

From Ashes to Resurrection, From Soot to Hope
A Lenten Devotional for 2013
From Presbyterians for Earth Care



So soon we come from angels singing about a new born babe to the dusty road leading the apostles down from the mountain and into Jerusalem. We cannot go back and travel with them but we can take our own journey, marking our path with the five carefully and prayerfully chosen issues for Presbyterians for Earth Care's advocacy. There are so many things that could be added and we invite you to lay the ones that press on your hearts alongside our five. Come. The road is better lit when we see others are carrying candles, too. Take heart, in these weeks of Lent. We follow a well-worn path toward an empty tomb!



**Ash Wednesday and First Week of Lent
An Ashen Cross of Our Own Making
By Rev. Holly Hallman**



Ash took on new meaning for me when I learned that, although Washington State is shutting down its last coal mine, the local energy company still sources one-third of its power from coal mined in Montana and extraction is going to explode as coal is taken from those same plains where the buffalo roamed and the skies were not cloudy all day and sent by train to ports on the west coast for export to Asia. Photos of the train terminal in Bellingham, Washington show a continuous cloud of soot in the air above and around the terminal. Does God's creation have a forehead? Are we marking a cross upon that sacred brow?

The five areas for advocacy that PEC has chosen are; mountain top removal, fracking, Keystone XL Tar Sands, coal exports (by train), and divestment from oil companies. The first four concern our creating energy that is putting an ashen cross on the forehead of us all. If there is hope for slowing and then reversing this ashen cross it comes from a faithful walk with the man who spoke

truth to the powers of his time, found twelve stout companions to travel with him, and fed 5,000 people with very little.

Ash Wednesday offers us an opportunity to assess our strengths, renew our faithful journey in the shadow of this Man and find gratitude for the fact that there are many more than twelve of us who walk together toward an ash-less future. May the ashes we wear on our foreheads call us to a Lenten time of simplicity. May we enter, with the twelve, the confusion and sadness of that long ago journey to Jerusalem.



Rev. Holly Hallman is the Northwest Regional Representative for Presbyterians for Earth Care. She is a native of Colorado and lives in Seattle. She is often found where there are opportunities for salmon advocacy.

Second Week of Lent
Mourning for Canada's Wild Places - Questioning the Tar Sands Pipeline
By Rev. Dana Eglinton

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)

Go to one of the internet mapping sites; set to – satellite image; search for Fort MacKay, Alberta, Canada; and scroll out a little so you can see the land around the town of Fort MacKay. You will get an aerial view of what tar sands mining operations look like. You will see open pit strip mines, processing facilities, and tailings ponds straddling the Athabasca River. Check out the mileage scale on the map, and note how large an area has already been



denuded of vegetation and turned into an industrial wasteland. And know that this is just the beginning of the destruction of forests, and the pollution of air and ground and surface waters. To see maps of what more is planned go to <http://oilsandstruth.org/maps-tar-sands-development>.

The whole point of tar sands mining is of course to supply gasoline for your car and fuel oil to heat your home. To expedite the process of turning tar sands oil into consumable products in the United States the industry has proposed the Keystone XL pipeline to carry the tar sands crude from Canada to Gulf Coast refineries. Unfortunately the energy inputs required to mine, transport, and refine tar sands oil are much higher than those associated with conventional oil, adding an additional burden of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere.

So maybe you should consider spending some prayer time this Lenten season in mourning – lifting up the damaged earth and its damaged people to God. Lament the ongoing desecration of forests, rivers, lakes, ground water, and air quality as the tar sands are exploited. Mourn the additional burden of carbon dioxide being added to the atmosphere. Cry for our impoverished imaginations that have trapped us in ongoing cycles of ecological and cultural destruction. Mourn, but find strength in the wisdom of Jesus, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." And then in the power of the comforting Spirit get back to work at stopping the Keystone XL pipeline and at getting a carbon tax in place to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Rev. Dana Eglinton is the Northeast Regional Representative for Presbyterians for Earth Care. He is pastor of Jacksonville Presbyterian Church, in Bordentown, NJ and a participant in its Earth Care Ministry.

Third Week of Lent
Having Dominion
By Rev. Paul Henschen

And God said, "Let us make humankind in our image....and let them have dominion over...." (Genesis 1:26)

A basic premise of our scriptures is that God is Creator and everything else has been created. God has given us tremendous freedom by creating us in God's image and by giving us dominion over creation. So when was it that humankind decided that having "dominion over" meant we could do what we wanted to the earth and its creatures? Is that what God intended?

The Hebrew word for "to have dominion" is "radah," meaning "to rule over". It is used frequently in the Old Testament to describe a king's rule over subjects or nations (see <http://www.directionjournal.org/article/?922>). But there is an implied sense of responsibility and care involved.



When we consider the process of fracking, where does humankind's God-given mandate of dominion come into play? Fracking has allowed companies to obtain natural gas and oil from sources that were previously too deep to reach. But at what cost? Are we being responsible dominion-rulers of the earth by using the fracking process? Common sense tells us that injecting the earth with deadly chemicals might be a bad idea. What about possible contamination of water aquifers beneath the surface? Accidents have occurred and will continue to occur. Human error is inevitable. Spills occur on the surface

(see <http://www.propublica.org/special/north-dakota-spills>). Also, companies are rarely using profits to develop clean, sustainable energy sources.

A responsible ruler that has dominion over his/her subjects exercises authority with care and compassion. And our Ruler, our King, is Jesus Christ. How does Christ exercise dominion over us? Jesus Christ, and God whom he has revealed, is far more compassionate and loving than we realize. Jesus Christ is our model as we exercise our God-given dominion over creation. We are made in God's image. To be faithful to that image, to follow the example of Christ, how can we do no less than what is best for the earth rather than what is expedient for ourselves?

Rev. Paul Henschen is pastor at The Presbyterian-United Methodist Church in Ellendale, North Dakota, and he serves Presbyterians for Earth Care as the Midwest Regional Representative.

Fourth Week of Lent
Appalachian Voices – A Lament for the Mountains
By Sharman Chapman-Crane

This piece may be used as a litany.

Leader: Appalachia Cries

Where is our resurrection?

Voice 1: Over 500 mountains lost to surface mining.

Voice 2: Over 2,000 miles of streams buried.

Leader: Ask the animals, and they will teach you,

Voice 3: The birds of the air, and they will tell you,

Voice 4: Speak to the earth and it will instruct you,

Voice 5: Even the fish will inform you

Leader: We have coveted our neighbors' land,

Voice 1: Our neighbors' resources.

Voice 2: How do we make atonement?

Leader: Our faith story begins with creation

Voice 2: ...and God saw that it was good.

Voice 3: Creation was Yahweh's first gift to us.

Leader: Appalachia cries

Voice 1: For the people –

Mothers: Living close to mine sites means our babies are 42% more likely to have birth defects.

Fathers: Surface mining has increased unemployment within the industry by 60%.

Youth: This region holds the record for depression and our drug abuse statistics are the highest per capita in the nation.

Leader: Appalachia cries

Voice 1: For peace –

Voice 2: It's not just the 4 million pounds of explosives set off daily in our mountains, it's knowing that:

Parents: In 2004 in Wise County, Virginia a 3-year-old child was crushed while sleeping in his bed one night.

Everyone: In 2005 in Hazard, Kentucky some shoppers in WalMart were injured by boulders crashing through the roof.

Couples: In 2009 in Knott County, Kentucky a couple's home was destroyed by a boulder the size of a pick-up truck.

Leader: These are not judgments on these people or on the land.

Voice 1: They are evidence of our complicity in sacrificing this gift of creation and our neighbors.

Voice 2: How do we love our neighbors?

Voice 1: Where does Appalachia find healing?

Voice 2: When will we learn what is holy and sacred?

Leader: Appalachia cries.



Sharman Chapman-Crane has lived at the feet of Pine and Black Mountains for over 25 years helping her neighbors fight the abuses of coal mining. She developed asthma 8 years ago when surface mining started in her holler above her home. The blasting has cracked the foundation of her home and released methane into her well water.

Fifth Week of Lent
Desperate Times Call for Desperate Measures
By Rev. David A. Dolan

A statement often attributed to the great theologian Karl Barth goes something like this: "One should read the Bible in one hand, and the newspaper in the other." In order to understand the contemporary culture, a modern version of this statement could say: "One should read the Bible in one hand, and the *Rolling Stone* magazine in the other." In the August 2, 2012 edition of *Rolling Stone*, Bill McKibben, a Methodist Sunday School teacher and author of numerous books on climate change, [published an essay](#) on the issue of climate change and the impact that the fossil fuel industry has had on the rapid increase of global warming. Bill McKibben argues that if the fossil fuel industry were to produce and sell all the fossil fuel that they currently have rights for, the Earth's temperature would dramatically increase to the point where all of Earth's inhabitants would not survive. He then lays out the strategy for influencing the fossil fuel industry by calling for the divestment of this industry by universities and other institutions (including religious denominations, as mentioned in [his article in The Christian Century](#)) much in the same way this practice was effective in influencing the South African government to drop its unjust policy of Apartheid in the 1980's. Bill McKibben's 350.org movement is sounding the call for this action to save the Earth. [The 350.org movement](#) is a campaign to address the issue of climate change and influence individuals, governments and corporations to take action to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from the current amount of 392 parts per million (ppm) to a safe 350 ppm.



I made a symbolic commitment as a teenager: I would not get my driver's license until I turned 21. I had several reasons for taking this unusual step. When I was in my early teens growing up in Santa Barbara, California, I witnessed the ecological devastation of the massive oil spill in the Santa Barbara Channel in January of 1969. I also witnessed the beginning of the environmental movement including the first Earth Day in 1970 and was particularly impressed by the negative impact cars had upon the planet. This was my personal act of "divestment" of the fossil fuel industry.

Like giving something up for Lent, this symbolic commitment took some discipline. I walked, rode my bike and utilized public transportation. My discipline meant that there was just a little less pollution and consumption of petroleum. I often had a chance to explain my reasons for not having a driver's license — a teachable moment as result of this symbolic act.

During this time of Lent, we have another teachable moment. I urge all Presbyterians to make a prayerful study of all Biblical passages dealing with the stewardship of creation and also read Bill McKibben's [Rolling Stone article](#). Upon reflection, I hope that a discussion and dialogue would commence within our denomination for us to consider joining this call for divestment of the fossil fuel industry in order to demonstrate our commitment not only for human rights, but the right for all of God's creation to thrive in a healthier planet for many years to come.

Rev. David A. Dolan is a Minister-at-Large in the PC(USA) and has a life-long commitment to the environment and conservation. He has served on the staff at several churches and presbyteries and is the official liaison for the 350.org movement to the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Palm Sunday
Tell Us, What is Going to Happen?
By Karen Turney

It was tough times for Jesus and the disciples before they made their scripted way into Jerusalem to the upper room. *The high priests and religious scholars were looking for a way that they could seize Jesus and kill him. They agreed it should not be done during Passover week - we don't want the crowds up in arms, they said.* (The Message, Mark 14:2)

The disciples questioned Jesus before his return to Jerusalem - tell us, what is going to happen? Was his answer just for them or for our ears too?

Tell us, what is going to happen with our earth? Will we be able to stop the XL Tar Sands project once and for all? Will we be able to end mountaintop coal mining and heal the deep scars it has left behind? Can we curb the export of coal to China and prevail on that country to clear the air? Will we wake up the people to the dangers of fracking? Or find the courage to divest ourselves from partnering in oil company business? What if the degradation to the environment continues to get worse despite all our efforts?



Back in those days before the Passover feast, Jesus told the disciples it was going to be hard. He even warned the disciples that fake messiahs and lying preachers were going to pop up everywhere. So Jesus said, *staying with it - that's what God requires. Stay with it to the end. You won't be sorry and you'll be saved. All during this time, the good news - the message of the kingdom, will be preached all over the world, a witness staked out in every country. And then the end will come.* (The Message - Matthew 24:13-14)

PEC friends, you are walking through the pain of not knowing all the answers or knowing some of the answers and seeing them ignored or ridiculed. It is painful to our environment and hurtful to our souls. We most likely will not witness the end - we don't know, but evidently, staying with it...keep on keeping-on...that's what God requires.

Karen Turney is a Presbyterian Elder and member of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, where she is currently Clerk of Session. She has been active in Peacemaking groups in Atlanta and Kansas City and has been a member of PEC for several years. She has previously served on the nominating committee for PEC.

Easter Sunday
Resurrection – A Miracle is Waiting to Unfold
By Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

The data about how human actions affect the world in which we live is overwhelmingly negative. Sadly we read regular reports about global climate change, soil erosion, water pollution, persistent national addictions to fossil fuels, damage done to the ozone layer, and much more. Film documentaries show us the depletion of the vital polar ice caps. Meteorological statistics weary us by noting how current weather patterns are the worst in recorded history. And our mailboxes overflow with donation requests from overworked conservancy and advocacy groups, desperately fighting for eco-justice.

But all this cannot be the final word we offer on this subject. To give up or accept a defeatist position runs counter to other scientific evidence as well as our Christian faith. Other data points to how the earth can heal many of its ecological wounds, once we stop the worst forms of damage and environmental abuse. Nature does adapt, re-group, and re-claim what we have wrongly usurped. Air, water, and soil can come back through rejuvenating wonders built into God's essential design of this world.



To make this happen requires an “Easter perspective” on nature. In between the time on the cross and the sunrise on Easter morning, the earth waited. The followers of Jesus mourned and stopped what they had been doing. The violence of the cross was over for a spell. Then came the third day – a time of life reborn, of hope renewed, and of resurrection in every sense of the word. To step away from ecological violence means we have to be still, waiting and watching and praying and believing. For to our longing eyes, a miracle is anxious to unfold.

Resurrection is not just a one-time event. It is a way of life – real life – and a walk of faith – this day and for all time. For that good news, let us say: Thanks be to God!

Rev. Dr. Randy Bush has had the privilege to serve as an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) since February 1989. Currently he is Senior Pastor at East Liberty Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. He also serves as Adjunct Faculty at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, teaching courses in Pastoral Care, Preaching & Ethics, and Pastoral Theology. He has served congregations in Africa, and the Midwest. He gave the keynote address for the PEC luncheon at the 2012 General Assembly.