

MODERATOR'S MESSAGE: OUR SAINTS AND PROPHETS

by Diane Waddell

We need all the wisdom we can gather.

During these times of acute climate change, it is so important to be open to ancient words and holy words, words of past and present prophets. Recently, in the search for Earth justice, I have been gifted to meet some amazingly wise and passionate people.

The Yukon PEC conference was certainly one of those times where I made contact, heart and mind, with people of great wisdom and passion from theological, scientific, and spiritual perspectives. I am grateful to have met native persons from Alaska, particularly Larry Mercurieff, an Aleut elder from Pribilof Islands. Through his words, we learned the importance of relationship and how silence is a great teacher.

I also am grateful for having met and worked with Curtis and Cindee Karns in their bio-shelter, a one of a kind (in the world) home in Anchorage. They shared about lifestyle integrity and relationship through Christian permaculture.

During the UN Climate March, (wearing my PEC t-shirt), I introduced myself to a woman from Syracuse, NY, standing next to me, who said, "Perhaps you knew my father, Bill Gibson." What an honor! I truly am grateful beyond words for his prophetic and pioneering work in eco-justice, a term he coined.



Watch for opportunities to share about Lifestyle Integrity and Lifestyle Simplification beginning with our PEC Conference in Montreat, Sept 15-18, 2015!

As we look to our 20th anniversary in 2015, I am reminded of Dr. Gibson's words:

"Eco-justice [is] the wellbeing of all humankind on a thriving earth. As a goal, it retains and reinforces all of the church's longstanding commitment to justice in the social order, and it adds a major new insight of our time: that justice to human beings is inseparable from right relationships with and within the natural order. Eco-justice includes social and economic justice and, by combining it with ecological awareness and appreciation, profoundly affects the way it is to be achieved. Eco-justice means justice to all of God's creation." (From: Keeping and Healing the Creation; a Resource Paper of the Presbyterian Eco-justice Task Force, issued by the Committee on Social Witness Policy of the PCUSA).

Praise be to God for Saints past and present, Prophets of wisdom who have tilled and planted the Garden. Let us together continue to harvest and share the harvest wisdom. Let us pray and prophesy and hold fast. For it is our work and our calling.

Amen.
Diane Waddell,
Moderator

Inside this issue:

Editor's Note	2
Fossil Free PCUSA UPDATE	3
General Assembly Update	3
People's Climate March	4
Living in Trash	5
Alaska Trip Reflections	6
Relishing Abundance	7
Membership Form	8



Steering Committee

Moderator:

Diane Waddell
(816) 262-4770
PECModerator@gmail.com

Vice Moderator:

The Rev. Holly Hallman
(425) 736-2684
PECViceModerator@gmail.com

Treasurer:

Sue Smith
(732) 291-3343
PECFinance@gmail.com

Regional Representatives

Northeast:

The Rev. Dana Eglinton
(609) 261-3026
PECRepNE@gmail.com

Southeast:

Nancy Fayer
(410) 750-1479
nancyfayer@verizon.net

Pacific:

Kathleen Dove
PECRepPacific@gmail.com

Midwest:

The Rev. Paul Henschen
(701) 349-4007
PECRepMidwest@gmail.com

Southwest:

Rick Owen
rickowen@sbcglobal.net

Northwest:

The Rev. Curtis Karns
PECRepNW@gmail.com

At-Large:

The Rev. Abby Mohaupt
(815) 985-8325
awmohaupt@gmail.com

PEC Coordinator:

Jane Laping
(828) 277-7342
presbyearthcare@gmail.com

Editor:

Neddy Astudillo
Neddy.astudillo@gmail.com

EDITOR'S NOTE: FOR GOOD OR FOR ILL, WHAT COMPELS YOU TO CARE FOR THE EARTH?

by Neddy Astudillo

In an ecofeminism class at a college in Madison, students read an article from Ivone Gebara called *Ecofeminism, A Latin American Perspective*. In the article, the author speaks about the experience of poor women in Brazil, who are starving and dying with diseases, while wasteful discussions about saving the rainforest are going on at governmental levels. The professor asked the students: *What compels the women in the story to care for the earth?* And as expected, what compels these women is seeking a safer and better world for their children.

Later, when I asked the students what compelled them to care for the earth, the answer was different: to protect the beauty of the earth; to become a compassionate human being; and for their own spirituality. Nature helps them connect with the divine. All these answers are worthy, while certainly the experience of nature is different.

We all need a reason to compel us to care for the earth. But I think we need to help each other, to look beyond our own reasons. The poor need to experience the

beauty of the earth and connect with the divine in nature, while the privileged need to recognize the struggle of the poor as part of the Earth's, where God also dwells. That is what ecojustice can do for us. Ecological justice will not happen until social justice accompanies it, and the sooner we link both in our creation care work, the more we can accomplish. Human struggle is also part of the earth's struggle.

For the second time in a month, I've heard well intended folks say that the necessary change (to save the earth) will not happen until the privileged make it happen with their money and political power; and that the poor (and the undocumented) are too occupied surviving or are even part of the problem. I do not think this is true. There is a proverb that says: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

It is essential that we open our perception to see the other as essential to our own survival and that of the Earth. The two are part of the one.

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 Jane at presbyearthcare@gmail.com or your regional representative.

SPOTLIGHT ON ADVOCACY: AN UPDATE ON FOSSIL FREE PCUSA *by Abby Mohaupt*

More than two years ago, Presbyterians for Earth Care began supporting a grassroots campaign to get the PC(USA) to divest from fossil fuel companies. This campaign has turned into the organization Fossil Free PCUSA and has been blessed by the ongoing prayers and actions of PEC.

Fossil Free PCUSA is already looking forward to the next General Assembly in Portland, and beginning to discern what overtures and resolutions could be brought from presbyteries around the country.

But first, we want to tell you where we are now.

We went to the 221st General Assembly with the strong support of 12 Presbyteries for Overture 15-01 (Divestment from Fossil Fuels). The overture received significant attention and discussion on the floor of plenary before it was referred to the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee (MRTI). MRTI was tasked to study divestment from fossil fuels and report back to the 222nd General Assembly in 2016.

MRTI has already taken the first steps. They met with members of our Fossil Free PCUSA team at their October meeting in Boston and heard from

Dan Terpstra and Rob Mark in addition to two resource people, Jim Antal and Bob Massie, on divestment.

Fossil Free PCUSA will continue to engage MRTI, Board of Pensions and the Presbyterian Foundation. We cannot do this work of divestment on a denominational level without them. But we will also work on local and presbytery levels.

The time is now for us to discuss and move. Together we will reach out to as many congregations and communities, bring educational curriculum on climate justice and divestment, develop local leadership on this issue, and ensure passage of our overture on fossil fuel divestment by 50 Presbyteries, and ultimately by the 222nd General Assembly. This is a formidable goal, but an attainable one as we work in faith and with urgency.

Our faith in God calls us to not profit from the destruction of creation; thus divestment from fossil fuels is a moral and biblical mandate. As a denomination, we must bring climate change and climate justice to the forefront of our faithful response to God's love for us in Jesus Christ.

We need the help of each of you and look forward to working together as stewards of God's creation toward a sustainable world.

If you are interested in partnering with us in this work, please visit Fossil Free PCUSA's website at www.fossilfreepcusa.org or email PEC's At-Large Steering Committee Member Abby Mohaupt at awmohaupt@gmail.com.

You can also join PEC's advocacy work on a variety of issues by contacting Holly Hallman at PECvicemoderator@gmail.com

Servants of Christ
and stewards
of the mysteries of God
(1 Corinthians 4:1b)

ECO STEWARDS AT THE PEOPLES CLIMATE MARCH: AN INTERVIEW WITH ROB MARK

By Vickie Machado

The Rev. Rob Mark is Pastor at Boston's Church of the Covenant, a lead advocate on the Presbyterian movement to divest from fossil fuels, and a central organizer of Eco-Stewards Program.

Why did you go?

I feel strongly that the biggest moral issue we are facing right now as a planet and for humanity is climate change. It's been really important to be present and to show up as a religious leader, to say we really feel strongly about climate justice. I also went because I am a new father. My seven-month-old son's very existence demands that I take my own stewardship of God's earth a lot more seriously now. Looking into his eyes, I feel all the more compelled to speak out and take action.



say 10,000+ people were there and they were all representing the greater faith community. There were signs representing the different expressions of faith: atheist and humanist, all the way to evangelical and everything in between—the Muslim community, the Jewish community, all sorts of Christian denominations. When I saw the Presbyterian flag, boldly being raised by our own Colleen Earp, a fellow Eco-Steward, I was deeply moved and encouraged that there were a lot of us gathered. [We] all share that common belief that we are stewards of God's earth or we are stewards of the earth, however we recognize it as such.

What was the most powerful experience of the march?

One of the most important and powerful things for me was to recognize—in coming into New York, when the streets were filled with 400,000 other people—that we are not alone in this movement. There are a lot of people from communities of faith, to secular communities, to university students, to labor movement folks that are deeply committed to doing something.

Describe the interfaith presence.

The entire block was filled (see photo at right). I would



Save the Date for Presbyterians for Earth Care's Conference

DOWN TO EARTH ADVOCACY AND ACTION

Patricia Tull, Keynoter

Workshops on Simple Living, Environmental Justice, and Advocacy
will be combined with worship and community building in beautiful North Carolina

September 15-18, 2015

Montreat Conference Center

TOXIC TOWNS: LIVING IN THE MIDST OF TRASH

By Rick Randolph

During my first trip to Haiti in 1994, I was in the US Army and was briefed on areas on the island that were so contaminated with toxic waste, that US soldiers were not allowed to enter. The local leaders had sold the 'right' to contaminate the land to overseas polluters who dumped toxic waste in these areas. While we did remain out of those areas, the Haitians that lived there couldn't leave. They had no place else to go.

In 2013, the journal "Environmental Health Perspectives" published a study of the effects of childhood exposure to Lead and hexavalent Chromium in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The investigators measured the soil and air in the areas of garbage dumps and tanneries, and found them to be high in lead and hexavalent chromium. Using identified sites, the authors calculated that in these countries, 8.6 million people were at risk of toxic exposure due to environmental contamination—almost always the poorest in their society. After calculating the amount of contamination and plotting the population densities, the authors calculated that these countries have annually lost over 800,000 healthy years of life due to the toxic exposures. The losses stem from premature death as well as from neurological (including mental retardation), gastrointestinal, and cardiovascular damage.

This is even greater than the burden of malaria in these areas. More recent articles estimated the total economic burden to the developing world at \$989 billion per year. These toxic exposures are draining the future and present from the developing world.

When I go back to Haiti, I am haunted every time I see a child playing in the large garbage dump

outside of Port au Prince. I know that we can do better. We can support efforts of those in the developing world to improve their economies, to improve their education and to improve their public health. When we do that, we will start the process of raising up a new generation that can lead the way to a better future. When we do so, we will imitate Christ's call to care for the downtrodden:

"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

(Mark 9:34-37, NASB)

Rick Randolph is a family physician in Lenexa, Kansas. He has provided primary care, public health and disaster response in the US, the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa and the Philippines. He is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and retired as a US Army Colonel. He served twice in Iraq. He sits on several non-profit boards in organizations focused on children's health and on the developing world. He holds a graduate certificate in Public Health in the Developing World and works with Heart to Heart International which "imagines a world in which every person has access to a healthy life and every community has the capacity to make that access a reality. We believe that sustained access to health sets the foundation for individual and community development." For more information about Heart to Heart, and the work that Dr. Randolph is doing in Haiti, please visit <http://www.hearttoheart.org/our-work/haiti-operations/>

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

By Robin Blakeman

From September 2 – 7, the Yukon Presbyterians for Earth Care Conference titled “Seeing the Signs of the Times; A Practical Theology of Climate Change” took participants on a ground tour of Alaska, from Anchorage to the Fairbanks area. Signs of Climate Change are everywhere, as well as signs of extractive industrial exploitation.



Above: Portage Glacier

Lower Right: Moose at Lake Birchwood

Glacial Melt: The once massive Portage glacier has receded three miles from the visitor’s center, which was built with an observation area so that people could see the ice up close. All you can see from that observation area now is a lake, and the mountains surrounding it.

Permafrost melt threatens buildings and roads in the Fairbanks area and beyond, as well as the ecosystem necessary to maintain Caribou and other iconic wildlife populations. The permafrost is releasing methane that has been stored for thousands of years, as well as ancient bacteria – the potential effects of which are unknown. At the US Army Corps Permafrost tunnel, near Fairbanks, we learned that permafrost is actually

much older than the glaciers - dated back 20,000+ years in some places.

Another major threat to the state’s ecosystem looms in the **trans-Alaska oil pipeline**, which transports two million barrels of oil per day; three-quarters of it is built on top of melting permafrost.

Bristol Bay mining operations threaten one of the last commercial scale wild salmon fisheries in the world, and the native populations who depend on those fish for cultural and physical survival. The **Mat-Su Valley** proposed surface coal mines are also a concern to many native communities.

Entire native communities on Alaska’s seacoast — such as those in Shismaref — are facing the need to relocate and/or drastically change their thousands of year old ways of life.

Melting sea ice and increased volume of seawater have devastated populations of wild game. These communities have subsisted for thousands of years. One young woman – Tiffany Immingan - has found it necessary to run a food pantry in Savoonga, previously home of self-sufficient hunters.

Continues on page 7



National Security issues: The sea ice is melting at such a rapid rate that one of the speakers on our tour — Dr. Michael Castellini, a University of Alaska scientist — attended a meeting with NATO officials on the same day that he spoke to our group about the effect of Climate Change on the polar ocean regions. He also helped design the newest research vessel in the US Naval fleet to research the rapidly appearing Arctic Ocean.

One note of hope came from people in Alaska who are starting so-called “Transition Communities,” which will be resilient enough to survive local and global climate changes - made up of pioneers in many ways, when it comes to alternative sources of energy, food production, and water recycling.

Alaska — our last frontier — may just lead the way to transition lifestyles which will be necessary in the dec-

ades and generations to come. The fact that religious community leaders in Alaska are at the forefront of Transition Community initiatives is inspiring.



Above: Rev. Dr. Curtis Karns, the Right Reverend David Mahaffey, Ilarion (Larry) Mercurieff, and Rev. Shelley Wickstrom

RELISHING GOD'S ABUNDANCE

By Katie Preston

I am one of those people that *hates* seeing or hearing anything Christmas related before Thanksgiving. I believe that there are seasons for a reason, and on my calendar, the Christmas season does not start until the Friday after Thanksgiving. And yet, year after year, Christmas shows up earlier and earlier each year. I am currently working a job in the local mall, and a few weeks ago on my way in to the store – mind you *before* Halloween even – I noticed that the set up for Santa had gone up overnight. People – it wasn't even November 1, and they were ready for Santa!

One of the reasons I am so bothered by this haste to get to Christmas is that the focus is on the consumerism of Christmas – not on the holiness of the coming of Christ. It is all about making sure you've got your decorations ready and have started thinking about presents for people. It is not about making sure you've got your spiritual life in order or have considered how to share your gifts with the people of God. As an ecosteward, I wish we really would refocus around the “true meaning of Christmas” instead of creating mountains of waste. According to a Mother Earth Living article, “38,000 miles of ribbon and 4 million tons of

shopping bags and gift-wrapping” are tossed out during the holidays. That does not even count what is inside all that wrapping!

And, according to a report from the Electronics Take Back Coalition 384 million electronic items were discarded in 2010 – not necessarily related to Christmas, but still a whopping number. Only 73.7 million of those were recycled. In our consumerist, perceived obsolescence society, we care about having more of the latest instead of about having enough of the needed. It's time to start taking stock of our stuff, and deciding what we truly need to live fulfilling lives pleasing to God.

This Christmas season, I challenge us all to consider what it means to prepare for the coming of the Christ child and to relish the abundance of God's glorious Creation.

For more information on Mother Earth Living and the Electronics Take Back Coalition, visit these websites:

www.motherearthliving.com

www.electronicstakeback.com



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