) for more information.
- Ecumenical Advocacy days: March 23 – 26, 2012 | Washington, DC. 2012 theme: “Is THIS the Fast I Seek? Economy, Livelihood and Our National Priorities.” For information, visit [advocacydays.org](http://advocacydays.org).
- 2012 Eco-Stewards program: Look for information on the 2012 Eco-Stewards program and internships in an upcoming issue of PEC Update and at <http://ecostewardsprogram.org/>.

## PARTNERING WITH GOD THROUGH CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND NATURE

By Nancy S. Wiens

The Center for Nature and Christian Spirituality works with young adults, age 22 to mid-thirties, who seek to develop their spiritual lives and who have a passion for nature. It empowers young adults spiritually and practically to participate in the Christian church's active engagement in caring for and restoring creation. Those drawn to the program are looking for practical skills in nature, wilderness experiences connected to their Christian faith, Christian spiritual formation and discernment skills, experience living in intentional community, and an opportunity to learn more about themselves, others, nature, and God. The Center offers apprenticeships and formation in collaboration with Westminster Woods Camp and Conference Center and San Francisco Theological Seminary. In part, the Center grew out of the Presbyterians for Earth Care event that blossomed into the Eco-Stewards Program. In September 2011, the Center welcomed its second group of apprentices to the 11-month program.

Focusing on a creative relationship between Christian spirituality and nature, the Center teaches a way of working in the world that draws both on Christian contemplation and natural science's experimental method. It uses Walter Bughardt's notion of Christian contemplation, "a long, loving look at the real," to root its teaching of Christian spirituality. This contemplative approach to loving God, self, and neighbor helps to expand our sense of self and neighbor to include all of creation and invites the eyes of hope that reflect Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of God being among us.

Akin to contemplation, permaculture is a design process that employs thoughtful and protracted observation of the world around and within us. Seeking to create sustainable human-nature relationships and based on an ethic of "Earth Care, People Care, and Fair Share," permaculture focuses on natural systems thinking and ecological design principles that mimic systems found in nature. The permaculture approach to design resembles Christian spirituality's approach to listening for the presence of God in and through every aspect of life.

In its first year the Center apprentices partnered with environmental education staff and students to build an outdoor cooking classroom and kitchen garden using contemplative practices and permaculture principles. Funded by the Ping Foundation, the space allows the food triangle of compost/soil to garden to kitchen/table to come alive in the teaching of children and adults alike. With the vegetables and herbs a few steps away from the preparation tables and cob oven, the link between what people grow and what they eat became real. Complete with kneading blessings into the bread baked in the cob oven, the theology of nature that shapes Christian care for the earth and care for humans communicates the abundance of grace in our daily lives.

Lisa Carlson talks about her experience as a Center apprentice: "Learning and practicing the specific ways that we can be in healthy relationship with nature brought meaning to my experiences of God in nature. I have always felt a closeness to God when learning about nature or being out in creation, so having the opportunity to go deeper to connect with the roots of our responsibility in relating to nature was deeply meaningful to me."

To learn more about the Center for Nature and Christian Spirituality please go to [www.westminsterwoods.org/cncs/](http://www.westminsterwoods.org/cncs/).



### 2011 Eco-Stewards Program

By Becky W. Evans

After a successful June event exploring sustainability and reconciliation through agriculture, health and green building on the Crow Reservation in Montana, the Eco-Stewards Program sent three of its young-adult participants off to summer internships where they could further explore the connections between environmental stewardship and their faith at Presbyterian camps and organic farms.

Eco-Steward Andrew Foltz-Morrison, an undergraduate majoring in philosophy and geography at Rutgers University, spent his summer planning, constructing and planting a community garden at Krislund Camp and Conference Center in Madisonburg, PA.

Meanwhile, back in Montana, Eco-Stewards Dave Grace and Gerard Miller both served as interns at Greenwood Farm, the same organic farm on the Crow Reservation that fed and hosted the Eco-Stewards during our week-long program. Grace, a sustainable agriculture major at Warren Wilson College, and Miller, who studied modern languages, linguistics and intercultural communication at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, experienced a summer's worth of hard farm labor and cross-cultural exploration.

The Eco-Stewards Program is grateful for its interns, their hosts and these opportunities for hands-on environmental stewardship work, faith-sharing and community-building. To read more student reflections about the Eco-Stewards Program and for information about future programs, please visit our blog at: <http://www.ecostewardsprogram.wordpress.com>

Donations to the grassroots Eco-Stewards Program can be made through Presbyterians for Earth Care.

## FROM HEVEL TO HOPE: A MEDITATION ON ROMANS 8:18-25

by William P. Brown, Columbia Theological Seminary



Dr. William P. Brown

**HOW DO WE FIND HOPE AMID THE DATA OF DESPAIR AND THE LACK OF PROGRESS? WE DON'T. HOPE FINDS US.**

Nearly every speaker at the PEC conference commented on the challenge of sustaining hope amid despair. Greenhouse gasses continue to rise at an unprecedented rate (despite the global recession), and many of the toxins we spew into the environment will leave a legacy of harm for many, many generations to come. We learned of the insidious effects of Atrazine in our corn and how our global food system is severely broken. Add to that the lack of political will, along with an overabundance of bipartisan rancor, and it is tempting to intone the words of the biblical sage Qoheleth in Ecclesiastes, “So I turned and gave my heart up to despair concerning all the toil of my labors under the sun” (Eccl. 2:20). “Vanity of vanities.... All is vanity!” Futility of futilities! It’s all hevel (Hebrew word for “vanity”).

How do we find hope amid the data of despair and the lack of progress? We don’t. Hope finds us. Hope is a gift of God that offers itself when the stories and lessons of our faith are read anew for just such a time as this. Hope is an endowed conviction, not a cheery disposition. Instead of meekly smiling in the face of bad news, “hoping” for the best as the optimist does, hope laughs at adversity and dares to imagine God’s vision of justice and peace for the world, of restoration for creation, even if such imagining flies in the face of all that we see around us. Hope is the gift of resolve against the odds. “Hope that is seen is not hope” (Rom 8:24).

This “hoping against hope” is a hope that rises from the pit of despair, of despair for God’s creation. “For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope. . . .” (Rom 8:20). Whereas Qoheleth could see only hevel all around, Paul saw beyond the futility, beyond creation’s “bondage to decay,” beyond its groaning, our groaning, toward the larger reality of God’s new creation already at work in Christ. Yes, creation is “subjected to futility,” Paul admits, a futility that has its origins, according to Scripture, in humanity’s first ecological violation - the one committed by that primal couple in the garden (Genesis 3). In recognizing our own complicity in creation’s “futility,” Paul saw a glimmer of God’s work to redeem and restore creation through Christ. To be sure, creation remains in “bondage to decay,” including creation’s bondage to our habits of consumption and neglect. But in such subjection, in the hevel of it all, Paul finds

God to be the agent of hope. The evidence is Christ’s resurrection, for therein lies the key to the new creation.

Paul’s argument is that Christ’s resurrection is no more isolated an event than humanity is independent from creation. “To dust you shall return,” God tells Adam (Gen 3:19). That “dust”—the organic constituents of our bodies, indeed of life itself—becomes dispersed throughout the earth, ultimately providing the constituents for other living bodies. As the molecules of our bodies become shared with future generations of all life, and as our own living, breathing bodies reflect the evolutionary legacy of life in all its interdependence, then resurrection cannot be limited to the raising up of human life. It must include the whole of creation in its vast eschatological sweep, all from the simple fact that we remain now and forevermore an interconnected part of God’s creation. Descartes was wrong. As the biologist S. J. Singer puts it: “I link, therefore I am.”

It is in our linkage to all life that the resurrecting, renewing power of God is working to transform, not destroy, the world.

Jesus said, “Behold, I am making all things new” (Rev 21:5), not “I am making all new things.” And in God’s power to renew, the church becomes the sign of the new creation, the beloved community for the biotic community! As much as we have brought about creation’s degradation, we are also instrumental in its redemption, Paul makes this readily clear.

So what is hope? To quote Carolyn Raffensperger: “Hope is not optimism. We don’t know if everything is going to turn out alright. Hope is the deep orientation of the soul toward what is right. I set the compass of my own soul to the true north of future generations.” Those future generations are our children, and beyond them, beyond us all, lies the new reality of creation’s transformation. To think we can build it ourselves, however, is a recipe for despair. Our hope comes from knowing that Christ has begun the work of new creation and that what we do now will not only mitigate impending catastrophes but welcome creation’s future in Christ.

## DOWNPAYMENT ON HOPE

by John Preston

They got it. The people of all ages from all parts of our land gathered in the Colorado mountains near Allenspark for PEC's conference: God's Earth: Too Big to Fail? They got it despite the fact that our political leaders don't get it. They got it despite the fact that most of the American Church doesn't get it either. So, who are these people?

To say who they are is to say what they said, how they worshiped and sang and moved, and what they brought by way of commitments to honoring the earth from back home. They are a small group of prophetic people within the Presbyterian Church who know that our world economic system is unsustainable, and that without transformational change, the next generation will experience more pronounced collapse of fundamental social, political, and economic structures worldwide. And so they came to this beautiful place, a reminder of all that is good about the creation, to learn, to exchange, to worship, to network, to plan for the future and to find in each other, pastoral care.

Many of them would not see themselves as prophets. They would simply see themselves following the wisdom in Einstein's comment when he said, "Those who have the privilege to know have the duty to act."

Yet as workshop leader Peter Sawtell reminded us, the prophet both encases his criticism of his society in lament and offers a hopeful vision of what can be. There is both sorrow and joy, both the bad news and the good news in the prophetic witness. This balance is hard to pull off in what appears to be the cultural optimism of America. Canadian Theologian Doug Hall claims that our optimism in North America is only a protective veneer. Underneath, is a covert pessimism, even a covert nihilism. Ideally, prophets are able to accept the pessimism and be critical, and yet hopeful. In fact, several of the presenters toward the end of the conference made the distinction between optimism and hope, saying that although they may not be optimistic, they are hopeful.

As for myself, I came to the conference as a pessimist about our political system which in the best of times addresses incremental change only after tough compromise. Yet we live in a time which demands paradigm change... transformational change. This was echoed by conference leaders, including Dr. John Ikerd, an economist who could preach like a prophet, offering criticism with hope.

The Church is key to this possibility. Yet, the church has become less prophetic in the 40 or so years since my ordination. We are stuck in a traditionalism that separates heaven from earth,



*PEC Conference participants near Allenspark, Colorado.*

and is blind to

both the sin and grace in our institutional structures. We don't get it when the Pauline letters talk about the "principalities and powers."

And our clergy leaders continue, on the whole, to "go native," confining their ministries to chaplaincy and pastoral care.

Yet, what does pastoral care mean to those who lament the exploitation of people and earth? I have a friend who is on the session of a local Presbyterian church, who is very concerned, as I am, about climate change. He reads the literature, and voices his concern to his friends on the session. He told me recently: "They said they would pray for me."

For me, just being with like-minded people who get it was pastoral care. I felt that I received a down payment on hope by getting to know new friends who are struggling with their calling as those who trust in the ongoing creation. I am especially encouraged by the young adults I met who are the next generation of prophetic people. They are the holy yeast of a new church, an earth honoring church. And, the witness of fellow steering committee members, who are "fighting the good fight," encourages me.

So perhaps the conference altered my thinking and my trust in hope. Hope is less abstract, more communal, more focused in these earthy, fun, prophetic saints who came to Colorado. And so courage brothers and sisters! Courage to fight the good fight on behalf of each other and the earth, courage to speak the truth in love, and courage to trust in God's spirit of creativity whose trajectory of grace pulls us into the deep future. We indeed are privileged to know what we know, thanks to each other, and the grace of God that flows through us. Now that we have this knowledge, we must act. And remember this: In this time in which we are privileged to live, on the cusp of great transformation, the prophetic is pastoral.

**"THERE IS  
BOTH  
SORROW  
AND JOY,  
BOTH THE  
BAD NEWS  
AND THE  
GOOD NEWS  
IN THE  
PROPHETIC  
WITNESS."**



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