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Moderator's Reflection

By Diane Waddell

Dear Colleagues,

Our Update this month is an Advent Devotional with a new twist: integrating the mysterious beauty of Advent (and Christmas) with the mystery and beauty of Creation. Through this PEC devotional, we invite you to experience Advent through your spirit, heart, mind, and your senses – and to experience it deeply.

You might take a few moments daily to reflect on the devotional offering for the week (or day). Consider the reflection inwardly, breathing in and out with a sense of birth/rebirth. Experience the star(s) in a deep way, knowing that we are all stardust, knowing that we are all part of the mystery.

Recall St. Francis of Assisi's words... "Most High, all powerful, all good Lord. All praise is Yours, all glory, all honor and all blessings... Praise be You my Lord with all your creatures... Brother Sun... Sister Moon... Brothers Wind, Air, and Fire... Sister Water... Praised be you, my Lord through our Sister, Mother Earth who sustains and governs us..." (*Canticle of the Sun.*)

Consider creating a special space at a table and adding some elements from Earth that symbolize soil, water, air, and the other amazing animals that share this planet. Add those to symbols which you hold most sacred in your relationship to Christ: a cross, Bible, meaningful texts, pictures. Add elements which contain fragrance such as pine branches as well as different textures -- a bowl or pitcher of water (or a picture of snow), a candle, feathers, maybe in white to represent a dove.

Invite others into your special space this Advent—especially children and youth—as you share gratitude for Christ and Creation. The space may be your heart or your table space. It may be in person or through a letter, email, or prayer. Breathe in the opportunity for deepening relationships with others, as well as with Creation.

Dear friends, may the mystery of this holy season be integrated in your heart and mind. May the blessings of God's Creation hold and renew you. May you know this Advent/Christmas as one of Rebirth as you share the Gift with others in the family of God.

Many thanks to those persons who have written a reflection for this version of the "Update." Particularly I want to thank our new newsletter editor-in-training, Abby Mohaupt. Abby is a student at McCormick Theological Seminary with an emphasis in Environmental Theology. We appreciate the skills she brings to this volunteer position, along with her enthusiasm, graciousness, and energy.

We are sharing this Update both in printed version and through e-mail. Each week of Advent, we will send you the reflection, as well as the daily reflection for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

May the blessings of Christ and the richness of Creation be with you,

Diane Waddell

Moderator, Presbyterians for Earth Care



Photo by Jane Laping

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT – NOVEMBER 27 – DECEMBER 3

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:36-40, NRSV)

I saw a lone fir tree last week, looking like it was ready to be decorated for the Christmas season. But it is not. It is planted in soil covering a cement cap that shields soil so contaminated by dioxin, it could not be remediated. This is the former manufacturing home of DDT and Agent Orange.

I saw this on a tour of the Ironbound section of Newark, NJ, named because it developed inside the railroad tracks crossing the city. Today the majority of the population is African American, Latino and foreign born, moderate to low income, and approximately 75% of the population has less than a high school education. People who don't live there know this section as having the best Portuguese restaurants in the state, yet it is a food desert. On this tour, what I saw was environmental racism. This is not the reflection of a person who has experienced the injustice in this community, but of a white, middle-class person who toured it one day and saw circumstances that would not be tolerated in my neighborhood. What I saw is a community that suffers from the cumulative impacts of multiple injustices:

- The dioxin-laden site, along with other pollutants from numerous old industrial sites, contaminated a 13 mile stretch of the Passaic River. In many neighborhoods, the rivers play a large part in the community, this river does not.
- The Ironbound abuts Newark Airport and is surrounded by five major New Jersey highways – its air is polluted by emissions and noise.
- Port Newark is also adjacent to the Ironbound and 7,000 trucks regularly service the port. Trucks idle for hours at the port waiting to load cargo and drive through the Ironbound. Community members did a truck count once for 2 hours at 6 intersections and counted over 2,000 trucks.
- Port Newark is also a visual reminder of the US trade deficit, with towering piles of empty shipping containers (a visual eyesore as well).
- There is a lack of recreational opportunities – not many parks, others closed because of contamination. One chemical company, as part of restitution, built a recreational center. The pool had to be suspended above ground because of the contamination in the soil at that location.
- Covanta operates the largest incinerator in the state here (over half of the trash comes from New York City). And the air scrubbing equipment is not as advanced as the other installations in the state.

In this season of anticipation of the birth of Jesus, I am drawn to his commandments. If we love God, we need to love all of God's creation. Can we do this and tolerate multiple injustices to the earth in one place? Can we love our neighbor and tolerate multiple injustices to our neighbor's community?



Photo courtesy of the author.

But in this season of hope – I saw great hope. The Ironbound Community Corporation is very engaged in helping residents organize and advocate to remediate the current problems, and prevent further cumulative impacts. They provide awareness tours. They advocated keeping a medical waste facility from being built. They are involved with the planning process for the restoration of the river banks. They are saving the few parks they have.

In this season of anticipation of the birth of Jesus, I am drawn to his commandments. If we love God, we need to love all of God's creation. Can we do this and tolerate multiple injustices to the earth in one place? Can we love our neighbor and tolerate multiple injustices to our neighbor's community?

What can we do?

- Always respect a community suffering from environmental injustice and how they are working to make their situation better.
- Provide support by writing letters and standing with the community when asked.
- When you throw out your trash, think about how to create less going to incinerators.

More Information:

- Read the Environmental Justice Principles: <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>.
- Look at the web to see if your state posts DEP environmental mapping tools.
- Read the Executive Summary of the United Church of Christ's report on Toxic Waste and Race: <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/2007%20UCC%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>.

Prayer:

Gracious God, in this season of anticipation and hope, care for those who are impacted by environmental injustice; keep them safe from further injustices; give them strength in their work for justice. Open the eyes of the unaware. Help us all to tend your wondrous creation, working towards a healthy earth that will lift everyone. Amen

Sue Smith is the Treasurer of Presbyterians for Earth Care, a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Rumson, NJ, a GreenFaith Fellow, and a student at New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT – DECEMBER 4-10

¹A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. ²The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. ³His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; ⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

⁶The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. ⁹They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious. (Isaiah 11: 1-10)

And so we anticipate a savior who will turn things around. We did then, and we still do today. Things just aren't right – they're downright backwards in many ways. The wealthy become wealthier, the poor become poorer; the powerful flaunt their might, while the weak suffer in anguish. Things need to be turned around so radically that no relationship would be untouched by the remedy. Many think of this "peaceable kingdom" as a utopian vision of reconciliation with and within nature.

But the vision is symbol and hyperbole at best, and at worst it is blind to the goodness inherent in the world as it is. The "peaceable kingdom" from an ecological point of view, is arguably not respectful of any of the individuals pictured in it; not the lion nor the lamb, nor the calf, nor the wolf – nor even the human. From the perspective of what makes a human being, just think how boring life would be without moral challenges, without appreciation for our temporality that leads us to value the time we have, without appreciation that can only come from discernment of a spectrum of values.

What power does this symbol of a peaceable kingdom, that we reenact every year in our depictions of those gathered around the manger in



Photo courtesy of the author.

Bethlehem, exert on our perception and life in the world? To some, the idea of wild animals in proper ecological relationships has no meaning.

Animals are mostly objects, like the rest of material being, for our use and manipulation. Others tend toward more of a kinship feeling toward other creatures, leading to harm to both wild animals

and humans. Whether or not such an attitude is really informed by the scriptural sources, many have such visions that function to influence how they interact with wildlife. Could the vision that comes from our deep longings for relief from those things that sorrow us, distort our view – actually get in the way of our discernment of God's will for the world now?

Thus we come to the crux of the problem: how do we love the world, without imposing our own designs on it? At the same time, how do we prevent ourselves from hating the world and despairing that we will ever achieve greater degrees of justice for those things we know are the result of selfishness or abuses of power? Is it even our place to make such decisions for all of creaturely existence?

The new ruler anticipated in Isaiah and at this time of year, is a ruler who will lead us to understand and to live in new relationships of solidarity, respect, and care. The new life to which we are called, is inclusive of all creation, and it will be characterized by respect for the integrity of each living being. For the time being, our vision is still clouded, our envisioned utopias still a bit short of the mark. We eagerly watch and listen for the day when we will know everything is all right. In the meantime, we seek clues to how we can move things forward in the right direction, while we celebrate the opportunity to respond to the challenges of the day.

What can we do?

- Get to know the place where you live. Even the most wild of wilderness preserves has no chance of survival unless we love the place where we live.
- Feed your sense of wonder: develop/practice skills of natural awareness: sensory perception, observation of details, patient and quiet waiting.
- Join others in your area who are champions of the preservation of place, open space, parks, and ecosystemic communities.

More Information:

Look in to organizations such as the Resource Renewal Institute/Defense of Place: <http://www.rri.org/defenseofplace.php>

Participate in the Earth Charter Initiative. For information, go to: <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/>

Become familiar with the Healthy Parks, Healthy People Initiative: http://www.nps.gov/public_health/hp/hphp.htm

Prayer:

Much more realistic than Isaiah 11, and respectful of animals as they are, is Psalm 104 – where it is celebrated that "...the young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God"

"Oh Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures..." who "...all look to you to give them their food in due season." Lord, we long for the complete joy of your kingdom, anticipating your presence among us, and the realization of a peace that is everlasting throughout your creation. Help us resolve our confusions over whether your kingdom is a future fulfillment, or a present reality to be lived.

David Siegenthaler is the PEC Pacific Regional Representative and volunteers as an eco-justice minister in the Presbytery of San Francisco. He is employed by the National Park Service to coordinate the Federal lands to Parks Program for the Western Region. David holds a Master's degree in Environmental Resources Management, a Master of Divinity, and a Ph.D. in Systemic and Philosophical Theology.

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT – DECEMBER 11-17

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the Negeb. May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves. (Psalm 126:1-6, CEB)

I think God has a special connection with dreamers. Maybe it's just that we let our guard down as we drift into the world of dreams—maybe we just leave a little more space for God to get in.

Over and over in the story of God speaking to God's people, God uses dreams to communicate. These dreams are full of peril (like Joseph's in Egypt) and these dreams are full of promise (like a different Joseph's). God uses those who dream.

Before I went to seminary, I read some of the writings of other religious leaders who wrote about the need for people of faith to care for the planet. Their convicting words reminded me of all the summers I spent leading worship at a summer camp. At camp, I deeply felt the connection between my love of God and my love of creation. Surely God felt closer to me when I was hiking the hilly trails or gazing at a summer sunset. I am always overwhelmed with joy at the beauty of God's creation. It did not occur to me—until I read these writings—that God might be closer to me when the earth is not so pretty. Could it be that I felt God when I encountered clear cut forests, endangered species, and oil refineries? Could it be that I might also be overwhelmed by the depth of the destruction of God's creation?

We have destroyed much of God's creation. We have forgotten how connected we people are to the rest of God's creation. When I remember, I am overcome with a sense of inadequacy. Whatever seeds of change I plant will not be enough. And I weep, like the people in the Psalm. I have no hope.

But I have dreams. After I finished reading these writings by other people of faith, I dreamed of people who are Presbyterians who also feel connected to God's creation. And now, in seminary, I have met many of these Presbyterians who are working to plant seeds of change, of hope, of plenty. I have met people who are fulfilling my dream.

I am certain that what we do together will not be enough. But I am also certain that God does not leave us alone to do this work. Christ comes so that our work does not leave us in tears of sadness but in tears of joy. Christ comes so that we might be restored. Christ comes so that we might dream of a better world with God. Christ comes so that we might know that—

even in our sins of destruction—God loves us. God is with us—in the sunsets and in the refineries. God is with us, and God loves us.

More information:

For information on connecting worship and education to caring for God's creation, visit www.webofcreation.org

To learn more about the ministry of Presbyterian Summer Camps (connecting God's people to God's planet), visit <http://www.pccca.net/>

Prayer:

Holy God, blessed be Your name for the works of Your hands in all the world. Thank you for loving us and calling us to dream for the restoration of Your creation. Remind us—in this season of the Coming Christ—that You are with us. Thank you for the trees, the birds, the stars, the rivers, and the squirrels. We love you. Come, Jesus, Come. In Christ's name. Amen.

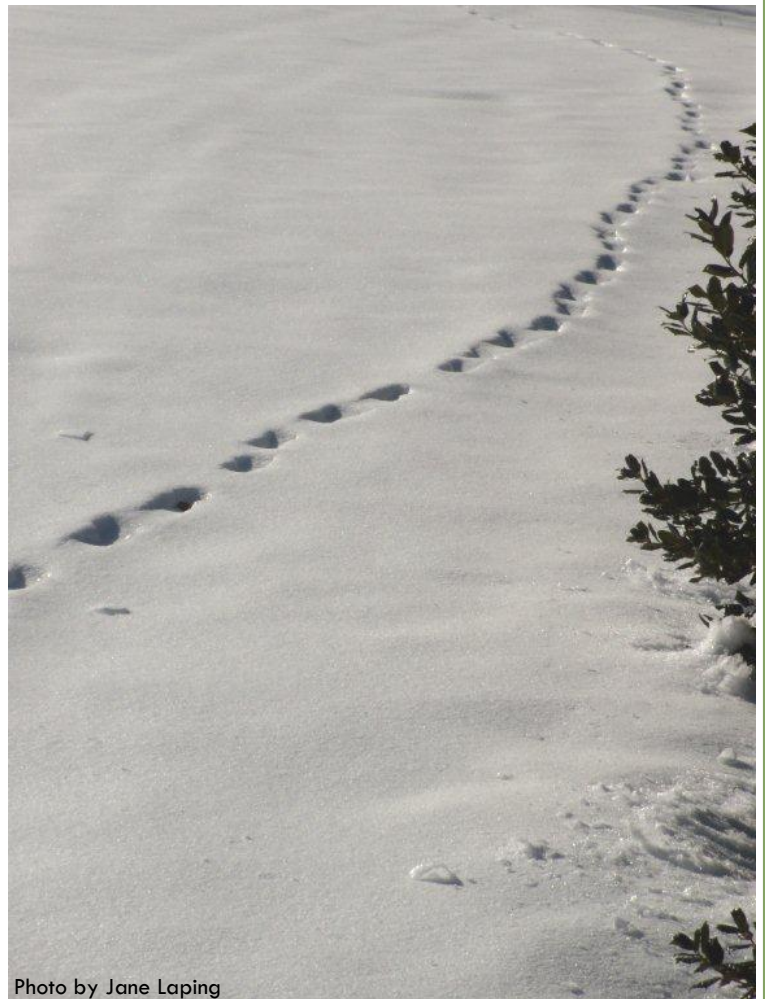


Photo by Jane Laping

Abby Mohaupt received her M.Div. from McCormick Theological Seminary in May 2011. She is currently pursuing a Masters of Theology with an emphasis in Environmental Theology at McCormick. She lives in Chicago amidst the bounty of God's urban world.

FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT – DECEMBER 18-23

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:26-38, NIV) (See also Genesis 1 & 2)

As I write these words, the world's population has reached 7 billion. The last thing I want to do is to turn to the Bible and encounter "the angel of fertility" at work! But there he (or she) is, in the Advent-Christmas story and other places, impregnating barren women as a sign of hope. And so, I wonder if God is paying attention to the global population explosion of our day, will we be visited by the "angel of birth control" any time soon?

It's a bit scary to ask this question because there is evidence in the Hebrew Scriptures that "the angel of death" visited the people of God long ago. But let's not go there. Let's instead turn to the beginning of the Biblical narrative (Genesis 1 and 2), where humanity was visited by "the angel of sustainability." Can you hear what he (or she) says to us today?

*I am the angel of sustainability. . .
I was there when the Lord God
made earth and sky,
giving you grounding and shelter.
I was there when the wild plants
appeared and the field crops grew,
giving you nature and nurture.
I was there when the streams
and rivers flowed,
giving you refreshment and irrigation.*

*I was there when you were charged with
caring for creation
giving you a calling and an occupation.*

What can we do?

- Promote a "going green" campaign with your family, place of work, and church. Raise awareness about the need to practice the three Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.
- Adopt a project that promotes learning about sustainable food, such as hosting a farmers market or partnering with neighbors for an organic garden.

More Information:

Listen to a news story and watch a video on the global population explosion at:

www.npr.org/2011/10/31/141816460/visualizing-how-a-population-grows-to-7-billion

Watch and discuss movies about global warming, food production, and water conservation such as:

An Inconvenient Truth (an-inconvenient-truth.com)

Food, Inc. (foodincmovie.com)

Blue Gold (bluegold-worldwaterwars.com)

A Crude Awakening (oilcrashmovie.com)

Prayer:

*God of good news and inconvenient truths,
we admit that we have not cared for creation.
You asked us to multiply your good works,
but instead we have divided the human family
into haves and have-nots.*

*Our selfishness leads us to hoard goods,
while many of your children are homeless.*

*Our carelessness leads us to waste food,
while many of your children are hungry.*

*Our apathy leads us to close our eyes
while many of your children are sleepless.*

*Forgive us, Master Gardener,
and uproot from our lives*

*the weeds that drown out your image
and interfere with your intention.*

*As we till the soil and water the seeds,
may we discover that true happiness comes from caring.*

*As we gather the crops and harvest,
may we discover that lasting health comes from partaking.*

Rev. Magdalena I. García is Pastor of Ravenswood Presbyterian Church, in Chicago, where she has served since 2003. She is a graduate of McCormick Theological Seminary (M.Div., 1989). She has served as preacher, keynote speaker, and worship leader for national and regional church events. In 2008, she was honored for her "visionary work in transforming the church and society" as a recipient of the 2008 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Women of Faith Award. She is the author of the compendium *Toward a Liberating Faith: Introduction to Mujerista Theology*, published by the Women's Ministries Program Area of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

CHRISTMAS EVE

... I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.
(John 10:10)

Christmas is traditionally a time of gift giving. After all, God gave us His Son on Christmas Day, a helpless baby, heralded by angels and visited by kings. As Christians we prepare to receive God's gift through prayer, readings, candle-lighting, and reflections during the four weeks of Advent that precede Christmas.

The custom of Christmas gift giving dates back to the 4th century when St. Nicholas, a bishop in Turkey, gave handmade gifts to the less fortunate and also to children. God has been giving us gifts year-round since the beginning of creation and we love the gift of His earth and how it provides food and water and clothing and shelter for our needs. But instead of honoring God and taking good care of the earth so that future generations will have what they need, in our sinful nature we take more from the earth than we need and leave less for generations who come after us. We dig and bore and explode to get to ores and oil and coal and metals and in the process foul streams and rivers and lakes, rape the landscape, destroy mountains, contaminate the land, pollute the air, and overextend the natural renewal of the earth.

Being the generous God that He is, our God also gave us the gift of His son, Jesus, who would ultimately die for our sins. Sins of greed and gluttony and arrogance and self-centeredness would all be forgiven. Isn't that the best Christmas present we can imagine - that our God, who gave us this beautiful planet Earth to be our home could forgive us for dishonoring Him by not taking care of it?



Photo courtesy of the author.



Photo courtesy of the author.

What can we do?

- Shift the focus of celebrating Christ's birth from exchanging gifts to spending quality time together: bake cookies to share with friends, go caroling at a nursing home, invite a single person to attend a musical performance or a play, build a snowman with your neighbors, or have friends and family over for a potluck dinner. Remember that the Christmas season lasts until the Epiphany on January 6.
- Minimize consumerism at Christmas and all year by giving alternative gifts such as a donation to a charity, a coupon for a service, or a locally produced, hand-made (by you!), or fair trade product.

More Information:

Fair trade products can be purchased at Ten Thousand Villages <http://www.tenthousandvillages.com/>.

Heifer International: www.heifer.org offers animal gifts and training to help families help themselves.

"Christmas is Not Your Birthday" by Mike Slaughter

The Story of Stuff by Annie Leonard-
<http://www.storyofstuff.com/>

Prayer:

Let us pray for forgiveness: Heavenly Father, on the eve of your only Son's birth, we praise you for the universe you created for us. We thank you for the special home you made for us on Earth and for how interdependent you made all living things. Help us to understand how we are to live in harmony together, so that all may have life abundantly. Today we celebrate the love you have for us and anticipate forgiveness of our ecological sins through the human form of your baby, Jesus.

Jane Laping is Vice Moderator of Presbyterians for Earth Care. She is active in creation care at her church, in her Presbytery and with the denomination. Jane is co-author of Earth Care Congregations: A Green Guide for Presbyterian Churches.

CHRISTMAS DAY

And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7, NRSV)

There was no room for Him among people, in the inn. And so He was born among the animals. The most humble yet warm and inviting place, a manger, a feeding trough, we imagine stuffed with hay, a soft and inviting place for a newborn. No newborn nursery for Him. Nothing fancy. Nothing even “human.” He was born among the animals.

On this Lord’s Day, we confront an earthy reality: the Lord of all dwelling among the beasts. He was to meet beasts again, in the wilderness of Judaea, where wild beasts dwelt (Mark 1:13). And he had a love for the creatures with whom we share creation: birds (Matthew 6:26; Luke 3:22; John 2:14), sheep (Luke 15:4ff.), foxes (Matthew 8:20), cattle, oxen and donkeys (Luke 13:15), just to name the ones in Scripture. By inference, if on the day of his birth He lay in a manger, we may assume there were sheep, and perhaps goats and donkeys as well, and maybe even horses and camels, since this was an inn.

How beautiful and mysterious that the incarnation took place among animals. They welcomed Him, we may presume. I find that my friends who are dogs, cats and horses generally welcome me without judgment and accept me with eager anticipation. A newborn baby must have been a cause for great curiosity among them!

There is a legend that the animals can speak on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. I wonder what they would say to us. Would they thank God for the gift of Christ, as we do? They will if we show the same love and respect and trust for them as Jesus did, daring to be born among them. When God came to walk with us in the person of Jesus, God started among animals, sharing space with them. I wonder if we can learn to share our space with them lovingly, respectfully, gratefully, kindly, responsibly.

We are called as followers of the Lord Who came on Christmas Day to live lives of gratitude, and to love our neighbors. And our neighbors are not just our human neighbors, though they are our nearest kin. We share the earth in a delicate balance with neighbors non-human, who outnumber and pre-date us by a great order of magnitude. Our particular gifts, skills and adaptations do not make us better than our animal neighbors: they give us a greater responsibility to enjoy, defend and live in dynamic harmony with the biosphere. Seven billion humans have placed a great load on this planet; can we so live as to love all our neighbors, sharing resources, habitat and lifestyles mutually energetic and life-giving?

Instead of piling up stuff on Christmas day, give the gift of love, respect, fun and generosity by including animals as God did on the very first Christmas. Be merry!



Stan Adamson with his horses New Moon and Kara.

What can we do?

- Consider blessing animals on Christmas Day. This is easily as good a day as St. Francis Day, or the Environmental Sabbath in June. Say “thank you” to the animals for welcoming Jesus.
- Give a gift to your local Humane Society or Animal Shelter. Consider volunteering time with an organization working with animals: a therapeutic riding center, a raptor rehabilitation program, or a dog rescue group.
- Support and volunteer with an animal rights organization such as the World Wildlife Fund, the Audubon Society, or the National Humane Society.

More Information:

Readings from a Christian perspective include *Christianity and the Rights of Animals* (New York: Crossroads, 1987) and *Animal Theology* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994) by Andrew Linzey; and *Ask the Animals* (Harrisburg: Morehouse, 2006) by Elizabeth Canham. From an interfaith perspective: *Blessing the Animals* (Woodstock, Vermont: Skylight Paths, 2006) by Lynn L. Caruso.

From scientists, three wonderful and thought-provoking books: *Reason for Hope* (New York: Warner, 1999) by Jane Goodall; *The Ten Truets* (New York: HarperOne, 2003) by Jane Goodall and Marc Bekoff; and *The Animal Manifesto* (Novato, California: New World Library, 2010) by Marc Bekoff.

Prayer:

O God, in Whose love we celebrate today, thank You for Your greatest gift, the gift of Yourself in Jesus Christ. We are grateful that You came to walk among us, embracing the whole of creation by being born among the animals. Give us a child-like delight and joy in our animal neighbors. Watch over and protect them. Help us to always live kindly and respectfully with them, taking delight in their amazing abilities, their beauty, their play, and their right to share the earth with us unmolested. On this most holy day, we thank You for all our neighbors, and ask that the generosity You have shown to us may be the mark of our lives as we live on this earth; through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Stan Adamson is Pastor of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Boulder, Colorado, the first PCUSA Earth Care Congregation in Colorado. He has been blessing and welcoming animals in the worship life of St. Andrew for two decades. He shares his life with his wife Clare, his Cairn Terrier friend Maggie, and three Arabian horses, Kally, New Moon and Kara.



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