

Moderator's Reflection *By Diane Waddell*

As it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" (Luke 3:4-6)

Hope is often the theme in the lighting of the first Advent candle, and it sets a tone of anticipation through the season. In this text for the first Sunday in Advent we hear words of anticipation as John the Baptist quotes from the prophet Isaiah. We who seek the Christ also seek reassurance that our work in Earth caring will make the rough ways smoother and the crooked straighter.

The need for hope continues as seekers of Creation-healing, not only during Advent, but each day of Earth's journey around the sun. A PEC journey of hope was ignited in 2011, when Dr. Bill Brown at our Highlands Conference reminded us that 'Hope finds us'. Uplifted, we have followed the path of seeking hopefulness in our recent Updates as well as in our collaboration with Patrick David Heery, editor of *Unbound, An Interactive Journal of Christian Social Witness* in the November/December issue. (We are very excited about our collaboration and invite you to follow this e-journal.)

In September, I visited the Kansas prairie, a very grounding experience, to take the opportunity to hear speakers at the Land Institute's Prairie Festival. This year speakers included Wendell Berry, P. Sainath, and David Orr (presenting on "Down to the Wire: Discussing Climate Collapse.") PEC's theme of hope resounded from the prairie. "Pessimism is not what we need," Orr said, "nor is optimism. Neither will get us 'anywhere.'" Wendell Berry and Wes Jackson agreed. "It is hope that will carry us down these days of climate destabilization," Orr said.

There was still something needed. It all came together during a sermon (actually today, in October) when my pastor mentioned a quote (amazingly enough) from Wendell Berry, "It gets darker and darker, and then Jesus was born." She mentioned the **radical hope** that this quote had engendered for a woman in the midst of her own darkness. Yes!!!...**radical** John the Baptist, **radical** Christ (indeed) and now, what we need is **radical hope...for Earth's healing**. Amen.

In this Update, we recognize Earth Care Congregations (ECCs) and highlight the four areas of action in the program: worship, education, facilities, and outreach (including community involvement and public policy). We have asked representative ECCs to blend these earth-caring actions with the Advent message. We honor as well all 97 current ECCs, as well as PEC member churches and the many groups and individuals who have continued to work steadfastly toward environmental and related social justice goals.

The peace and passion of Christ be with you.

Yours in **radical hope**,
Diane Waddell
Moderator, Presbyterians for Earth Care

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ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTRIES AT THE WHITE HOUSE

By Rebecca Barnes-Davies

From the beginning stories of creation, we know that God made us to be in relationship. We are part of God's good creation and we are related to others as we seek to glorify God. Relationships with other people, and with the whole creation, are part of what God intends for us. These relationships are for the well-being of all, as each seeks to become and to do God's will in individual and corporate life.

This September, over 100 faith-based leaders gathered at the White House to talk about caring for God's creation, greening congregations, and measuring energy efficiency. A variety of traditions were represented—various Christian denominations as well as Jewish, Muslim and Hindu voices. In plenaries, panels, and networking times, people shared convictions and introduced programs. Not only was it a fascinating, inspiring, and fun event, I believe that it was critical. It was a reminder of the importance of working in partnerships and of not thinking that God has already accomplished all things through us, whether in our own congregation or in our own tradition. We have a lot to learn from, through, and with one another.

When we enter partnerships, we do so by standing authentically in our own place. I spoke about the PC(USA) Earth Care Congregation program at this event and was proud to lift up all the Presbyterian congregational leaders in the room. It was an honor to share what we Presbyterians are doing and to connect with so many other great leaders. We share from our core what we believe and from there we can enter authentic relationship. We don't enter partnerships by giving up who we are or failing to truly celebrate what we, in our unique capacity, have done.

Knowing and appreciating true differences between partners, we are called to a movement of uniting with other voices and efforts for a common purpose. We can be good at what we are good at and still accept the complementary gifts and valuable resources that others have to share. PC(USA) Environmental Ministries and Presbyterians for Earth Care have great things to offer to congregations. So do EPA ENERGY STAR for Congregations, National Council of Churches' Eco-Justice Program, and other great organizations like Interfaith Power and Light and GreenFaith.

By embracing diversity and then entering community, we affirm a theology of abundance rather than living out of a fear of scarcity. Rather than asking who will take the people and financial resources away from our work, we realize that we together can enact real change in the world. This change will be broader, deeper, and more faithful to our call. Partnerships matter. The more we are able to truly find synergy with others, the more the movement for caring for God's earth will grow.

Living in the relationality to which we are called, for which we were created, we can find our way as people of faith who care for God's earth. In partnerships, we will become more truly who we are, discover who God has given us as models of best practice, support, and inspiration, and grow the movement in the hopes of making the most faithful witness in our care for creation.

Rebecca Barnes-Davies coordinates the Environmental Ministries office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Want to learn more? Visit <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/environment/>

Presbyterians for Earth Care (PEC) invites individuals and congregations to participate in the growing earth care movement within the Presbyterian Church(USA). PEC is a national eco-justice network that cares for God's creation by connecting, equipping, and inspiring Presbyterians to make creation care a central concern of the church. Founded in 1995 as a grassroots organization to help the denomination educate and energize church members to address environmental concerns from a faith perspective, it works in partnership with PC(USA)'s Environmental Ministries Office and the Office of Public Witness to promote earth justice with a biblical and theological base. Regional representatives recruit presbyteries, churches, organizations, and individuals to help form a national network of Presbyterians to work toward the common goal of restoring creation for ecology and justice. Check out PEC's web site at www.presbyearthcare.org. If you would like to become involved or have questions, contact Elspeth at presbyearthcare@gmail.com or your regional representative.

Introduction

Each week of Advent, we invite you to join us in reflecting in how caring for creation prepares us for the coming Christ. The following weekly reflections tell the stories of four congregations and how they fulfilled particular requirements to be certified as an Earth Care Congregation by the Office of Environmental Ministries. If you are interested in joining their ranks, please contact Rebecca Barnes-Davies at Rebecca.Barnes-Davies@pcusa.org. May the work of these congregations bring you hope, even as we wait with expectation, joy, and love for the Hope of the world.

WEEK ONE:

Facilities

By Holly Hallman

*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it.
Psalms 24:1*

The long glorious days of summer gave way to the golds and reds of fall and now we have come to the slowing—the quieting—that gives those of us in the northern hemisphere a season of reflection and anticipation.

For the Montevallo Presbyterian Church of Montevallo, Alabama, there is much to reflect upon. Their church is a beautiful, white landmark in this college town. The sanctuary was built in 1902 and the education wing was completed in 1912. When it was time to update the facilities, the discernment process led them to an exploration of the “best practices” for turning “old” into “green.” With guidance and information they found through the PC(USA) Office of Environmental Ministry, they explored the guidelines for ENERGY STAR for Congregations. These guidelines have only been available for the last three or four years so it was new and exciting for this forward-thinking church to contemplate how they might incorporate as much of the program as possible into their renovation. Rev. Leanne Pearce Reed stated that it was easy, with this group, to sell the idea. The area where they live has pollution issues that affect air quality and the water in the nearby Cahava River.

The ENERGY STAR for Congregations program provides a range of possibilities that run from free to more costly. The new windows, insulation, and appliances that the members felt had to be purchased were on the costly side, for sure. However, if you ever get to talk to Rev. Leanne, she will tell you over and over that there are many, many low cost and NO cost ways to be more energy efficient. Her hope is that everyone will browse through the online guidelines, especially the “10 Sure Energy Savers” page.

But, all great journeys have stories with multiple parts; there's not just mangers and shepherds. Congregant Bill Peters began the task of tracking the energy use of the structures and systems that are integral to their buildings. Using Portfolio Manager he tracked the kilowatt hours of electricity, the gallons of water and the therms of natural gas used. Bill says that Portfolio Manager is a very technical program designed for use in large, commercial facilities. It became his calling to make the program work for the Montevallo Congregation's specific purpose. He will gladly tell you that he is excited about the re-launch that is coming in the spring of 2013 when Portfolio Manager will provide a user friendly tracking model. Why is he excited? A group of Episcopalian churches in Chicago are using this tool for accountability, and not just for a particular congregation, but across the whole diocese! His hope is that with this apples-to-apples ability to compare, many Presbyterian Churches across the country will join together to share information and resources.

A great story, yes, but the journey this year led right to the White House. The congregation was honored in September, as one of 28 churches that have become Energy Stars! Rev. Leanne was personally invited to represent her members. There is no doubt that even in those hallowed halls she lost no time telling everyone who would listen that they can do it too.

Creator God, you brought the earth out of the void and flung stars into the skies above it. When you wanted the Wisemen to find the baby, born and laid in a manger, you led them there by a star that shone both day and night. We thank you for this Alabama congregation that has found a new and different star to bless their journey. Amen.

Holly Hallman recently retired from serving as a hospice chaplain, and she currently serves PEC on the Steering Committee.

WEEK TWO:**Worship**

By Katie Preston

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" Mark 1:2-3

Korean Presbyterian Church of Boston (Korean PC of Boston) became a certified Earth Care Congregation in September this year. They exceeded the total number of points needed and one of the reasons for that was their focus on worship. Many times congregations find it easy to embrace environmental stewardship in their facilities and elsewhere around their campus (like choosing recycled paper or offering recycling of bulletins). But it often seems more difficult for a pastor to include elements of Creation Care into the worship life of his or her community. That is why ECCs includes worship as one of the four components of the certification program. Sure, you can get certified doing a minimal amount of worship-related components. But Korean PC of Boston was not one of those congregations.

They held a special Environmental Mission Sunday in conjunction with Earth Day this year, as well as included a Creation-themed sermon each quarter. They created an Earth Day Bookmark that was distributed to members and each Sunday reuse and recycle their bulletins. They've already started planning out their recertification for next year, including adding an outdoor service to their quarterly Creation-themed sermon.

Korean PC of Boston is just one example of how you can begin to think about incorporating Creation care into the worshipping life of your congregation. I encourage you to reach out to Elder Jason and learn more about what they've done and what they plan to do to keep building that connection between worship and Creation care.

In his book, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, theologian Bill Brown uses a marvelous illustration of how the creation story sets up a temple in and of nature. This amazing illustration highlights each day of the creation narrative as a pillar of the building of a temple. But unlike the temple we learn about in 1Kings, this temple is a cosmic temple, not a temple made of stone. For me, what this imagery highlights is that when we are in nature, we are able to worship God as the Creator who has given us such delights as apple trees and songbirds. We can just as easily worship God in the wonder of Creation as we can in our beautiful sanctuaries.

I find that being in nature helps me connect to the Creator and have a meaningful worship experience. Perhaps as they plan for

their outdoor service (and as you plan in your congregations), Korean PC of Boston could consider Dr. Brown's imagery and find ways to incorporate it into their service (and yours)!

Advent is a time of preparation; a time for us to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Christ-child. Similarly in our work in the environmental community, we are in a time of preparation for the coming of the "Green Revolution" – the creation of a sustainable community. As people of faith, we are preparing the way for that green revolution – the work we do and the words we proclaim prepare us for what is to come.

Korean Presbyterian Church of Boston does a wonderful job of preparing the way, through regular worship interaction with the Creation. Making sure that Creation care isn't a token conversation held on one Sunday, reminds us that there is always work to be done in preparing for the sustainable future. We can always be doing a little more. Just as John the Baptist proclaimed the coming of the Christ, Korean PC of Boston regularly proclaims the call to care for Creation.

Just like we hope in the birth of the Messiah, we hope for a time when we will live in a sustainable world, a world that respects the One who comes to Redeem as the same One who Creates and Sustains us all.

God of hope, help us prepare our places for your coming and help us proclaim your love in the world. Amen.

Katie Preston is the Director of Virginia Interfaith Power and Light, a graduate of Columbia Theological Seminary and a candidate for ordination as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

WEEK THREE CONTINUES ON PAGE 5



Photo provided by Korean Presbyterian Church of Boston.

WEEK THREE:

Education

By Bill Seaman

*And in that region there were shepherds out in the field,
keeping watch over their flock by night.
And an angel of the Lord appeared to them.
Luke 2: 8-9a*

The advent and birth of Jesus offers to Christians not only a sacred annual time of reflection on the birth of a Savior, but perhaps also an opportunity to ponder God's ongoing acts of creation and to see in them Jesus as Teacher and Steward concerning Earth. When we read that *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1a), and that *"He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him"* (John 1:2-3a), we may wonder how indeed Jesus, in his earthly lifetime, related to what was "created" and "made." How did the infant presented in the temple and singled out by Simeon and by Anna—to the amazement of Joseph and Mary—grow as a child and become *"strong, filled with wisdom"* (Luke 2:40b)?

The Bible's narration of the "Christmas story" tells us how even at the moment of birth the life of Jesus Christ was intertwined with "Creation" as manifested in the natural world and also as reflected practically in the lives of those who depended on its bounty. After all, an angel of the Lord was sent to *"shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night"* to announce the good news of great joy of the Messiah's birth. The shepherds certainly would have been people of the land, presumably in tune with Earth and its seasons. How might Jesus have interacted with them in childhood? Meanwhile, as Jesus learned carpentry in his youth it seems likely that experience with types of wood extended to harvest of trees in the forest, with hands-on lessons in plant and animal ecology. And certainly travel with family, all the way to Egypt even, exposed Jesus to the region's landscapes and ecosystems.

How do we in modern times relate to Earth? In the United States, educators, physicians and social scientists are seriously concerned for the lack of time spent outdoors by children. Symptoms of so-called "nature-deficit disorder" include obesity, depression, and inability to concentrate. Two critical developmental factors, namely availability of childhood opportunities and adult mentors, afforded Jesus the foundation for a life in close communion with the outdoors. Consider his adult experiences in wilderness, on stormy waters, and in tranquil gardens, and the profound ministries connected with each of them. Certainly Jesus was neither an adult nor a "Child Left Inside!"

How do followers of Jesus afford children and adults opportunity to learn to care for Earth? Congregations across the Presby-

terian Church (USA) are educating members and the community about timely environmental issues ranging from safety of water supply, food security and fair trade business, to energy conservation and simplicity of lifestyle. At Montreat Presbyterian Church in North Carolina an appointed Earth Stewardship Theologian recently taught two multi-week Christian Education classes, "Clues for a World on the Edge: Creation as the Theater of God's Glory" and "What Shall We Eat...?" Additional ways of building biblical and scientific literacy concerning Earth care are coordinated by the church's Earth Ministry Team, for example by arranging informative and lively programs at annual Earth Care potluck supper celebrations (with elected officials attending) and attendance/discussion at movies and lectures, such as on coal mining and climate disruption. Partnership with the nearby Montreat Conference Center affords access to outdoor facilities such as the Prayer Path, pictured below.

We may not know the exact influence upon Jesus of the shepherds who witnessed his day of birth, but certainly their sensitivity to Creation and its seasons and limits offers guidance in following a Savior who also inspires stewardship of Earth, at Christmas and all other times of the year.

O gracious God, thank you for the birth of a Savior to our world. Please guide us in following his paths of righteousness to steward the Creation where you have placed us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

William Seaman is an ordained Presbyterian elder who resides with his wife in the southern Blue Ridge Mountains. He is Professor Emeritus, University of Florida, and in retirement consults on environmental science, leads the Earth Ministry Team of Montreat Presbyterian Church (North Carolina), and is working on certification as an environmental educator.

Photograph courtesy of Phyllis Sadler, who used it in a church class on "Seeing God through the Eyes of Photography."



WEEK FOUR:**Outreach**

By Abby Mohaupt

*The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall
blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing.*

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

Isaiah 35:1-4

In October 2006, members and friends of First Presbyterian Church Palo Alto watched Al Gore's film "An Inconvenient Truth." This screening led to the creation of the Cool Planet Working Group, a group of members and friends of the congregation committed to responding to the threat of climate change. From its inception, Cool Planet has sought to reach out to the congregation in its ministries and in partnership with other organizations, and to creation.

Since 2006, First Presbyterian has partnered with California Interfaith Power and Light, Union of Concerned Scientists, the City of Palo Alto, and Acterra, as well as co founding the MidPeninsula Environmental Ministries in partnership with several local churches. These partnerships have led to political action and advocacy, as well as networking and education. For example, in 2010 the congregation participated in a Valentine writing campaign to California Senators and Representatives to urge them to love the earth by passing strong climate change legislation.

From the urging and organizing of Cool Planet, the congregation has embraced caring for creation and ending climate change through Adult Education series, facilities changes, and worship services. In 2008, the congregation replaced their lawn with drought-tolerant plants and added bike racks to the church campus. Annual Earth Day worship services have been supplemented by additional worship services that highlight the human connection to creation, particularly during the annual church picnic worship service which takes place outside. Members and friends of the congregation from all different places in life have participated in these opportunities—from the young to the old, the sick to the healthy, the staff to the congregation.

All of this work has been done within a deep and joyful connection to creation. Members and friends of the congregation and the working group regularly spend time in creation biking, run-

ning, or walking. Another working group in the congregation is focused on hiking, and many of the members of Cool Planet are in this group as well. This connection has provided a reminder of why the congregation has committed to caring for creation and working to end climate change.

Facing the reality of climate change can provoke fear and hopelessness. It would be easier to be paralyzed by a sense of helplessness than to participate in the hard work of changing how humanity affects the rest of creation. It's much harder to join this work, and harder still to do it with hopeful rejoicing. Some of our hope can come from our understanding that creation joins us—that we are connected to each other and to creation. Our hope also comes from our understanding that all of creation waits with anticipation and joy for the coming of Christ, who comes to heal our broken connections. So as we wait, we do so knowing that our bodies and spirits are welcomed into these connections wherever we are in life. Our hands and feet and spirits rejoice with each other and all creation!

Holy God, give us hope as we work to protect your creation, even as we wait for you. Help us work in your world with grace and peace, reaching out to each other in love. We give you thanks for the joy we find in your creation and for the hope we find in you. Amen.

Abby Mohaupt is the Pastoral Resident at First Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto, CA. A candidate for ordination as a teaching elder in the PC(USA), she serves PEC as the editor of The Update.



Photo provided by First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto

BLESSINGS TO YOU IN THIS ADVENT SEASON!

WHY IS PEC A MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATION?

By Fred Milligan

Community organizers say that there are two kinds of power: “organized money and organized people.”

PEC is not a wealthy organization. As important as it is for us to have some funds to maintain our network, our power is in our members and what we can achieve together. For 17 years, first as PRC and now PEC, we have been quietly organizing a network of Presbyterians who are committed to focusing our church on the biblical call “To till and to keep” the earth (Genesis 1:12).

Yes, we gather to encourage each other, to educate ourselves and to fellowship with like-minded believers in a special community of faith. But we know that we are meant to achieve more than this. We are meant to engage our common efforts toward the task at hand, “to till and to keep” this earth God has made. We are meant to exert the power of our combined energies toward achieving change in our church and in our world.

This above all other reasons is why it is important that you belong to PEC and why you should invite others to join as well: because we are making a difference in the life of our church and our world.

In the coming months you will be hearing more about specific actions we will be inviting you to join in taking to further our hope for more faithful stewardship of God’s earth.

In the meantime, we thank you for joining or renewing your membership in PEC.

In a continuing effort to be more sustainable, we invite members to choose to receive the Update in e-mail form. If you prefer a print copy as well, we ask that you please ensure your membership is paid.

I give you a new commandment:

Love each other.

Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other.

This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other.

John 13:34-35, Common English Bible

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COMING SOON:

Taking up a theme of hope, Presbyterians for Earth Care, the Presbyterian Environmental Ministries, and *Unbound: An Interactive Journal of Christian Social Justice* (www.justiceUNBOUND.org) are teaming up to create a Nov/Dec 2012 issue on the spirituality, relationships, and hope that are at the foundation of our eco-justice ministry.



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