

## Faith & Environment Conference Montreat, NC · July 7-11, 2009

By Tom Pakurar, Conference Chairman

In March 2009 I was called to step up to the challenge of being the chairperson for our 2009 National PRC Conference: Embracing God's call to be Green, at Montreat. I fulfilled a similar role in 2007.

But I was bothered by this call. A lot happened in the world in the last six months that wasn't reflected in initial conference-planning meeting in February 2008. How can we justify traveling to North Carolina from all over the country and hold this conference? After some soul-searching, I was pleased to discover that the conference framework was really in God's hands, and that the ideas and themes apply today ever more.

This is the very time we need a national gathering the most. We must bring together people of all ages to answer Earth's call for help in these times of hurt. We must identify and strengthen our relationships among God, the people of God, and the Earth so we can have peace (Micah 4:3-4).

### Some highlights of this year's conference include:

- A Young Stewards program under the leadership of Hans Wendlandt promises to be a fun and inspiring experience for high school and junior high children. The new "We believe" Creation Module will serve as the basis of some of the group activities. Hans will also provide workshops on "How to Green Your Youth Ministry" and "How to Green Your Youth Sunday school."
- Doctor Howard Frumkin, Director of the National Center for Environmental Health/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention, is our keynote speaker. I am hopeful he will provide some guidance on topics of common interest that could direct churches for the next 5-10 years. He has spoken on the effects of climate change and how our disconnection from nature is affecting our health.

**For further information and for on-line registration, check out [www.montreat.org](http://www.montreat.org).**

- Professor Ellen Davis is a popular lecturer at Duke Divinity School. She has written a portion of the introduction to the new "Green Bible," and at Montreat she will be expanding on her strong connection to the agrarian texts in scripture.



*A View from Montreat*

- Reverend Pat Watkins is the first Church and Community Worker (missionary inside the US) for the United Methodist Church (UMC) as "Executive Director of Caretakers of God's Creation." He will share his stories of transformation of church mission in other parts of the country that make Caretakers one of the core missions of the UMC. He brings practical experiences as a former Director of the Virginia Interfaith Power & Light organization to program funding options independent of dwindling church finances.
- Charles Pettee, a well-known North Carolina bluegrass artist will team with Elizabeth Bahnson in concert and worship. Charles believes his music is his mission for earth care. Please check out his music [www.charlespettee.com](http://www.charlespettee.com) and [www.folkpsalm.com](http://www.folkpsalm.com).

Please bring any story you have of "Acts of Faith" by a congregation or individual that embodies earth care, peace and care for those in need. These will be shared in small group settings so we can strengthen our regional connections.

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## Upcoming Events

- \* **PRC 2009 NATIONAL ECO-JUSTICE CONFERENCE**  
**"Faith and Environment: Embracing God's Call to be Green"**  
*July 7 – 11, 2009; Montreat Presbyterian Conference Center,  
 Montreat, NC.*

**For further information and for on-line registration,  
 check out [www.montreat.org](http://www.montreat.org).**

- \* **ECO-STEWARDS**  
**Eco-Stewards Midwest: August 9-16, 2009;**  
*Stronghold Retreat Center in Oregon, IL; Lake View Presbyterian  
 Church in Chicago, IL*

**For more information, go to  
[www.presbyterianconservationcorps.org](http://www.presbyterianconservationcorps.org)**

- \* **GHOST RANCH SEMINARS**  
*2009 seminar: "Ritual & Loving the Earth Fiercely"*  
*2010 seminar: "Water & a Baptismal Life"*

Now is the time to make reservations to be a part of the 2009 Peace & Justice Week at Ghost Ranch, July 27-August 2. There are eight seminars from which to choose including the PRC sponsored class "Faith in Action & Stone" led by brothers David William Abazs and Andrew Kang Bartlett. This seminar aims to combine head, heart and hands toward healing of creation.

Descriptions of these classes may be found at [www.ghost ranch.org](http://www.ghost ranch.org). The Rev. Corey A. Nelson will serve as worship/music leader for the week as well as working with the children/youth program. The Rev. Nancy Copeland-Payton will be available all week for one-on-one sessions of spiritual discernment. There will also be an opportunity to attend the commemoration at Los Alamos of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Family member seeking other kinds of classes can choose from among a wide variety in the Creative Arts Festival lineup. To get your housing choice send your reservation in now.

**For more information, go to [www.ghost ranch.org](http://www.ghost ranch.org)**

- \* **HOLY GROUND: LANDSCAPE OF THE SACRED**  
**Featuring Author Jane Kirkpatrick**  
 Saturday, September 19, 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
 2310 Highway 141, Trout Lake, WA.  
*(See page 7 for a full description)*

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## Report of PRC Nominating Committee

By Bill Smith, Chairman

This year's Nominating Committee was made up of Bill Bowman, Burt Froom, Gwen McKee, and the undersigned. We met several times via conference call to discuss the openings on the Steering Committee and candidates who might fill them. We are pleased to present the following slate of nominees:

- **Jenny Holmes of Portland, Oregon,**  
*for re-election as Moderator*
- **Sue Smith of Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey,**  
*for election as Treasurer*
- **Rick Melin of Spokane, Washington,**  
*for re-election as Northwest Regional Representative*
- **Kate Mosley of Atlanta, Georgia,**  
*for re-election as Southeast Regional Representative*
- **Martha Rogers of Austin, Texas,**  
*for election as Southwest Regional Representative*

Sue has served on the Steering Committee for one year as a Member-at-Large. If elected, Martha would be joining the Steering Committee for the first time.

Martha joined PRC when she and her husband Wayne attended the 2007 conference at Mo-Ranch. She has been a leader in helping her congregation, St. Andrew's in Austin, become a better environmental steward. The church serves Equal Exchange coffee, uses "real plates", has replaced an energy-hogging kitchen range, recycles everything possible, has reduced garbage pickup from twice to once a month, and is entering the Interfaith Power and Light "Cool Congregations" competition. She also led her congregation in a successful stewardship campaign for 2009, and she served as a Texas Impact Board member for ten years.

The Nominating Committee requests your vote for the above candidates. You may cast a vote by going to the PRC website ([www.prcweb.org](http://www.prcweb.org)) and voting before July 1.

### ***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 July 30.

Send your ideas to [PECjulie@gmail.com](mailto:PECjulie@gmail.com)

## ***New Coordinator Named***

In May, PRC made the decision to select Julie Lehman from a strong field of applicants. Julie has been a lay leader and teacher in the Presbyterian Church for over twenty years. Having studied environmental theology, ethics and education in seminary, she has helped form earth teams and led environmental education at a variety of churches. She leads workshops for and consults with church groups about how best to tailor greening efforts to their own church life and facilities.

Currently, she is the part-time Director of Church Relations at Warren Wilson College, a leading school in higher education sustainability founded by the Presbyterian Church. Julie has written articles on environmental stewardship for various Presbyterian publications including the Outlook. She designed and hosted an eco-sermon challenge to the clergy of the PC USA in 2006.

Julie lives in Asheville, NC with her husband, Michael Poulos, Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Asheville, and her two children, Nicholas and Sophie. Julie and Michael are both graduates of Davidson College and Columbia Theological Seminary. Julie holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Arts in Theological Studies. The Steering Committee warmly welcomes Julie to the PEC team. We look forward to working with and learning from her. Meet her at our national conference in Montreat this July where she will be giving a workshop on greening congregations.



## Community and Light: Design Themes for the 21st Century

By Gary Watrous, AIA

On October 13, 1991, the congregation of the New Goshen Presbyterian Church of Prospect, Kentucky unanimously approved the design for a new sanctuary and classroom addition to their existing building. The Building Committee had worked hard with their Louisville architect, Gary Watrous, AIA, to develop the design of the region's first super-insulated, passive-solar church. Moreover, they did it within a tight construction budget of \$450,000.

It was clear from the outset that this project offered a unique opportunity to explore concepts of church design for the twenty-first century and to embody many of the recommendations of Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice, the thoughtful report adopted by the 202nd General Assembly of (1990) Presbyterian Church USA. These concepts have been further advanced as by study entitled *The Power to Change*; U.S. Energy Policy and Global Warming, adopted by the 218th General Assembly (2008).

The architect's design concept for the project focused on the twin themes of "community" and "light"—as symbols of the Body and Spirit, the Tangible and Intangible, the Earth and Sky.

### COMMUNITY

The design expressed the theme of "community" in several ways. First, the new sanctuary has a seating pattern that reinforced the sense of the congregation as one community. Previously, the multi-purpose room in the original building was used as sanctuary space and was too small to permit the entire congregation to worship together at one time. As a result, a split service fostered a sense of estrangement between the "early shift" and "late shift". Building a new sanctuary of 310 seats allowed unified worship of the entire congregation and restored a sense of community.

The Building Committee wanted the pews to be set on a gently sloping floor, so members could clearly see the Worship Center. And the new Narthex-Sunspace offered an indoor gathering place directly before and after the service. An exterior courtyard, created by the sheltering wing of the new addition, offered an outside gathering place, as well as a

sense of "Front Door"—a clear point of entry that was lacking in the original building.

Another important architectural goal was also to create a visual sense of "community" between new and old parts of the building complex. The design challenge was to create a unity of shape, silhouette and material between the small-scale original building and the larger new addition. The final solution created a functionally articulated arrangement of building shapes leading up to the larger mass of the sanctuary and culminating in a "Light Tower."

### LIGHT

The other organizing concept for the project was "Light". The architect wanted the design to express the concept of light in both its biblical/spiritual connotations as well as its practical qualities of illumination and warmth.

The scientific "Big Bang" theory states that everything we see around us started off as light. Einstein stated that energy and matter are interchangeable, that Light may be regarded as both matter and energy. Everything we see has come from the stars and is "condensed light" As Carl Sagan said, "We are Star Stuff!"

Church architecture for the 21st century can proclaim not only the Good News of the New Testament but also the wonder of our incredible journey—the handiwork of God. Even aside from our new scientific understandings about the birth of the universe, we know that light, sunlight, and the sun are powerful, universal and ancient symbols.

Celebrating light as a tangible and constant force in our buildings of worship is a humble reminder of our connection to our Creator—a reminder of

where we have come from and where we are going—a door to the Awe and Wonder. A well-designed church can put us in touch with profound feelings.

In addition to celebrating the emotional and spiritual qualities of light, modern church architects have the opportunity to make light work for congregations as a source of functional heat in order to offset the cost of winter heating bills and design buildings that are much more energy-efficient year round.

In addition to being heavily insulated, the New Goshen design captures the sun's energy in the Narthex-Sunspace and distributes solar heat to the entire new addition. In the summer, properly designed overhangs prevent direct sunlight



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from entering this space, minimizing air-conditioning bills.

A properly designed super-insulated, passive-solar church can easily cut its yearly energy bill by 50% compared to conventional design. Watrous's computer calculations showed that the additional construction costs of this design went toward extra insulation and better windows, but that this additional cost would be paid back by lower energy bills in the next seven years—and in the following ten years would save \$60,000. This is an impressive figure for any building owner but especially for church congregations.

Watrous notes that the relatively low thermostat settings most of the week enables this passive-solar church to be heated many days only by the sun. He envisions that these nationally recognized, passive-solar design principles can be a model for other church congregations. Congregations can begin to build churches that are designed to have less negative impact on the environment and to be more in accord

with the recommendations of Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice.

### CONCLUSION

Watrous believes that church design for the 21st Century will be connected to the themes of Community and Light. He says, "A sense of Community is needed to offset the stresses, alienation, and loneliness of modern life and to provide a safe haven and support of like-minded people sharing their beliefs." Also the ancient and universal theme of Light will take on even more significance as we become more intimately connected to our cosmic origins. As fossil fuels become scarce and more expensive, and as it becomes clearer that burning them contributes to global warming, sunlight will become increasingly the "fuel of choice." The users of the church building 20 or 30 years from now will feel grateful to architects who design super-insulated, passive-solar structures today.

## **News from the Environmental Ministries Office** · By Bill Somplatsky-Jarman

**The good news is the reopening of the Environmental Ministries Office.** The 2008 General Assembly had called for the restoration of the office to re-galvanize the church's efforts to care for God's creation. The General Assembly Council built it into the 2009-2010 budget for Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry.

**The good news is that Katie Holmes just started as Program Assistant for Environmental Ministries.** Katie brings a wealth of passion, commitment, learning and experience to the task. Previously, she worked with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance coming to that position from Kentucky Waterways Alliance where she held several positions including Watershed Program Director. She graduated in 2004 from Guilford College with high honors earning a B.A. in Environmental Studies and History. A native of Louisville, she is a member of Highland Presbyterian Church. She can be reached at 888-728-7228, ext. 5624, or by email at [Katie.Holmes@pcusa.org](mailto:Katie.Holmes@pcusa.org).

**The good news is that Katie is pitching in with a renewed staff team from several program areas.** Work rebuilding capacity for the Stewardship of Creation

Enablers, congregational leaders and committed Presbyterians is underway. SCE training has been scheduled for the Presbyterians for Restoring Creation Conference at Montreat in July. CPJ has adopted Climate Change and Its Impacts as one of three themes for focused work. The May Presbyterian Panel will gather information on the attitudes and practices of Presbyterians and their congregations related to environmental issues.

**Materials for Earth Day Sunday were posted on the PCUSA environmental website.** This year's theme was why we care about God's creation, and developed ecumenically through the Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches. Palm Sunday witnessed continued success of promoting the use of Eco-Palms with their fair wages and a less wasteful method of harvesting.

**In addition to this renewed work, the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) has been engaging several corporations on environmental responsibility and sustainability.** Working with Ceres, a coalition of investors, environmental, human rights and consumer organizations, and

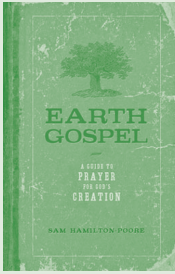
labor unions, MRTI staff has participated in stakeholder meetings with Sun Microsystems, American Electric Power, McDonalds and Timberland.

**Through the Investor Network on Climate Risk (INCR),** progressive corporations have been enlisted to speak out on the necessity of addressing climate change and regulating carbon, an influential counterweight to the US Chamber of Commerce. In cases where necessary, shareholder resolutions have been filed with companies to urge more action on climate change. For example, the Presbyterian Foundation's New Covenant Funds filed a resolution with ConocoPhillips calling for the company to set a target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Last year, the resolution received over 28% of the proxy vote, and we hope for similar success on May 12, 2009.

Finally, MRTI joined with other shareholders to meet with Citigroup about its lending policies for mountaintop removal mining projects.

**This is the good news of 2009, a year when there is more than enough work to do.**

## BOOK REVIEW



**EARTH GOSPEL:  
A Guide to Prayer for God's  
Creation**

By Sam Hamilton-Poore

REVIEWED BY (THE REV.) DAVID BROOKMAN

Would anyone disagree that portents of ecological disaster, including climate change, species extinction and diminished natural resources, are becoming a commonplace of contemporary life? As I encounter them I am reminded of the opening lines of William Butler Yeats' poem, *The Second Coming*:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world . . .

Thankfully, there is an antidote to the sense of foreboding conjured by Yeats' darkly brooding vision that antedates warnings trumpeted in today's popular press. The antidote is the realization that within us the center does hold—provided that we recollect the source of that center which Sam Hamilton-Poore makes explicit in his collection of prayers, hymns and reflections titled *Earth Gospel* (Upper Room Books, 2008). Like an oasis in the wilderness that refreshes with images of God's work of creation, we are reminded of our true vocation which is to participate in this ongoing work as stewards, servants, disciples and partners.

Hamilton-Poore, a Presbyterian minister who currently serves as Director of the Program in Christian Spirituality and as Assistant Professor of Christian Spirituality at San Francisco Theological Seminary, declares in the Introduction (pp. 17-18): "One of my chief concerns in *Earth Gospel* is to provide a prayer book that is 'theocentric' (God-centered) rather than 'anthropocentric' (human-centered). So much damage and suffering have been inflicted on the earth as a result of the presumption (nonbiblical, I quickly add) that the human species, and not God, is the center of everything. Whatever role our species may play in the health and flourishing of creation, the central story always remains God and God's relationship with all of creation, humanity included."

But Hamilton-Poore's stance is intended not merely to provide comfort for errant human practices of the past that have diminished our environment. He recognizes that Christian action on behalf of the earth is essential. However, that action needs to include, he insists, the "work" of Christian prayer "for prayer is a way of taking action." "Prayer and action are not two separate matters for Christians; how we *live* is informed and shaped by how we pray and how we *pray* is informed and shaped by how we live. Furthermore, through prayer, we seek to align ourselves—heart, mind, soul, body, strength—with what *God* is doing in and through our lives, our communities, and the creation itself. Prayer energizes and inspires our love-in-action (p. 10)."

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—SAM HAMILTON-POORE, *EARTH GOSPEL*

I wish that I had had several copies of *Earth Gospel* a few years ago inasmuch as it would have prepared my congregants to more actively participate in a Lenten study on Christian responsibility for ecological matters. It does seem to me that the book offers spiritual and intellectual resources that rebuff addictions to ever more material goods which in turn lead to the demise of natural systems. Accordingly, the book offers a prayer cycle that is structured by a rhythm which comprises recurring themes for each day of the week. Furthermore, each day is divided into Morning, Midday and Evening times for prayer.

Hamilton-Poore doesn't preach. Instead, he leaves it to other voices to lift up and present insights that penetrate the busy minds of Western peoples that slowly, by turns, transform consciousness. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, for example, minces no words when he identifies our basic problem: "The root cause of our environmental sin lies in our self-centeredness and in the mistaken order of values that we inherit and accept without any critical evaluation . . . Without this revolutionary 'change of mind,' all our conservation projects . . . will remain ultimately ineffective." The message of *Earth Gospel* is that the center does hold—as long as we take care to recognize where that center truly lies.

## Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2009

By Sue Smith

*Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God...*

(ROMANS 8:19, NRSV)

Each worship service during the weekend started with these words from Romans, focusing us on the theme of this year's Advocacy Days: Enough for All Creation. It was a weekend of speakers, workshops, and community building, preparing us for advocating for climate change with our Congressional delegations.

The first plenary speaker was Rev. Janet Parker, of the Rock Spring Congregational United Church of Christ, Arlington, VA. She talked about the message our environmental work should convey: love not fear. Fear works temporarily, but in the long term is not effective. We need an inspiring positive vision. The second plenary speaker was Tyler Edgar, Assistant Director of the Climate and Energy Campaign of the National Council of Church's Eco-Justice Program. She discussed the importance of bringing love and justice into the climate debate.

Each year the conference planners put together "the ask" – the message to Congress about the legislation we want to see passed. This year's ask:

- Reduce climate change emissions: 25-40% below 1990 levels by 2020; at least 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. Climate change is real and greenhouse gases are causing it.
- Support vulnerable communities: provide substantial new funding for adaption measures and transition assistance for vulnerable communities both overseas and in the US. The poor are suffering.
- Assist and welcome climate migrants: provide humanitarian assistance to people fleeing the effects of climate change and admit substantial numbers of environmental migrants to the US. People are going to have to move.

Both the House and Senate leadership plan to bring climate change legislation to the floor this year, and we

***Both the House and Senate leadership plan to bring climate change legislation to the floor this year, and we need to advocate for including these concerns.***

need to advocate for including these concerns. Leslie Woods, Representative for Domestic Poverty and Environmental Issues in the PC (USA) Washington Office, follows environmental legislation and provides updates and alerts through weekly email publications while Congress is in session. **If you are not currently on the mailing list, you can subscribe at <http://cap-wiz.com/pcusa/mlm/signup/>.** It is a great resource for advocacy.

At the end of the weekend we heard from a panel of legislative aides. Their message was clear: our Senators and Representatives need to hear our voices, and we need to remind them that there is a faith dimension to this issue.

### **HOLY GROUND: LANDSCAPE OF THE SACRED, Featuring Author Jane Kirkpatrick**

On September 19, Jane Kirkpatrick will speak at "Holy Ground: Landscape of the Sacred in Trout Lake, Washington in the shadow of Mt. Adams.

This fifth annual Creation Care Fellowship of the Eco-Justice Team of the Presbytery of the Cascades will be held 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Trout Lake School, 2310 Highway 141, Trout Lake, WA and is co-sponsored by Trout Lake Presbyterian Church. Kirkpatrick's award-winning essays, articles, and humor have appeared in over fifty publications. She's written 14 novels and three non-fiction books including the Wrangler award-winning book *A Sweetness to the Soul*, a story inspired by a fifty-year old essay a Depression-era schoolboy wrote about his distant ancestors—the Sherars. Since moving to Oregon in 1974, she worked in the disabilities field, became the director of the mental health program and eventually "retired" to homestead on the John Day River and begin a new adventure in writing, working on the Warm Spring reservation, growing watermelons, and attempting to grow grapes, alfalfa and cattle. Jane believes that our lives are the stories that others read first and she encourages groups to discover the power of their own stories to divinely heal and transform. Workshops include "Backyard Organic Gardening," "Community Gardening for All," and "Telling/Writing a Story--or Your Story," A hands-on writing and storytelling workshop with Jane Kirkpatrick. Registration includes a locally-grown lunch and is \$20, or \$15 for seniors and students. Scholarships are available.

To register, call Dawn at 1-800-926-3223 or download a registration brochure from [www.cascadespresbytery.org](http://www.cascadespresbytery.org)

## PRC MEMBERSHIP, RENEWAL, OR DONATION

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MAIL TO: Presbyterians for Restoring Creation, 15 Cisco Road,  
Asheville, NC 28805 OR, Join/Renew online at [www.prcweb.org](http://www.prcweb.org)

## Montreat, NC

*Continued from page 1*

PRC challenges all who travel to the conference to minimize their carbon footprint. A good guide is Getting There Greener by Union of Concerned Scientists found at [www.ucsusa.org/gettingtheregreener](http://www.ucsusa.org/gettingtheregreener).

The conference registration information is on [www.montreat.org/current/2009-faith-and-environment](http://www.montreat.org/current/2009-faith-and-environment)

If you need more information, please contact Montreat registration staff on 800-572-2257 or Tom Pakurar on 804-639-4454.

### What's In a Name? PRC to Change its Name

For several years now, Presbyterians for Restoring Creation has considered the pluses and minuses of changing its name. The motivation for this discussion in large part has been the confusion over "restoring creation." Although some will remember that the name ties directly to the Presbyterian Church USA's 1990 General Assembly Statement, "Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice," many are not aware of this tie. Often people have asked if we are a group that supports "creationism," the creation of the world in seven literal days, or a variation thereof. In February, PRC sent a survey to all members for whom we had e-mail to get their input on various options for a new name. Although a fair number wanted to keep the name as is, more were in favor of a change. Using this input and considering the key ideas to convey about our organization through its name, the Steering Committee decided upon "**Presbyterians for Earth Care (PEC), An Eco-Justice Network**" These ideas include rooted in faith, open to diverse Presbyterians, connecting ecology and justice, and bringing together people at the grassroots level. Also, the abbreviation for the new name only requires the change of one letter! The new name will start to be used formally after PRC's July conference.

[www.prcweb.org](http://www.prcweb.org)

Presbyterians for Restoring Creation (PRC)

Caring for God's Creation by connecting, equipping, and inspiring.



## PRC Update

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