

Moving Beyond Fossil Fuels

For Earth Care, Health And Justice

A Carbon Fast Lenten Devotional



Presbyterians for
Earth Care

AN ECO-JUSTICE NETWORK

Created by the Presbyterians for Earth Care Advocacy Committee, 2011

www.presbyearthcare.org

Introduction

Like many good ideas, people in different places conceive of the good idea at around the same time. This is true with the idea of a "carbon fast" for Lent, or "giving up carbon" for Lent. One of the most well known sources of the carbon fast idea is James Jones, the Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, who started a carbon fast program in 2007. It continues today through an organization called TearFund. Each day, for 40 days, the TearFund will email you a tip/task to reduce your carbon footprint in your daily life. Now there are many environmentally oriented Lenten guides that you can find in the resources section at the end of this document. One we especially recommend for those who want a daily action is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s "Tread Lightly for Lent" 40 day calendar.

Presbyterians for Earth Care's 2011 Carbon Fast Lenten Devotional is a bit different than most of these resources. Instead of providing an action for each day of Lent, we provide reflections on the key days of the season and reflections for each week of Lent, mostly based on the Sunday Lectionary readings. Our writers are ordinary Presbyterians trying to be faithful to God's call to care for creation in their congregation, presbytery, ecumenical organization or community. We invite Christians of all denominations to use this resource.

The idea emerged from PEC Advocacy Committee members who believe that our theological and biblical understandings of our relationship with God's creation, as well as with God and each other, are foundational as we work for the policy changes we would like to see in society. Also, we realized that the issues many of us were addressing through advocacy in our diverse regions had to do with our society's reliance on fossil fuels. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) provides strong foundations for moving away from fossil fuels in 2006 and 2008 statements on energy and climate.

Global warming is indeed the overarching moral issue of our time. Deep and rapid change is called for. Our reliance on fossil fuels is unjust. If we and our faith communities are not providing leadership in the move away from fossil fuels, who will? One of the most important things we can do is articulate global warming as a moral issue. For decades, slavery was seen as a purely economic issue. It was not until it became a moral issue, thanks in large part to religious involvement, that progress was made.

Writing these reflections was not easy for some of us, who may just be starting to place the environmental work we have been doing for a long time in the context of our faith. Perhaps this describes you. We hope that these reflections will inspire you to tell your story in a similar way. We also hope these stories will motivate you to take action during Lent and in the days ahead. Be aware of where the Holy Spirit seems to nudge you as you read. What small piece of the puzzle can you make a unique contribution toward?

The framing questions for our reflections were roughly as follows:

What is the struggle for God's creation you are involved with or the opportunities and alternatives you are creating, modeling or promoting?

Make it personal. How is this struggle or opportunity touching you and your community?

How does your faith inform how you see the situation?

Where do you find the hope? What actions are called for?

What is your prayer for this challenge or opportunity?

We hope that these stories and reflections are bread for your spiritual journey during the season of Lent. Please let us know what you think of this devotional and if you would like to contribute to a similar resource next year by sending an e-mail to presbyearthcare@gmail.com. Thank you for reading.

In Christ, Jenny Holmes, PEC Moderator

Ash Wednesday, March 9, 2011, *Ashes, Pollution and Hope*

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Our Lenten journey of repentance and reflection begins today with the ritual of a cross of ashes on the forehead, reminding us that we are humble creatures of the dust in need of God's salvation and healing. The 40 days of Lent is a rich time to explore how our discipleship connects to all of Creation and to try new ways of living. In our time, a meaningful practice of repentance--turning toward God and God's Reign--is reducing fossil fuel use, named "giving up carbon for Lent" or a "carbon fast" by some.

The New Testament scriptures for Ash Wednesday are directed at our spiritual practices as a community of Christians, including the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer, properly understood, puts the well-being of our fellow humans and God's creation at the center, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as in heaven." This central prayer of our faith is very practical, asking for daily sustenance (food, clean water and clean air) on which our earthly existence depends. Our daily bread itself--in its growing, processing, transportation and storage--is much too dependent on fossil fuels. One of the by-products of burning coal for electricity--is toxic coal ash, which if improperly stored, can contaminate water, air and soil.

As we mark our foreheads with ashen crosses, may we remember those communities which are in harm's way because they are near coal ash disposal sites. Coal ash waste from power plants, contains mercury, lead, arsenic and other dangerous chemicals that can cause cancer and damage the nervous system and organs, especially in children. Coal ash waste contains the highly toxic carcinogen called hexavalent chromium, which has leaked into drinking water and was made infamous by Erin Brockovich's lawsuit against Pacific Gas & Electric. Recent studies of municipal tap water found water contamination in the majority of tested cities. Residents thus forfeit the basic right to clean, safe drinking water.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is attempting to regulate coal ash waste as hazardous so it can be disposed of properly without causing damage to the air, water, and food chain. In my community, we have attended EPA hearings, as well as written and called our legislators to advocate for the safe disposal of the coal ash. Unfortunately, many of our leaders do not understand about the danger of coal ash waste and are voting against measures the EPA is attempting to implement to protect our health.

Isaiah 58 reminds us that our spiritual practices must be connected to justice if renewal is to come. "Is not what I require of you is a fast: to loose the fetters of injustice, to untie the knots of the yoke, to snap every yoke and to set free those who have been crushed? In our time, the extraction, burning and disposal of fossil fuels and their by-products oppress those whose homes, health and livelihoods are directly affected. On a personal and congregational level, we can be more mindful of how we use electricity and work towards reducing our dependency on fossil fuels and support measures to develop renewable energy sources. Then "our light shall break forth like the dawn."

Shifting away from coal-powered electricity will not happen overnight. But, one essential thing we must do in the meantime is make sure that toxic coal ash is not harming those who live nearby.

Prayer: Create in us a clean heart, O God. Create in us a heart that desires that the water we drink, the soil that provides our food, and the air we breathe is pure, allowing all of your creatures to have an abundant life. May the joy of our salvation extend to the whole creation as we live our lives mindful of how our daily practices can enhance the lives of all. May those in decision-making roles in society, especially government, keep the Common Good at the forefront of all of their deliberations on energy policy and use. Amen

By: Carol Oglesby and Jenny Holmes, Carol Oglesby is a member of First Presbyterian Church of Evansville, Indiana where she started an Environmental Ministry Committee. Her region has the largest concentration of coal-fired power plants in the world. Jenny Holmes is moderator of Presbyterians for Earth Care.

Week Starting with the First Sunday in Lent, March 13 2011. *Going Carbon Neutral - First Presbyterian Celebrates God's Creation With "Light from Light"*

Lectionary Scriptures: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7, Psalm 32. Romans 5:12-19, Matthew 4:1-11

For this reflection: Genesis 2:4-25, Psalm 136, Revelation 11:15-19

The phrase "Light from Light" is one of our core affirmations of faith every Sunday in the words of the Nicene Creed: "...God from God, light from light, true God from true God..." With the saints of all the ages, we affirm our faith in the Triune God with our good stewardship of the gifts of creation and the gifts of our forerunners in the faith. The Session of First Presbyterian Church is pleased to announce an opportunity in a new century for our congregation to remain faithful stewards of the light.

With these words, First Presbyterian Church of Tallahassee launched its "Light from Light Capital Campaign" to reduce its energy usage and go carbon neutral. The church session went on to say that, "We live in a time of rising awareness of climate change and the importance of good stewardship of the planet God created for us to live on and care for. Our congregation is both individually and collectively concerned with doing our part to reduce the impact of our church facilities on the environment. Further, we are responding to the 2006 General Assembly Resolution calling on all Presbyterians and Presbyterian institutions to go carbon neutral by making our facility more energy efficient, reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and offsetting our remaining carbon emissions."

The church upgraded their heating and cooling systems, installed double pane windows, replaced all light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs and installed 25.5 KW of solar panels on the roof of their education building. Half the cost of the solar was offset by a state energy grant, but it undertook these improvements with no expectation that there would be a financial payback by saving energy. And note: this is neither a large nor wealthy church, but it is a church whose members are rich in the spirit of giving.

To offset the remaining carbon emissions, the church trained its members to retrofit homes to make them more energy efficient and enlisted the help of an African American church to identify homeowners who would like these improvements. First Presbyterian offset 84 tons of carbon emissions from the previous year and enough additional carbon emissions for at least another year by helping low income homeowners to make their homes more comfortable and to reduce their energy bills. To read about how to go carbon neutral go to www.oldfirstchurch.org.

Church members have responded to the Christian mandate to care for creation and the Biblical promise of the restoration of right relationships among God, human beings and the rest of creation. From Genesis 2:4-25 to Revelation 11:15-19, we are reminded that humanity is part of all creation and we are meant to live in an interconnected, interdependent relationship with God and the whole of creation, acting as stewards of creation.

In a very real sense, the church has celebrated God's good gifts with light from light.

And from Psalm 136, we pray O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, and his steadfast love endures forever; who spread out the earth on the waters. For his steadfast love endures forever; Who made the great lights. For his steadfast love endures forever; the sun to rule over the day. For his steadfast love endures forever; the moon and stars to rule over the night. For his steadfast love endures forever. Amen

By: Pam McVety is a biologist who retired from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection after 30 years of service. Since retirement she has founded the Climate Change Literacy Project and is the Stewardship of Creation Enabler for the Florida Presbytery.

Reflection I. Week Starting with the [Second Sunday in Lent](#), March 20, 2011 – *Stewardship, Justice and Respect for Life: Finding the Ways to Talk About Coal*

Lectionary Scriptures: Genesis 12:1-4a, Psalm 121, Romans 4:1-5, 13-17, John 3:1-17 *or* Matthew 17:1-9

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

It's so easy to condemn the ones who hurt us. It's even easier to condemn the ones who hurt "the least of these." The rhetoric spins out of control, and before we know it we are accusing each other of murder.

That's one reason why many Christians shy away from conversations about coal. Because the secular discussion of coal-fired electric generation and the related discussions about extraction and coal waste are so full of controversy and acrimony. It can be hard to believe sometimes that those passionate individuals who are fighting the coal plants are doing it out of love, when there is so much hate in their speech.

So in 2007, when Texas was facing the possibility of nineteen—nineteen!—new coal-fired power plants, faith communities knew we needed to respond in a courageous, loving, authentically religious paradigm. We focused our messages around three terms with unique meaning for the faithful: Stewardship, Justice, and Respect for Life.

Stewardship. The Hebrew scriptures teach us that God gave human beings a unique status among all the creation, and with that status unique responsibility to "till and tend" the Earth—to act as God's stewards in caring for the creation and benefiting from its amazing abundance.

The call to stewardship is a call to action, to work proactively to preserve and nurture every part of the creation—to prevent destruction of what God created and called "good." It's also a call to appreciation: stewardship means respecting the abundant gifts of God's creation and making use of natural resources with humility and gratitude. Increasing our reliance on coal-fired generation without first ensuring we are making the best use of existing power would be poor stewardship of creation for two reasons: first, it would be wasteful, and second it would be destructive.

Justice. Environmental injustice is a way of describing the disproportionate impacts of pollution and other environmental degradation on our neighbors—especially on the members of the human family who are least able to escape or cope with the damage. The processes of coal mining, transportation and combustion result in environmental injustice in Texas and beyond. Environmental justice concerns extend to future generations and the world they will live in. A decision for a coal plant buildup is a decision against alternative energy strategies: once those plants are in place, there will be a tremendous incentive to maximize return on investment. Today's toddlers will be paying for the proposed plants while they inhale their asthma medicines and cope with the impacts of global warming.

Respect for Life. The greatest point of agreement among the worlds' faiths is our sacred obligation to preserve and protect the lives and health of all God's children. It is beyond dispute that the pollution from the proposed new coal plants would make Texans sick.

Respect for life doesn't just mean keeping people from dying: it means fostering a nurturing environment where human life can thrive, especially at its most fragile beginnings. The mercury emissions from the proposed coal plants would poison the environment for pregnant women and their unborn babies—demeaning the lives of innocent children before they draw their first breath. No condemnation, no accusations. Just aspiration, and clarity about what's at stake for our faith. That's how Texas faith communities successfully engaged the coal debate, and helped prevent the permitting of nineteen new coal-fired power plants.

Prayer: Dear God, May we keep the focus on our deepest values as we address threats to your Creation. May love guide our efforts for change. For you did not come to condemn, but to save. Amen.

Bee Morehead is Director of Texas Impact and chairs the PEC Advocacy Committee.

Reflection II. Week Starting with the [Second Sunday in Lent](#), March 20, 2011. *Lent and the Human Future*

Narratives are important, especially in critical times. Our faith is founded on stories.

One receives a sense of some of the biblical themes of faith in the lectionary readings for the second Sunday in Lent. There is the “Great Nation” theme of Genesis 12, the Creator God theme of the Psalms, and the “saving the world” theme of John 3:17. Those themes are all crucial for the future of our world.

In a time of growing bad news from our climate scientists, how can our gospels continue to voice “good news?” The answer, in part, is suggested by the authors of our gospels.

How could they even think of voicing “good news” on the eve of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE and the execution of Jesus some forty years before? They could pen their “good news” because they trusted in the providence of God. Because of God’s providence, the future was secure.

Today, there are two other very powerful narratives. America has its own “Great Nation” narrative that is sometimes referred to as America’s “exceptionalism.” I suspect that much of the power of this narrative is rooted in the idea that we were, at the beginning of our history, a kind of New Israel. Where the Old Testament Israel crossed the Red Sea at the Exodus and crossed the desert to come home after the exile, our fore-bearers crossed the Atlantic. Associated with this narrative is an ideology that continues to promote unsustainable economic growth. The American narrative tells us that such growth will lead to prosperity for the whole world. But it doesn’t take into account the limits of creation. So habitats are changing, ice is melting, carbon and methane which have been held by forests, oceans, and permafrost may well be releasing green house gases from what had been our protective sinks.

Our contemporary prophets, our scientists, are suggesting another narrative. Because of the urgency of our present crisis I believe it pre-empts the narrative of our exceptionalism. It is the narrative of how the earth, our home, has evolved over deep geologic time. By looking at the fossil record, we know that there have been five major extinctions during which at least 50% of the creation became extinct. Our most eminent climate scientist, James Hansen, states that we may well have entered the sixth major extinction. If so, it will be the first major species extinction since the arrival of the human animal some 15,000 years ago.

Can we read this “earth narrative” through the lens of the gospel narrative? Providence for me has been expanded beyond the Lord of (human) History of the last 3000 years to the millions of years of geologic time described in the fossil record. We can take hope knowing that when 90% of the species disappeared 251 million years ago, new species eventually re-emerged! But, what about the specifically *human* future?

What makes us human? I recently read one man’s very simple opinion. He said We are human because we can think about, and plan for, the future. If we look at geological time we see the benevolent creativity that overcame earth disasters that were caused by rapid disruptions in temperature. We can align ourselves with that benevolent creativity. Or, we can follow other narratives that may lead us to the collapse of our species. In Jesus, one might say that God bet the bank on the human future.

The question is: Will we take a side bet by collaborating with the creativity of providence? Its very much an open question. But hearing and telling the right narratives is key.

Prayer: O Creativity, may your witness be seen by us for what it is: a benevolent providence that aims for our good over millions of years. And as we see, let us plan well for a future which sustains all of life, provides sufficiency for all with equity and justice, and brings new buds to our stewardship, and your earth. Amen.

(Note: The numbers regarding the geologic record in this reflection are found in James Hansen’s *Storms of My Grandchildren*, published by Bloomsbury USA, New York).

By: The Rev. John Preston, HR, is a member of PEC’s Steering and Advocacy Committees living in New York, near Utica. Fracking in the Marcellus shale formation to extract natural gas is an issue in his area.

Week Starting with the Third Sunday in Lent, March 27, 2011. *Interconnected in God's Web of Life*

Lectionary Scriptures: Exodus 17:1-7, Psalm 95, Romans 5:1-11, John 4:5-42

Life is a beautiful circle; a wonderful web of interconnectedness. My profession as an Integrative/holistic nurse practitioner is one way that I connect in the web, keeping a frame of reference how body and life systems are integral and interdependent. Interdependence reminds us to move gracefully among life's multiple frames of reference including worship, family, community life, school, social and environmental justice, civic life, the arts, recreation and global interconnectedness. God allows all of these opportunities to be a part of the web of creation.

This web in one sense is very fragile; yet it has amazing tenacity and strength. Sometimes, our health may reach a dangerous 'tipping point', but cellular structures work furiously to keep our bodies and the universe in balance. Even yet, we must engage in the struggle...and consistently engage in efforts to embody and model that which represents our journey toward wholeness, healing, justice and loving-kindness.

A few years ago at the annual "Prairie Festival" at the Land Institute in Salina, KS, (which works toward sustainable agriculture), the evening speaker told his story of creating parks in Chile, with beautiful pictures. His life mission was to purchase land and preserve these 'national' treasures. One was in a beautiful Chilean mountain valley. He had purchased an old, run-down ranch and worked to 'heal' the land, renew the buildings, and make it all completely sustainable; depending on no fossil fuels for maintenance. He re-built a magnificent log-cabin-like home in the middle of the ranch. It was such a grand sight, yet very 'earthy'...and beautifully interconnected with the mountain valley... It was as though God had touched the space with a special blessing of something very sacred.

Thinking back, the memory of hearing his story still leaves me with a profound sense of God's presence, God's blessing and connectedness – even to a remote valley in central Chile. It was as though this ranch was reaching out to the world to say: *Hold on to this vision. It is beautiful...and it must be done to preserve our family...the family of interconnectedness of all Creation.* "O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation...For the Lord is a great God...and in the Lord's hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are God's also. The sea is God's, for God made it, and the dry land." (Psalm 95:1, 3a, 4, 5).

In our worship and ritual, in our work, in our life tasks, we must hold on to our vision for environmental and social justice. We must engender others in the web of creation and work to heal, empower and bless each other. For we are a strand in the beautiful, amazing web. We MUST take time for moments of reflection and ritual to instill hope, of reflection, of renewal and commitment. Light a candle daily for each goal you have for God's creation. Hold that beautiful, fragile, and miraculous interconnectedness in your mind and presence...sending prayers around the world that we may all love this space of Earth deeply, letting go the need for huge amounts of energy, particularly from fossil fuels, and allowing the peace and beauty of God's gift of creation to be in our hearts and minds as we reach out and touch each other and this beautiful Earth.

Prayer: God, of the spider's web, of the mountain valley; God of worship and ritual; God the source of all energy; in this Lenten season, we come seeking. We come looking for ways to connect even more deeply with the circle of life. To be faithful and just. As we light our candles, become a flame within us which lights our way in this darkness and enlightens our way of being so that we see ourselves a beautiful shining dewdrop, as integral, grateful, and passionate and committed to seeking wholeness in Creation. Amen.

By: Diane Waddell, Vice Moderator of Presbyterians for Earth Care. Diane is a nurse practitioner in integrative/holistic medicine. She started Earthkeepers in Heartland Presbytery after serving as moderator of the presbytery. She is a Stewardship of Creation enabler and a member of the Presbyterian Hunger Program Advisory committee.

Week Starting with the Fourth Sunday in Lent, April 3, 2011. *The Valley of the Shadow: Loving Neighbors and Mountain Top Removal*

Lectionary Scriptures: 1 Samuel 16:1-13, Psalm 23, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-4. Reflection: Psalm 121 and 23

"I lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence does my help come?" So often I reflect on this verse for I live at the feet of Pine and Black Mountains in the valley of Eolia (Cherokee for "valley of the winds or spirits). The mountains and sanctuaries like Bad Branch Falls have often lifted my spirits - working in the midst of the day-to-day struggles of poverty and oppression for 27 years now.

LORD HEAR MY PRAYER. Today it is a valley of shadows – the shadows of cancer, auto-immune diseases, breathing disorders, giant machinery, lost water sources, homes shaken daily - foundations cracked, drug abuse, unemployment, mountains blown apart, depression, and communities destroyed. The shadows are shifting - growing – the silhouette of Black Mountain is forever changed by the coal extraction blasting of mile after mile of mountaintops. One can no longer lie beside still waters to restore their soul as 2,000 miles of streams are buried for eternity. And as the landscape is over shadowed, so are communities. Communities over-shadowed by loss of jobs, over-shadowed by loss of health and life; loss of human dignity and security; shadows of fear. And the state overshadowed by a deficit budget due to subsidizing the coal industry.

LORD HEAR MY PRAYER. Where mountaintop removal exists – all of us collectively – in communion are not loving our neighbors. We flip our power switches without realizing we are literally blowing up mountains, burying streams, and creating divisions in communities. And the shadows grow – because the water that does leave our county is already impacted by loss of quantity and quality.

LORD HEAR MY PRAYER. A few years ago, a coal company claimed they owned this stream they wanted to bury. As required, they posted notice in the local paper of intention to create a valley fill (burying a stream with bulldozed trees and blown up mountain parts known as "overburden"). The notice said the stream was un-named and gave the quadrants. Locally, we know it as Rocky Branch and it begins up above Sam & Evelyn's home. As the permit was going to bury land that belonged to three families – we as neighbors and members of a social justice organization asked the coal company to move the "overburden" 2,000 feet to land that the company owned and had already devastated. Initially they refused, saying it would cost them 5 cents more on the ton.

LORD HEAR MY PRAYER. Yes, we stopped the valley fill and protected our neighbors' land, but at great cost. It has put neighbor against neighbor. The company quit giving donations to a local outreach organization. One neighbor on a fixed income and disability leases their land from the coal company. Their lease says that anything said against the company, means their land will be taken. In their illness we can't visit them because our car would be recognized by the mining employees on their way to work. Standing with neighbors means losing one's land.

LORD HEAR MY PRAYER. Seeing "friends of coal" license plates, bank tellers wearing "coal mining is our future" t-shirts, "save a coal miner's job, kill a tree hugger" bumper stickers are really messages/shadows of hate and fear. Our governor recently referred to water protection activists as an "unwarranted burden."

LORD HEAR MY PRAYER. So how do we show love for our neighbor? Do we help our neighbors whose property is in danger of being stolen and buried? Do we visit our neighbors who are ill? Do we try to shut down the mines – costing people the few jobs that are available? Do we love our neighbors downstream from us by diminishing and polluting their water? How DO we love each other? How do we love our governor?

LORD HEAR MY PRAYER. The hope, I believe, in the midst of all these shadows and dark secrets, is in trusting this journey of faith. I am unable to see the future, but as in the story of Jonah, the Ninevites responded, so I pray that today all of God's children will respond – the neighbors here, the miners, the companies, those that throw the light switches and push the buttons, those that live downstream – that we collectively and in communion will repent of our addiction to fossil fuel energies – that neighbor will embrace neighbor with God's love in action.
LORD HEAR OUR PRAYERS.

By: Sharman Champman Crane lives in eastern Kentucky where mountaintop removal is the everyday reality.

Week Starting with the Fifth Sunday in Lent, April 10, 2011. *What does globalization have to do with it?*

Lectionary Scriptures: Ezekiel 37:1-14, Psalm 130, Romans 8:6-11, John 11:1-45

Thus says the Lord of Hosts: See, disaster is spreading from nation to nation, And a great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth! (Jeremiah 25:32)

A family in the US drives a large SUV and the health and well-being of a family in Africa suffers. People in the developed world buy luxury goods and the natural resources of developing countries are plundered while their corrupt governments get rich at the citizen's expense. Someone flips a light switch and a mountain top is removed.

Jeremiah's words ring true today – disaster is spreading from nation to nation. In the pursuit of individual self-interest and corporate profit, the good of the community has been sacrificed. This is not what the gospel of social justice teaches us. Jesus wants abundance for all instead of riches for a few.

Can we change before it is too late? We can advocate for legislation and public policy that cares for the earth and promotes alternative energy sources. We can educate to change the way we use energy and natural resources. We can pray.

I find inspiration in the opening words of "A Social Creed for the 21st Century", adopted by the 2008 General Assembly:

We Churches of the United States have a message of hope for a fearful time. ...in our era of globalization we offer a vision of a society that shares more and consumes less, seeks compassion over suspicion and equality over domination, and finds security in joined hands rather than massed arms. Inspired by Isaiah's vision of a "peaceable kingdom," we honor the dignity of every person and the intrinsic value of every creature...

Prayer: Lord, We pray that all people of the earth understand that resources are not limitless. We pray that all people understand how their actions affect people on the other side of the world. We pray that all peoples strive for balance between self-interest and the common good. Amen.

Sue Smith is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Rumson, NJ. She is a GreenFaith Fellow, and currently serves as Treasurer for Presbyterians for Earth Care.

Palm Sunday, April 17, 2011. *Powered by the Sun, Inspired by the Spirit: Tapping God's Gifts of Clean Energy*

Lectionary Scriptures: Luke 19:28-40, Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Psalms 118 refers to "the stone that the builders rejected." Renewable energy could be the very cornerstone of our energy economy. Yet, we have long rejected it, choosing instead the easy path of burning fuels that are convenient, but tear at the fabric of Creation. Solar energy is the cornerstone of processes that support life on God's Earth.

God provides solar, wind, wave, and geothermal energy in abundance. We can be proactive, working with local and national stakeholders to plan for an energy transition. While using our remaining fossil resources more wisely and efficiently, we can phase in their renewable replacements. Although not without environmental impacts, renewables are much cleaner and create many jobs. But environmental stewardship is not facilitated by most current government or corporate energy policies. Congregations that make a solar commitment show that there is a better way. They announce the Good News that that God in Christ, cares for all Creation.

One of my most interesting and challenging projects directing Oregon Interfaith Power and Light (OIPL) has been to co-develop and implement approaches for congregations to fund and install solar electric systems. Because churches have unique constraints, it's not an easy task. But even in a difficult economy, it's not too hard to find congregations where some members are not only interested, but willing to do the hard work needed to bring a project to fruition. They volunteer to master the legal issues, raise funds, find investors, or educate fellow church members—even members who are skeptical of the whole idea.

Although solar electric systems are a hedge against rising utility prices—and can pay for themselves in as little as six years, depending on financing—the economic return is not the driving factor for these people. They want their churches to lead by example through a highly visible commitment to earth care. It is a commitment that also attracts a new generation that makes the environment a higher priority. Furthermore, they recognize that solar installations serve as a tangible reminder—both to the congregation and the surrounding community—that clean, locally produced energy is an option to consider.

Most congregations—especially Presbyterian congregations—do not move quickly on decisions about complex projects. And unfortunately, the solar policy environment has been changing faster than many congregations can make decisions or find the capital to implement them. Stable policies are essential to expanding the use of solar. OIPL has succeeded in getting three projects off the ground with a business committed to community-based energy. To create some stability for solar, OIPL is also working on expanding a feed-in solar tariff, currently being piloted by the state public utility commission. It requires utilities to pay for the full value of clean energy. A similar setup has made Germany a world leader in solar.

As we celebrate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem today, it is a reminder that his Reign turns the established order on its head. Through Christ, we have the power to change, inside and out.

Prayer: Dear God, Thank you for your gracious and abundant gift of clean energy. Because of your Son, we have the power to change our energy ways. You inspire and help us to do things that many think are impossible. May we turn away from fossil fuels as we turn towards your Son, Jesus and toward the sun. Let us embrace energy sources that that bring us closer to your dream for all of Creation. Help us to be faithful to your call to earth care and co-create with you new ways of living within the means of your renewable energy gifts. Amen.

By: Jenny Holmes is Moderator for PEC, Stewardship of Creation Enabler for Cascades Presbytery and Environmental Ministries Director for Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.

Resources: www.wind-works.org/ www.pcusa.org/resource/power-change-us-energy-policy-global-warming/

Good Friday, April 22, 2011, *Good Friday is Earth Day*

Lectionary Scriptures: Isaiah 50:4-9a, Psalm 31:9-16, Philippians 2:5-11, Luke 22:14-23:56 or Luke 23:1-49

The four gospel narratives for Good Friday are: Mark 15:13-39, Matthew 27:31-50, Luke 23:33-46, John 19:17-30

Will our churches be celebrating Earth Day this Good Friday? Many will see these as two completely different categories, and say to themselves, “Too bad Earth Day falls on Good Friday,” as they rush on past this observation to plan a Maundy Thursday or Good Friday service. Some of us, on the other hand, are struck by this image: The crucifixion of the earth on Good Friday.

This image reflects a metaphor that personifies the earth in the figure of the Messiah. But think about it. The earth nurtures and supports all of life, including our own, just as does God revealed in Christ, who sustains us.

Derrick Jensen, a writer appearing in Orion magazine, has said that a perpetual growth economy is the “macroeconomic enshrinement of abusive behavior.” What he sees in the dynamic between abuser and victim is a loved one whose boundaries are not respected because the abuser feels he has exclusive rights and privileges over these boundaries. And the power behind this abuse? It is the power of entitlement.

The abuser does not question his being entitled to the fruits of exploitation. Morally, most of us are aware of exploitation that is abusive to supposed loved ones. But we are blind to the collective abuse of humankind, and especially powerful nations such as our own. After all, the “exploitation” of “natural resources” has a positive connotation as part of our consciousness as Americans. Perhaps we are collectively blinded by the bright sun of our own triumphant optimism as an exceptional, God led, people.

What has to happen for the abuse of the earth to stop? First we have to be able to see in the dark. The gospels of Mark and Matthew include three hours of darkness, starting at noontime, in their account of Jesus’ dying. Luke and John seem to have already moved to a triumphal tone, for they leave the darkness out of their narrative. The earlier gospels reflect that the earliest followers of Jesus still lived close to the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome. They lived their lives between the “now” of dark experience and the “not yet” of bright expectation in a way most of us cannot because of the protective veneer of American optimism and Christian triumphalism.

How can we begin to move away from our sense of entitlement as a people? The story of Good Friday helps us to begin to affirm the darkness as a basic dimension of a reality that we live out between the now and the not yet. We need time to acclimate to the dark and really see what is happening. Our present excessive exploitation of the earth can be seen as abusive, and must be limited and stopped. Good Friday, with its theology of the cross, is a theology of respect for the limits of creation. And, that means respecting the sanctity of the boundaries of the earth.

Prayer: Dear God, We may be at a time of sun down. Some see only the brilliant colors and declare their optimism. Day light will soon come once more. Others see fear and play to it with an anger that covers up fear. How do we pray in a time of darkness? Prayer is our leap of trust in the Mystery that is present in the deepest time, the deepest space. It is a leap that declares the benevolence in the creativity that we see in the grand beauty of the earth. We live between the dawn and the dusk. Hope remembers the colors of dusk, and envisions the sun rise that will come. In that vision, in that memory, may our work that joins with your work be blessed! Amen.

By: The Rev. John Preston, HR, is a member of PEC's Steering and Advocacy Committees living in New York, near Utica. Natural gas extraction in the Marcellus shale formation through hydraulic fracturing (also known as “fracking”) is an issue in his area.

Easter Sunday, April 24, 2011. *A Solar Present and Future, A New Beginning with God's Clean Energy*

Lectionary Scriptures: Acts 10:34-43 —or— Jeremiah 31:1-6; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Colossians 3:1-4 —or— Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18 —or— Matthew 28:1-10

The poetry of Eastertide for me is full of new beginnings and fresh transitions. Such a focus as 'God's Clean Energy' is similarly poetic. In fact, these days, my spoken definition of God has to do with 'God as loving energy'. (I come to this sense of God through ongoing theological connections I consider at work in expressions of 'new beginnings' found in process theology, as well as the poetical covenant dynamics that permeate scripture – such as found in Jeremiah 31.)

Theologian John Cobb observes, "... Much vitality exists in the church today among individuals and small groups who have found in the gospel a lever against oppression and exclusion and also against the dominant values of the consumer society. Whole communities within the church are shaped by this transforming vitality. In the midst of much decay and dreariness are seeds of new life." [From *The Process Perspective* (J. Slettom, ed.)]

From my perspective, incorporating alternative energy approaches into the life of our churches certainly speak as 'seeds of new life'. Of course, one important clean energy option is solar.

Just as the energy of the sun stimulates plant seeds to grow, that same energy – which exists in mind stretching abundance – today can be harnessed to our individual and communal settings both for electric utility savings and reduction of atmospheric CO₂. Specifically, as faith communities, we have access to solar installation models that heat water and produce electricity simply by agreeing to the use of our property, such as roof tops or parking cover structures. Where I live this is beginning to happen with growing interest. From outright ownership models to hands off leasing agreements between solar system producers, investors and utilities involving church properties, clean energy options are blooming like the desert after a rain.

Cobb continues, "Process theology can make a contribution to this development. In the process model every momentary experience is both largely continuous with the past and in some measure new and different. The newness comes partly from drawing on elements in the past that were not there before. It comes most fundamentally from God, who enables us to weave these new elements together with the old through the realization of truly novel possibilities."

This for me is one understanding of what new beginnings are available to us. As found in the inter-relational insights and necessities of process thought and our deep multi-generational covenant faith, we connect in energy and love ever anew with our creativity and creation. By our faith community efforts we can connect through God's clean energy in seeking to conserve energy, in seeking to mitigate CO₂ in our biosphere, in seeking transition from fossil fuels to alternative energy production, in seeking communal values and public interests, in seeking the inherent health and vitality available to us as part of God and Creation.

Prayer: Gracious Creative *Godness* - We pray that we open ourselves to your creative will. We pray that we seek to be responsible and disciplined in our earth care. We thank you for the infinite possibilities of life and love. As the unfolding creativity of Jesus teaches us. The future is open. Amen

David Sholin is a Stewardship of Creation Enabler for Presbytery of Grand Canyon, a member- Earth Care Commission- Arizona Ecumenical Council and a former PEC Steering Committee Member. His home is mostly powered by solar energy.

Do you like the PEC Carbon Fast Devotional? Check out these other Lenten carbon fasting resources:

Presbyterian Church, (U.S.A.) Resources

Tread Lightly for Lent, <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/environment/tread-lightly-lent/>

Guide to Going Carbon Neutral. For families and churches in response to the General Assembly 2006 Resolution Calling on all Presbyterians to go Carbon Neutral as a Bold Christian Witness to Help Combat the Effects of Climate Change. <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/guide-going-carbon-neutral/>

The Power to Change - U.S. Energy Policy and Global Warming. This policy, approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008), is the first major update of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s energy policy in more than 27 years. This General Assembly policy offers moral guidance and provides practical steps individual Presbyterians, groups and communities may take to change unhealthy energy practices to ensure that there is an abundant supply of God's good energy for future generations of the whole creation to enjoy. <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/guide-going-carbon-neutral/>

Presbyterians for Earth Care Resources

Carbon Neutral Lifestyles Brochure

<http://www.presbyearthcare.org/docs/CarbonNeutralLivesBROCHURE.pdf>

Devotional and Worship Resources: <http://www.presbyearthcare.org/resources-aids.html>

Ecumenical Resources

World Council of Churches Seven Weeks for Water. <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/activities/ewn-home/resources-and-links/seven-weeks-for-water.html>

TearFund 2011 Carbon Fast Resource. <http://www.tearfund.org/Campaigning/Carbon+Fast/>

Carbon Fast for Lent blog –Fasters calculate carbon footprints and reduce by 10 percent. <http://carbonfast.blogspot.com/>

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington offers a Carbon Fast 2011 Calendar. <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Lenten-Creation-Stewardship-Calendar-2011.pdf>

Earth and Spirit Center's Lent 4.5 is a 7-week program on simple living. <http://www.earthandspiritcenter.org/lent45/>

Stations of the Rainforests <http://www.columbans.co.uk/j&p%20publications.html>

Live Life Live Lent – initiative from the Archbishop of Canterbury with adult & kid curricula. <http://www.livelent.net/>

Ecumenical Lenten Carbon Fast <http://www.macucc.org/pages/detail/2410>