

PEC UPDATE

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MODERATORS MESSAGE

Resiliency: Preserving and Restoring Creation's Fruitfulness

By Jenny Holmes

IS IT NOT ENOUGH FOR YOU TO FEED ON THE GOOD PASTURE? MUST YOU ALSO TRAMPLE THE REST OF YOUR PASTURE WITH YOUR FEET? IS IT NOT ENOUGH FOR YOU TO DRINK CLEAR WATER? MUST YOU ALSO MUDDY THE REST WITH YOUR FEET?

— EZEKIEL 34:18, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

The animal herders of Ezekiel's time must have on occasion neglected best soil and water stewardship practices to provoke the questions above. Although few of us tend herds of animals today, the questions apply directly to us and our own relationship with the earth.

The essence of these questions is that "God's creation provides what you need, so why thoughtlessly destroy its ability to sustain others?" In the U.S., we have enjoyed high levels of material consumption, usually without seeing or even being aware of the consequences. The water we muddy through our daily choices and economic structures may be in the high mountains of Bolivia, where watersheds are polluted by mining or below the hillsides that the poor have been forced to use because the powerful have taken the best land to create profits from exports.

There is also the long history of exploitation in nations such as Haiti, creating a situation where just to survive, the poor often have little choice but to deforest the land, thus destroying its fruitfulness for generations. And in our own country, we are only starting to recognize how the simple act of flipping a light switch is connected not only to climate disruption, but to the ravaging of mountains for coal in Appalachia and the loss of clean water for drinking and healthy ecosystems.



Charles Petee and Elizabeth Bahnson.
Review of new Folk Psalm CD on page 6.

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Humankind's footprint has grown exponentially since biblical times. In fact, it has grown so big that recently a new geological epoch was designated as the successor to the Holocene—the Anthropocene epoch, named so because of the dominance of human influences rather than natural forces. Geologists justify this new epoch on the basis that humankind is now 1) changing the atmosphere's composition, thus modifying plants; 2) changing the distribution and diversity of species, thereby changing the future fossil record; and 3) acidifying the oceans, which will modify mineral deposits on the ocean floor.

Our responsibilities to creation have been kicked up a notch as we have taken over more of what Creation was formerly able to do for us. One of the most important ways to respond is to enhance

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MODERATORS MESSAGE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the resiliency of human and ecological systems. The ability to adapt to change and thrive requires embedding wisdom, flexibility and intelligence throughout the system. A resilient agricultural system has a diverse gene pool, the ability to generate its own energy and fertilizers, farmers who know their land intimately, and customers who are close at hand. By contrast, a "brittle" agricultural system is characterized by mono-cropping, centralization, fossil-based energy and fertilizers, and long distances from field to fork.

Knowing that climate disruption will profoundly change God's world, how can we create or retrofit human systems that are resilient and reduce pressure on ecosystems? As Christians, we know that discipleship in Christ calls us to practice our faith in tangible ways that reflect the kingdom coming. Our daily choices count. In the area of food, there are now many more opportunities to support a resilient agriculture than there were five years ago—because people are choosing local and sustainable food. The local church, as a part of sharing the Good News, has incred-

ible opportunities to model resiliency and to be a place of hope and healing for the community. This can involve hosting a community garden, generating solar energy, reducing storm water runoff from the parking lot, supporting missions that integrate efforts to make impoverished communities both socially and ecologically resilient, helping people cultivate a creation aware spirituality, advocating for local, national, international policies that support resiliency (for example, climate adaptation funding for poor nations or restoring Gulf Coast wetlands), setting up systems for sharing resources and most importantly—building community. Community building is something that we can learn to do better from those that have less, as the article by Mark Hare in this issue of PEC Update describes. We have a short window of time to build resiliency before peak oil and climate disruption challenge the growth-oriented and brittle systems that we have come to depend on. Exciting new possibilities for ministry are opening up as a result. Isn't resiliency an outgrowth of faith?

“Decades of inexpensive imports-especially from the U.S.-punctuated with abundant aid in various crises have destroyed local agriculture and left impoverished countries such as Haiti unable to feed themselves. ...[Loosened barriers to trade] may have been good for some of my farmers in Arkansas, but it has not worked. It was a mistake.” [former President Bill] Clinton told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 10.”

— March 22, 2010, Associated Press,
Poor nations can't feed selves,
by Jonathan M. Katz

Through the Eco-Stewards program, PEC and its partners are preparing a new generation of leaders for this critical period. PEC is also preparing new resources to equip individuals and the church to engage in faithful care of creation and justice. Our time has come. Are we ready? God is waiting.

Jenny Holmes,
PEC Moderator

Resources

- **On the web... PC(USA)'s office of Environmental Ministries has a new climate change web page:**
www.pcusa.org/environment/climate-change
- **Presbyterian Global Eco(n)-Justice e-newsletter re: fair trade, globalization and earth stewardship**
www.pcusa.org/trade
- **Presbyterian Hunger Program's Climate Change connection website:**
www.pcusa.org/hunger/features/climate.htm
and "What You Can Do" page:
www.pcusa.org/hunger/features/climate3.htm
- **National Council of Churches of Christ's 2010 Earth Sunday Resource:** "Sacred Spaces and an Abundant Life: Worship Spaces as Stewardship"
www.ncccojustice.org/resources
- **Just Eating: Practicing our Faith at the Table:**
This 7-week program examines links between faith and food. Also available in middle school version. Purchase in print or download:
www.pcusa.org/food/justeating

PEC News

Nominating Committee at Work

Each year the membership of PEC elects representatives and officers to serve on the Steering Committee. Members of the nominating committee include: Bob Remsburg, Linda Gray Sonner, Elaine Noble and Bill Bowman. The committee requests suggestions from PEC members of individuals who may be willing to serve in a leadership role. Open positions for 2010 include Vice-Moderator, West Regional Representative (California, Nevada, Oregon, Hawaii, and southern Idaho), and at-large Fundraising Representative.

Email suggestions to rremsburg@yahoo.com.

Awards to Be Presented at General Assembly

Do you know an individual or a church or organization near the Twin Cities deserving of recognition for their dedication to earth care? If so, please nominate them for PEC's Bill Gibson Award and the PEC Institutional Awards to be presented at this year's PEC luncheon during General Assembly. Send a name, description of their accomplishments and contact information to pecjulie@gmail.com. Feel free to nominate your own church, and if it doesn't win the award, it may appear online or in a newsletter in the ideas/success stories section.

Luncheon at General Assembly

If you plan to attend General Assembly this summer in Minneapolis, you won't want to miss the PEC luncheon, Tuesday, July 6. Keynote speaker will be former PC(USA) moderator, Rick Ufford-Chase. Come meet other environmental Presbyterians and learn about the work of Presbyterians for Earth Care. Also, don't forget to stop by the PEC booth in the exhibition hall and meet moderator Jenny Holmes and coordinator Julie Lehman.

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 June 11.

Send your ideas to PECjulie@gmail.com

Advocacy

- **PC(USA) Washington Office is the voice of Presbyterian public policy:**

Use advocacy tools there to write legislators, follow issues and subscribe to the *Washington Report*, a bi monthly publication that covers a broad range of public policy issues of concern to the General Assembly, and keeps readers up-to-date on programs of the Washington Office.

<http://capwiz.com/pcusa/home>

- **General Assembly:** If your presbytery is meeting before May 19, 2010 it can still concur with one or both of the environmental overtures that will be brought to General Assembly (GA) this summer (see below). It needs to happen at least 45 days before General Assembly, July 2-10, 2010. Also, commissioners may submit a Commissioner's Resolution from the floor. For further info, e-mail jehrestore@aol.com.

- **February 13, Presbytery of Charlotte approved an overture to Reaffirm the "Call to Restore Creation"** from the 1990 GA policy Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice" in recognition of its continuing importance, and the crucial work remaining on the 20th anniversary of this policy. www.presbyearthcare.org/docs/2010_Restoring_Creation_Overture.pdf

- **In January 2010, the Presbytery of South Louisiana voted to overture GA** to support a theologically grounded education program focused on Gulf Coast wetlands restoration, to examine the role of corporations and institutions in the destruction of the wetlands and to advocate for policies to restore land lost due to coastal erosion in southern deltaic regions of Louisiana. If your presbytery or congregation votes to support the overture, please let Kristina Peterson of Bayou Blue Presbyterian Church know at krajeskipeterson@msn.com or 304-266-2517. She can send you a coastal land loss map for your meeting or study group. Download the overture at www.presbyearthcare.org/advocacy.html

- **Work on the climate change and energy bill in the Senate may now again be addressed after passage of the Senate Health care bill in the House.** In fact, 22 Senate democrats have written a letter to Harry Reid asking that the bill be passed in 2010. They cite that the lack of such legislation hurts job creation, and especially the development of green American jobs at a time when Asia and Europe are moving aggressively ahead. Why? Because business needs the certainty around the issues of energy and climate change before they will invest. *Stay tuned!*

Eco-Justice, Haiti and Hope

By Mark Hare

“Haiti is a basket case,” you’ve probably heard more than once, along with the despairing question, “Is there any hope for Haiti?”

Sent here by the Presbyterian Church (USA) as a missionary in 2004, I have had ample exposure to chaos and tragedy. Just weeks after I arrived, there were two major floods following a political and social upheaval that led to occupation by United Nations troops and the installation of an unelected government.

In 2005, a crime wave swept the capital, bringing months of constant violence and kidnappings. Because the Haitian government and economy is so centralized in Port au Prince, the crime wave kept the whole country reeling. In 2006, elections were held successfully, and things began to calm. Then in 2008, four hurricanes crisscrossed the edges of the island causing yet again massive floods, much loss of life, crops, homes and livestock. Some recovery and recuperation in 2009 followed. Then came the January 12th, 2010 earthquake. Most of the cities of Jacmel, Petit Gôave, Leogâne and Port au Prince were destroyed. It was the single worst disaster in all of Haiti’s turbulent history.

Tangled in with Haiti’s difficult past, in looping chains of cause and effect, is Haiti’s economic, social, and ecological situation. Economically, over eighty percent of the population has access to less than \$2.00 a day, and just over half of the population has access to less than \$1.00 a day. Socially, over sixty percent of rural Haitians have no access to improved water supplies and get all of their water from unprotected sources such as rivers or streams. Around forty percent of the children of Haiti never attend school.

Ecologically, Haiti has less than one percent of its original forest cover. The natural re-growth of scrub forests, essential if the land is to heal itself, is severely limited by

In this tangle of economic, social, and ecological upheaval, we have seen beauty and hope. God’s unending abundance is constantly evidenced in the graciousness and generosity of the Haitian people.



Loading the truck with goods and people, Friday, January 15th, the first trip from Port with quake victims.

the heavy demand for charcoal in the larger cities. Most of the best agricultural land is controlled by the government or by the Catholic hierarchy. The vast majority of farmers use land considered far too steep for agriculture.

Charcoal production and inadequate farming practices like uncontrolled burning keep the mountain tops and slopes bare, losing thousands of tons of soil every year through erosion. Within this social, economic and ecological context, most Haitians are constantly vulnerable, be it to disaster or hunger or disease caused by inequitable and inadequate access to resources necessary for people to thrive.

In this tangle of economic, social, and ecological upheaval, we have seen beauty and hope. God’s unending abundance is constantly evidenced in the graciousness and generosity of the Haitian people. When my wife Jenny and I visit someone in their home, we are always offered food from the family pot, and when we leave, we are often offered eggs to take home with us, our hosts saying, “We’re sorry we don’t have anything else to offer you.”

Another example of God’s abundant grace is often seen as uprooted urban families are welcomed into the homes and communities of rural families here in the Central Plateau region, and throughout rural Haiti. This sense of connection and community offers great hope for a new day in Haiti and to our whole suffering world.

For more information about Mark's long-term work to address hunger and restore land in Haiti go to www.pcusa.org/worldwide/haiti and look for his slideshow, "Beauty and Abundance," about the Road to Life Yard and Moringa Tree Project.

Mark's Profile: www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/harem.htm

Support Presbyterian Disaster Relief's work in Haiti: <http://www.pcusa.org/pda/>

Mark and Jenny's Blog:
www.markandjenny--pcusa.blogspot.com

Haiti Mission Network: PC(USA)'s NING social network site for Presbyterians and other partners in Haiti mission; collaborative model of Presbyterian mission.

Another glimmer of hope is the local farmers' cooperative with which we work. The Mouvman Peyizan Papay (MPP)—Farmer's Movement of Papaye—is both the largest and the oldest farmers' organization in the country. It began in 1973 when two small groups of farmers sought to improve their situation and that of their communities. They discovered that working together, they could achieve positive change. Their success inspired the formation of a number of other farmer organizations, which lead to a country-wide impact. Rural Haitians are no longer invisible to the government, and national leaders are now required to consider the potential impact of their decisions on the rural poor.

This is the MPP office on Delmas 39th.



A third source of hope for Jenny and me is the success we have seen from teaching more efficient farming techniques we learned during our six years in Nicaragua. First, we focused on planting the area around each family's house, maximizing production in small areas. Next, we interconnected every aspect of production.

Nitrogen-fixing trees called SALT (Sloping Agricultural Land Technology) are planted along the contours to slow the water during heavy rain, holding the soil in place. They become high quality forage for feeding the goats. The goats eat the leaves and the stems reinforce the soil conservation barriers back on the hillsides. The goats produce manure, which is then used for growing bananas, papayas and other fruit species. The manure also feeds the redworms, which turn the manure into a high quality organic compost, which together with chicken manure and other natural sources of fertilizer helps maximize vegetable production.

By concentrating resources and recycling every component for maximum use we were able to transform abandoned and unproductive land into a highly productive area, which produces bananas, papaya, vegetables, edible leaves and medicinal plants, and sustains goats, chickens, fish and rabbits. In addition, farmers and their neighbors are now turning their yards into gardens. It is a beautiful vision of God's generosity springing forth and showering us with abundance and grace.

Is there hope for Haiti? This is the wrong question. Is there hope for the world in Haiti? Our answer is a resounding YES. There is much to learn here, much going on that the world needs to see. It is an exciting place to be.

Mark Hare is an agricultural missionary with the PCUSA and MPP in Papay. His wife Jenny Bent serves with the MPP's Integrated Health Center. They have a daughter, Keila

"Please know that the best of what you have to offer are your prayers and your concerns. Knowing that we are not alone, that the world is willing to share part of the grief, is a relief."

***In Christ,
Mark, Jenny and Keila***

Review Corner

BOOK REVIEW

Wrestling Until the Dawn: The Fight for Biblical Justice in a Postmodern World

by John R. Preston

Reviewed by David Brookman

As I navigated John Preston's book, *Wrestling Until the Dawn: The Fight for Biblical Justice in a Postmodern World**, I became aware that a restless sort of energy pervades this work. Little wonder. Preston seeks to introduce his readers to nothing less than a revisionary theological program which will transcend the shortcomings of traditional theology.

And what are those insufficiencies? He begins by observing, (p. 7) "The common good for the whole of the earth comes down to an equitable sharing of the gifts of the earth within a context of the sustainability of our natural, physical ecology. That, in a nutshell, is the moral and spiritual challenge of our postmodern age." But this begs the question, "Are our current religious, economic and political institutions capable of guiding us toward a realization of this sense of the common good?"

In "The Context," (Part I) the author explores the role of theology in the current postmodern milieu. Following Part II, which consists of an historical overview of Christian origins including the development of foundational beliefs about God, Christ and humanity, Preston turns his attention to the challenge of creating theological reflection with present-day relevance and coherence. Part III thus represents the author's exploration of reality, not only from the perspective of the Jesus tradition but also from within the context of modern science. Then in Part IV, he examines the role of symbol and metaphor that can be expected in an emerging theological paradigm.

Preston takes seriously the findings of the Jesus Seminar (convened in 1985) for the sake of identifying the historical authenticity of Jesus' sayings. His argument is also buttressed by the reflections of contemporary theologians including Sallie McFague, Stanley Hauerwas and Walter Wink, whose insights he marshals in order to deconstruct the traditional "rescue system"—the claim that humanity is sinful, and that God is gracious to forgive and save.

Undoubtedly, the reconstructive arc of Preston's thesis will give some traditionalists pause. He insists (on page 206) that, "the stories of the incarnation in Jesus need a new interpretation. Rather," he continues, "God is present and incarnate in all of creation . . . We can affirm the stories if they help proclaim not only the divinity of Jesus, but also the divinity of us all, and of our earth!"

Thankfully, Preston's prose is largely free of theological jargon

CD REVIEW

Charles Pettee & FolkPsalm: *The Way of Manna: Agrarian Songs from the Bible for the Care of Creation*

Reviewed by Nancy Corson Carter

Many of us in PEC had the pleasure of meeting bluegrass/American folk/Celtic music artist Charles Pettee (of Chapel Hill, NC) at the July 2009 Montreat PEC Conference on Faith and Environment. Pettee and Dr. Ellen F. Davis, a professor at Duke Divinity School, combined exegesis and musical interpretation to explore what the Bible says about humankind's responsibility for care of the land. Dr. Davis is an expert in ancient Hebrew and author of the 2009 book *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*.

This CD (new in fall 2009) is an all original musical collection of Psalms and Scriptures; it continues the collaboration between Pettee and his group FolkPsalm with Dr. Davis, whose 20-page booklet of essays is included. The music, performed by some of North Carolina's premier acoustic musicians, is beautiful—clear, high energy, and deeply inspiring. To hear the Bible afresh, listen to these songs based on the Psalms and on stories about Amos, Naboth, Jezebel, Ahab, Jesus, and others.

I find the CD and booklet truthfully advertised as "an inspirational and practical resource for either individual or group study in such Biblical themes as stewardship of the land, faithful eating, repentance, and celebration of God's providence to all of creation."

To order, visit:
www.folkpsalm.com or
www.charlespettee.com
Email:
info@folkpsalm.com

and the tedium of textual analysis that often beleaguer the reader. His focus is limited to the Christian tradition, thereby leaving exploration of potentially enriching interfaith perspectives for others to unravel. But if one is passionately moved to establish direction that will orient the Reformed Church toward life that is truly reforming, then why not begin here? The restless energy incarnate within this text may endow some of his readers with the sense of purpose necessary to claim his vision as their own.

* *Spiritbrook Press, 2006. Available at Amazon.com*

Events Calendar

- ✳ **219th General Assembly of the PC (USA): July 3 – 10, 2010**
“Rivers of Living Water” — JOHN 7:38
Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis, MN,
Hosted by the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area
 Registration opens March 9, 2010
www.pcusa.org/ga219
- ✳ **Eco-Stewards Event: May 16– 23, 2010**
Bluestone Camp and Retreat near Hinton,
West Virginia
 Tending the Garden: A Faith Response to Protecting & Restoring Mountains Communities & Relationships. Co-Sponsored by PEC.
<http://ecostewardsprogram.org/2010.html>
- ✳ **Stewardship of the Land: A Christian Community Event: May 21-23, 2010**
Bluestone Camp and Retreat near Hinton,
West Virginia
 Featuring Joel Salatin of Polyface Farms.
 Co-Sponsored by PEC.
www.bluestonecamp.com/eco-retreat

Earth Day Preparation Tips

Earth Day Network Global Climate Change Pulpit Pledge!

Sign the year-round Global Climate Change Pulpit Pledge and join thousands of faith leaders committing to preach and teach on global climate change as a moral issue. The pledge is simple: I pledge to preach on global climate change at least once this year, recognizing that Earth Day is Every Day and for Everyone. The Pledge along with sample sermons and resources can be found at www.earthday.net/node/117

Activist Phone Book

Want the names and contact info for the White House comment line, House and Senate, and the heads of the committees over environment-related issues? Try Earth Day Network's "activist phone book" at: www.earthday.net/node/151

Did you know that Earth Day evolved from a five-day, eleven-state conservation tour President Kennedy took in September 1963?

The idea came from Earth Day Founder, Gaylord Nelson, who was increasingly concerned about the environment and wanted bring the topic into the national political dialog.

www.nelsonearthday.net

Celebrate Earth Day with kids:

- www.epa.gov/superfund/kids/earthday.htm
- <http://kids-educational-activities.suite101.com/article.cfm/how-to-celebrate-earth-day-with-children>

Ideas and Success Stories

ACCORDING TO RESEARCH FIRM, THE BARNA GROUP, older, mainline churches face many challenges, but their approach to environmental issues often "positions them well for attracting younger Americans."

www.barna.org/barna-update/article/17-leadership/323-report-examines-the-state-of-mainline-protestant-churches

* * *

THE NO IMPACT PROJECT is hosting a nationwide screening of the film, *No Impact Man*. During the week of Earth Day 2010, the No Impact Project, Slow Food USA and 1Sky are bringing people

together to watch, discuss and act. The theme of this event is the impact of food production on climate change and what your community can do to take action. Order your screening toolkit to plan a community screening event.

www.noimpactproject.org

* * *

MILLWOOD COMMUNITY PC IN SPOKANE, WA hosts a **Farmers' Market** during the spring and summer in the church parking lot. The Market is organized in cooperation with local area farmers and artisans. Items sold include: local, farm raised beef, artisan breads,

seasonal produce, honey, flowers, plants, herbs, sauces and more. Every week features a variety of local live music as well.

The church hopes to contribute to the health of the community, to the farmers and to the local economy. They find their inspiration in Jeremiah's call to "seek the welfare of the city God has sent us to, for in its welfare we will find our own welfare." Jeremiah 29 In a recent feature in the *New York Times* (see www.nytimes.com/2010/01/16/us/16church.html), Pastor Craig Goodwin claims, "It's like we've got more going on in our parking lot than we do within the walls of the church!"

www.millwoodpc.org



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40th Anniversary of Earth Day *April 22, 2010*

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Are you going to General Assembly 2010 on July 3-10 in Minneapolis, MN? If so, volunteer to help PEC host a luncheon on Tuesday and an exhibition booth through the week. Contact PEC coordinator, Julie Lehman for more information @ PECjulie@gmail.com.