

PEC UPDATE

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MODERATOR'S REFLECTION AND UPDATES

Below the Surface

By Jenny Holmes

“We can't see any oil out here at all” the TV reporter said with authority as he flew over the Louisiana coastline in a helicopter. The newscast's overall message seemed to be, “we can't see any more oil, so the problem must be over.” Images immediately came to mind from a Smithsonian Natural History Museum exhibit I recently viewed on the deep oceans, the most unknown and unexplored part of God's earth, filled with amazing creatures. As one scientist of the deep has said “it's like a jungle out there.”

I wondered how those denizens of the deep were faring. In mid-May, Samantha Joye, a researcher in one of the first scientific missions to explore oil spill impacts in the depths of the Gulf of Mexico said in a New York Times article, “There's a shocking amount of oil in the deep water, relative to what you see in the surface water...there's a tremendous amount of oil in multiple layers, three or four or five layers deep in the water column.” She and many other scientists who study the ocean depths are suggesting that one of the greatest legacies of the BP Deepwater Horizon spill may be its long term effects on ocean processes that impact all of life on earth.

As we advocate for the communities most affected by the spill, as people of faith we also need to call into question our consumptive way of life and how oil extraction, oil burned for energy and oil based chemicals disorder the fabric of creation, from the cells of our body to larger systems. Faith in Jesus Christ inspires and goads us to find better ways to live that respect all of God's creation. When we are called to account for the “hope that is in



Youth group from First Presbyterian Church of Asheville scoring points towards Earth Care Congregation certification with a camping weekend. See page 4 for more information.

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us” (1 PETER 3:15), including hope for the future of God's creation, we have good news to share.

Part of our hope in Christ is the invitation to an earth-caring way of living, rooted in our love for God and all that God has made—from the ocean depths to the galaxies above—that fosters a sustainable culture. Science is an important partner in this journey. The need for a conversation among science, faith and culture is made so evident by unchecked climate warming and oil

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MODERATORS MESSAGE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

spills and is the theme of PEC's 2011 conference. Look for more articles on the conference theme in upcoming issues of the Update. Also, in this issue a series on non-toxic living and faith begins thanks to our new Vice Moderator, **Diane Waddell**. We will learn about how toxic chemicals, largely petroleum based, affect our health, the alternatives available and the spiritual implications.

PEC Transition: Thanks to Julie

After a little over a year of service to PEC, **Julie Lehman** has left PEC to work full-time at Warren Wilson College where she has worked part-time for several years. We appreciate Julie's energy, creativity and enthusiasm and her help in bringing PEC up-to-date with social networking, an improved website and new database. She was a great help in organizing PEC's 2009 conference at Montreat, just down the road a piece from Warren Wilson. We are grateful that she has offered to serve as a volunteer editor for PEC Update. We look forward to continued work with Julie and Warren Wilson (a past recipient of PEC's institutional award).

Welcoming Elizabeth (Lizzie) McGurk

PEC is very excited to introduce its new coordinator, **Lizzie McGurk**. A long-time Presbyterian, she attended Eckerd College, a Presbyterian-related institution in St. Petersburg, FL where she received a BA in 2008 in Environmental Studies and Religious Studies and worked as the student ministries coordinator where she incorporated earth care projects. She has served as the National Council of Churches' Eco-Justice Programs: Eco-Justice Advocacy and Outreach Specialist for Healthy Churches since 2008 and will continue working in this position part-time as she works part time for PEC. There is so much to say about this accomplished young woman, and you will learn more about her in the next issue of the Update. With our move to Washington, DC, where many other denominations have staff, we look forward to new opportunities for collaboration and support.

You may contact Lizzie at pecmcgurk@gmail.com or (571) 337-8433

JENNY HOLMES, PEC MODERATOR

Resources

Order free DVDs from Environmental Ministries

Environmental Ministries is offering two free DVDs about Earth Care. *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice* offers an overview of the environmental crisis and the environmental policy passed by the General Assembly in 1990. *Cherishing God's Earth* looks at five components of environmental issues: earth, air, water, habitat and people. Study guides are available for both DVDs.

You can order the DVDs and study guides at the PC (USA) Church Store at: <http://store.pcusa.org>.



Leaves of the Tree Resource Now Has Study Guide

The PC (USA) recently released a study guide to accompany its "Leaves of the Tree" resource, outlining the biblical and theological foundations for cherishing God's Creation and practicing and promoting eco-justice. The booklet focuses on Genesis, Psalms, Pauline writings and the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The resource was sponsored by funding from Presbyterians for Earth Care through the Ken Yost Memorial Fund. Ken was the husband of Cathy Yost, the first Moderator of Presbyterians for Restoring Creation (now Presbyterians for Earth Care). See Cathy's reflection in the *Stories, Ideas and Inspiration* section of this Update.

If you or your church are starting to explore eco-justice and earth care issues or looking for an interesting adult class topic, the new study guide can provide a five-part series to facilitate study and conversation. You can choose between two different options, one for a two hour class and one for five one-hour sessions.

The Leaves of the Tree, a single study guide and five-session guide at: www.pcusa.org/resource/and-leaves-tree-are-healing-nations-single-session/

Advocacy

PEC Endorses Carbon Covenant: Fighting Climate Change, Improving Life in Vulnerable Communities

By Jenny Holmes, with information from *Interfaith Power and Light*.

PEC is pleased to endorse the Carbon Covenant, a program of Interfaith Power and Light that links faith communities in the Global North and South in a common commitment to curb global warming and help mitigate its impact on vulnerable people. The Carbon Covenant supports communities on the front lines of climate change impact.

Participating faith communities are directly addressing the number one source of carbon emissions in the developing world: deforestation. They are protecting forests from illegal logging and poaching, promoting alternative, sustainable livelihoods and reforesting degraded lands. Projects involving Presbyterian churches include reforestation projects in Cameroon and Ghana.

Cameroon is already suffering from the impact of climate change. Water supplies are drying up and the dry season is longer and hotter and is followed by more floods and longer rains. Already poor communities are now faced with higher prices for food and water due to shortages and are simply unable to make ends meet. In response, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) is helping plant 100,000 trees over three years in all the 10 regions of the country. The proj-



Carbon Covenant

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ect will aim to plant 100,000 trees in different communities in Cameroon and ensure that water catchments in communities are protected and developed.

This interfaith project is intended to raise environmental awareness about tree planting not only within local Presbyterian churches but also with the local Roman Catholic Church, Protestant Mission and Muslim communities. It will work through young people in Presbyterian colleges and government schools to form tree-planting clubs and to mobilize PCC movements like the Christian Youth Fellowship, the Christian Women Fellowship and the Christian Men Fellowship to plant trees in identified communities nationwide. It will organize training workshops, work through the media and provide tree seedlings to be planted by volunteers in collaboration with the Ministries of Forestry, Environment, Agriculture and Research.

PEC encourages Presbyterians and their churches to participate in the Carbon Covenant as an additional component of their commitment to the General Assembly's 2006 Resolution that "strongly urges all Presbyterians to immediately make a bold witness by aspiring to live carbon neutral lives."

<http://www.presbyearthcare.org/advocacy-energy.html>. You may want to consider taking a special offering at your next Earth Day Sunday service or special earth care event to support the projects, or use it for a youth or VBS mission project. Please let us know your creative ideas for using this program and send us stories of how your congregation has used it.

For more information and to make a donation, go to www.co2covenant.org.



Kathy Galloway
Photo by Martha Rogers

Native Plant Garden

A native plant garden at the entrance to St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Austin, Texas, welcomes all who enter its doors. Low water requiring plants were selected for the sunny location by church member Kathy Galloway, also a Native Plant Society member. The nearby rain barrel provides some of the water. An illustrated plant list was available as part of an Earth Day celebration.

St. Andrew's is forming an Earth Care Team using the recently updated "Guide to Greening Presbyterian Churches", available at: www.pcusa.org/resource/earth-care-congregations-guide-greening-presbyteri

Health, Sacred Earth, and Non-Toxic Living: Part 1

By Diane Waddell, Vice Moderator of PEC

A prophet for our times, Rick Ufford-Chase, Moderator of the 214th General Assembly (2004), had bold and challenging words at our recent PEC luncheon. He said that care for the earth is no longer an issue on the fringe, but is now “legitimately the beginning of a movement.” “[The fringe] has moved to the center,” he said, and “God’s spirit is at work and the wave is beginning to crest.” Let us as justice-seeking people, resolve to incorporate the essence of these words into our soul, heart, and physical space.

PEC members and other like-minded individuals ‘see’ well from this peripheral ‘fringe’ edge. We seek to be gentle with Earth and Earth’s inhabitants. However, it seems that those who are in the ‘center’ currently may be within a type of ‘dark matter’ in which they do not seek environmental sustainability. For many reasons, they can’t seem to be able to find the reason or ability to see how much negative environmental impact they are having on Earth... on all of us and on future generations.

Our prophet, Rick, challenges us to be committed to a place and faith community for the long haul, to take on the wildest dreams we can imagine, to “break every taboo that we can find about crossing barriers,” and to “defy all conventional wisdom about what is possible.”

There are many ways to proceed...and many reasons. One is human health. Of course, human health is related to the well-being of the planet, since within the web of life we all are interdependent.

There is a concept called the Precautionary Principle, which basically means that industry and science would review thoroughly the (environmental and other) safety aspects of a product BEFORE it is introduced to the marketplace. This principle is upheld in Canada and the EU, but is not standard of practice in the U.S for most chemicals, cosmetics, and many other products. As it turns out, the burden of proof of toxicity in the U.S. is on the consumer and who responds, of course, after the toxic effects have taken place.

Dear Prophets and Friends of PEC, our journey and our goal is to help ourselves, family, friends, congregations and local and world community to engage in caring for Creation in a manner in which we honor God, Earth and Earth’s inhabitants. We must engage our mind, body and soul in this sacred work. This includes beginning to work toward reducing toxins by using less toxic products, by using fewer resources and using them more wisely.

This journey (and our series of upcoming articles) covers many realms of our lives...our home, self care, our health products, animal care, our food and agriculture and ‘our’ water. It is important to include how non-toxic living affects our soul, our relationships, our family, our community, our work, transportation, general purchasing of goods and services, the current capitalistic/materialistic system and our political system and government.

We must work to de-toxify the web. We must work to re-engage our appreciation for the sacredness of Earth, a precious gift of God. Prophets and Friends, let us proceed.

Diane is a Nurse Practitioner in Integrative and Complimentary Medicine in St. Joseph, MO/Heartland Presbytery. This is the first in a series of articles on Health, Spirituality and Non-Toxic Living.



Earth Care Congregations

A new program to encourage congregations to weave care for creation into all aspects of congregational life, and recognize them for their efforts, was launched by the PC(USA) Environmental Ministries Office at GA. If your church is active in earth care or interested in becoming more involved in being stewards of God’s earth check out “Earth Care Congregations: A Guide to Greening Presbyterian Churches” for ideas for earth care projects and worksheets, resources and instructions for becoming an Earth Care Congregation. To become certified as Earth Care Congregations churches take the “Earth Care Pledge” and complete activities and projects in the fields of worship, education, facilities and outreach. The guide and a PowerPoint to introduce it to your congregation can be found at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/environment/earth-care-congregations>. New PEC Steering Committee Member Jane Laping is a developer of the program.

PEC applauds the first group of churches to be certified as Earth Care Congregations: First Presbyterian Church, Cottage Grove, Oregon; First Presbyterian Church of Howard County, Columbia, Maryland; Frame Memorial Presbyterian Church, Steven’s Point, Wisconsin; Maryland Presbyterian Church, Townson, Maryland; North Como Presbyterian Church, Roseville, Minnesota; Second Presbyterian Church, Little Rock, Arkansas; St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Tucker, Georgia; and Swarthmore Presbyterian Church, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

Review Corner

BOOK REVIEW

ReNew: The Green VBS

A Review by Trevar Simmons, Eco-Steward Graduate, 2010

Spark House publishes *ReNew: The Green VBS*. According to their facebook page, they are designers tapping into imagination: "The ability to envision and move into a new future. In a word, faith."

After working with *ReNew* at Fayetteville Presbyterian Church in Fayetteville, WV, I am not surprised the makers describe themselves as imaginative designers. *ReNew* has successfully jumped onto everything in the popular mainstream of eco-stewardship, but in a way that proves meaningful, not just trendy.

A day at *ReNew* is organized by three categories: Gather, Activity Sites, and Send. At the start of each day, the curriculum suggests the children gather together to sing, hear the Bible story, and collect the offering.

Every day the Bible story is the Parable of the Sower as

ReNew has successfully jumped onto everything in the popular mainstream of eco-stewardship, but in a way that proves meaningful, not just trendy.

presented in Mark 4:1-9, just with a different emphasis. With *ReNew*, you read the parable slowly, having a theme from the story to guide the day's activities, themes like planting seeds, growing, and living together. Each theme acts like roots for the daily eco-question, spiritual question and tagline, all three appearing repeatedly in each of three activity sites: world, self, and community.

Each activity site has three optional activities for each day, one for lower elementary groups, one for upper elementary groups, and one for children of all ages. They are all engaging, capturing the children's attention

with crafts, games and discussion. Churches with lots of resources will find these activities easier to pull off, although many of the mate-

rials are easy to collect. Instead of using paper for drawing, *ReNew* suggests using the backs of cardboard boxes as a "greenER" option for some activities. Each activity has tips for how to make the day's activity more environmentally friendly, ranking levels as green, greenER, and greenest - from reusing materials to involving the kids in advocacy to the church congregation.

ReNew suggests making snack time learning time by talking about each food's origin. Games, too, mirror the lessons for the day, if you can fit a game time into an already packed day.

The pizza garden is a wonderful way to increase a child's interest in plants, although it can be time-consuming. Church groups can buy seeds packaged by *ReNew* for each child to plant, including tomatoes, onions, peppers, oregano, and basil.

ReNew has a lot of potential and should work well in most church settings. The program is not the same VBS you have always done. If you are looking to try something new, order *ReNew*. If you are of the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" perspective, then keep your regular programming; just add a creation care theme.

As with any program, you will have to tweak *ReNew* to fit your specific needs. *ReNew* has a lot of options to help you adapt to your own context. The curriculum successfully combines spirituality and ecology, imprinting stewardship of creation through repetition of daily themes in various forms at the activity sites and slowly walking through the Parable of the Sower.

I have one important recommendation if you try *ReNew*: make sure all of your volunteers are on the same page. If your volunteers aren't careful about their surroundings and reducing waste, they will send mixed messages to the participants. I turned off lights, powered off AC units, and closed doors behind people throughout the week. Perhaps the adults learned more than the children.

For more information, <http://sparkhouseblogs.org/renew/>



Fayetteville PC children learn from ReNew VBS



Children and gardening in green VBS program

Ideas and Success Stories

Cathy Yost Reflects on the 20th Anniversary of Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice

The following is part of the series "Reflecting on Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice." In 1990 the 202nd General Assembly approved Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice, which affirms that God calls the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to care for the earth and work for justice for all of creation, human and non-human. This series celebrates the statement's 20th anniversary. -Eco-Journey Blog of PC(USA) Environmental Ministries

It would be really hard to pin down the moment when I understood that our beautiful planet was in peril. When I saw my sons' school trash bins filled with Styrofoam lunch containers, I took action by becoming the monitor of the waste bins. It was indeed possible to recycle those containers if they were cleaned and sorted. I remember drawing attention to the issue by making myself a Halloween Hat out of Styrofoam parts. The Halloween Parade at that school was a neighborhood event that had some impact.

Surely a profound additional influence on my environmental life was my husband, Ken Yost, the Public Works Director for the City of Kirkwood, MO. He ran the very finest drop-off recycling depository in the region. Sadly, Ken was killed by an irate citizen at a Kirkwood City Council Meeting in February, 2008, along with five other civil servants. Having been a survivor of such senseless violence has made me more, not less, determined to respect and revere God's Creation.

After a fairly frustrating visit to an "Earth Day Festival" in St. Louis' Forest Park in 2000, we began searching for a way to offer hands-on service ministry for our home congregation in Kirkwood, MO. We settled on a Stream Clean-Up of the local storm water creeks, which were the catch basins for substantial amounts of plastic water bottles, trash bags, and even large drop-off items like

auto parts. The annual stream clean-up was honored by local clean-stream organizations as a worthwhile effort for the tons of debris we pulled out of the creeks.

Also in 2000, I finally put my Creation Theology into words in a hymn submitted for an international competition sponsored by Central Presbyterian Church of Houston, TX. I was thrilled when it won. The melody is "Beach Spring" from Sacred Harp, and is the same melody as "God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending." To the best of my knowledge, thanks to the internet, it has been sung in the U.S., Canada, Ireland and New Zealand. I have also submitted it for possible inclusion in the next Presbyterian Hymnal. I can think of no other words that sum up my personal theology better than these:

PRAYER FOR CREATION

O, Creator of the cosmos, we present our hearts in prayer.
We are awestruck by your glory, which surrounds us everywhere.
From the birdsong of the morning to a stormy sky at night,
You reveal yourself in Nature, in its gentleness and might.
Through each rainbow that you send us, you renew your covenant
With the earth and all life on it, a clear sign of your intent
That each living thing should flourish, in its own way, in its place.
You call us to new awareness of our neighbors and their space.
In our eagerness to prosper, we have ravaged what was good,
Using more than what was needed, taking everything we could.
We have changed the gentle order you intended for the earth.
Now we humbly ask the wisdom to be part of its rebirth.
We seek mercy, we seek vision, and the courage we will need
As we work to help the victims of the sins of human greed.
By our choices, in our actions, may we be part of your plans.
Help us gently till the Garden you've entrusted to our hands.
Finding strength in common purpose, may your faithful people be
Voices for a new perspective, leaders in simplicity.
Give us guidance, O, Creator; Give us power to achieve
True compassion for Creation as the legacy we leave.

Poem/Lyrics Set To Hymn Tune "Beach Spring", Registration Number PAu 2-561-670, United States Copyright Office – Library of Congress, Nov. 15, 2000

Eco-Justice Champions Honored at GA

Since 1997, Presbyterians for Earth Care has given awards annually to recognize individuals and groups, institutions, and churches to publicly recognize their leadership and accomplishments in caring for God's creation. At General Assembly on July 6, 2010, PEC presented two William Gibson Lifetime Achievement Awards: one to the **Rev. Dr. Robert L. Stivers**, a pioneer in Christian environmental ethics; and the other to the **Rev. Kristina Peterson**, the pastor of Blue Bayou Presbyterian (LA) and community based researcher and organ-

izer on disaster preparedness and sustainable communities.

North Como Presbyterian Church (profiled in the previous issue of the Update) received the Restoring Creation Award. The award recognized years of ever-expanding programs and activities that not only transformed the life of the church, but also the ways in which its members lived their lives outside of church.



Carole Rust and friends from North Como Presbyterian Church in MN planting trees as part of SPAM MISSION WEEKEND, a weekend full of service opportunities to help folks in need in the community and around the world.

Events Calendar

AUGUST 31 – SEPTEMBER 3, 2011

PEC Announces 2011 National Faith & Environment Conference: “God’s Earth: Too Big to Fail? A Conversation Among Faith, Science and Culture”

Highlands Presbyterian Camp and Retreat Center in the mountains of Colorado.

Keynote speakers include Dr. William Brown, author of *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science and the Ecology of Wonder*. Stay tuned for more details...

SEPTEMBER 25 – 27, 2010

Appalachia Rising Event

Washington, DC

Appalachia Rising is a mass mobilization calling for the abolition of mountaintop removal and surface mining. It is a culmination of the national movement against surface mining and a foundation upon which to build a pan-Appalachian movement for prosperity and justice. Coalfield citizens and organizers envision a vibrant mobilization of thousands—coalfield residents, students & youth, Christians & people of all faiths, families, celebrities, underground miners, activists, artists, and all who yearn for justice—to converge on Washington, DC for a day of non-violent action and dignified civil disobedience targeting the politicians and agencies who could abolish surface mining with the stroke of a pen. *For more information* go to: <http://appalachiarising.org>



OCTOBER 6, 2010

3:00-4:00PM (EASTERN)

Webinar on Earth Care Congregations and Energy Star

PC(USA) Congregations that are interested in working on earth care are invited to participate in a webinar from PC(USA) Environmental Ministries and ENERGY STAR for Congregations called “Earth Care Congregations and How ENERGY STAR Can Help” on Wednesday, October 6 from 3:00-4:00pm Eastern. Earth Care Congregations (<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/environment/earth-care-congregations>) is a new program that encourages churches to care for God’s earth and honors churches that have committed to this important mission. The webinar will explain how churches can become Earth Care Congregations and how ENERGY STAR’s Portfolio Manager can be used to help churches become more energy efficient. Learn more about Earth Care Congregations.

Please email Katie Holmes with questions at katie.holmes@pcusa.org.

OCTOBER 29, 2010 (EVENING)

Gathering with PEC and PC(USA) Environmental Ministries at Heartland Retreat and Conference Center in Kansas City, MO.

Meet the PEC Steering Committee and our new coordinator, Lizzie McGurk, Katie Holmes of Environmental Ministries and fellow PEC members at this gathering. To RSVP contact Diane Waddell at diane_waddell@sbcglobal.net.

OCTOBER 10, 2010

350.org’s Global Work Party

350.org is following up it’s Global Day of Action with **10/10/10: a Global Work Party**. On October 10, 2010, all around the world, people will be putting up solar panels and digging community gardens and laying out bike paths. According to leader Bill McKibben, “...not because we can stop climate change one bike path at a time, but because we need to make a sharp political point to our leaders: ‘we’re getting to work, what about you?’” Make a pledge to reduce energy use by 10% and receive help from Interfaith Power and Light at www.interfaithpowerandlight.org



NOVEMBER 3 – 11, 2010

Center for Interfaith Relations Hosts a Festival of Faiths

Louisville, KY

The theme is *Sacred Soil: Foundation of Life*. The celebration will focus on the role that soil plays within each faith’s history, theology, music, missions, etc. The event includes workshops, lectures, concerts, films, art exhibits, booths and more. *For more information*, check out the website: www.festivallfaiths@interfaithrelations.org or call 502-583-3100.

NOVEMBER 6, 2010

9:00AM – 3:30PM (PACIFIC)

Earth Care: Inspiration, Prayer and Action

Westminster Presbyterian Church

3737 Liberty Road South

Salem, Oregon.

Learn how to green your congregation and make prayer and worship a vital part of the process. Our keynote speaker is Sam Hamilton-Poore, Director of the Program in Christian Spirituality and Assistant Professor of Christian Spirituality at San Francisco Theological Seminary, author of *Earth Gospel: A Guide to Prayer for God’s Creation*. Cost: \$25. Seniors and students, \$20. Includes locally grown lunch and guidebook.

To Register: Call Dawn at 1-800-926-3223 or go to www.cascadespresbytery.org.

Do you have a story to share? We are always looking for stories and typically take articles of 400 words or less. The next submission date is November 5. *Send your ideas to jehrestore@gmail.com.*



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Appalachia Rising Event

September 25 – 27, 2010,
Washington DC

350.org's Global Work Party

10/10/10

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Please share your stories of becoming an Earth Care Congregation with PEC so that we can share them with the network. Tell us what motivated you to join the program, how you engaged your congregation, what challenges you faced, what changes you made and what the results and spiritual benefits have been.

Send your stories to pecmcgurk@gmail.com.