



A Womanist and Interfaith Response to Climate Change: Reimagining Our Collective Futures

**September 21, 2023
Presbyterian Earth Care Conference
“The Climate Crisis & Inspiring Hope”**

Our Calling

“My assignment as a womanist liberation ethicist is to debunk, unmask, and disentangle the historically conditioned value judgments and power relations that undergird the particularities of race, sex, and class oppression.” Katie Geneva Cannon

Our Challenge

To interrupt the fossil fuel burning death spiral and to advocate for a just world to convince governments, corporations, faith communities and individuals to forge a new course toward conservation, mitigation, sustainability, resilience and equity.



Problem: Theo-ethical Premise

**Doctrine of Creation
“queen of theological maladies,”**

“When early Europeans explored the rest of the world, they decided they had “come into possession” of the land. They operated with a particularly strange idea about the land: The land was something that could be “owned” by individuals forever. The strangeness and absurdity of this notion – that the earth can be owned by individuals – became normalized with the earth as a thing. The idea that God gave certain folk dominion over the planet, the right to exploit it, extract from it at will also became the norm. Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*

“It began with theft; we must never forget that the land was being taken and the animals captured and killed at monstrous rates and the plants and landscapes were being altered irreversibly over decade after decade and century after century. Peoples in the colonized world were being forced to think themselves in disoriented ways, away from the land, away from the animals, and into racial encasements forced to isolate their bodies from the land now turned to private property. Christians forced them to do this and imagined this was the right thing to do because this is how we saw things – isolated bodies and privatized land.” (Willie James Jennings 2018, *The Christian Imagination*)

Colonialists Impulse “Theological Malady”

The colonialists impulse, fueled by greed and the false belief in religious and biological superiority, remains operative today in our globalized economy. This imperial impulse shapes contemporary corporate interests in the fossil fuel (and other) industries; an insatiable quest for profit is enmeshed with a materialized and racialized vision of the Earth and its creatures. (Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*)



The Remedy is based in Morality

Faith communities must lead the way to a transformed global economy based upon a renewed religious vision of Earth and all life.

Re-envisioning a New Theology

- **Is an imperative to reshape the current religious narratives among religious communities from the colonialist view of Earth as a commodity.**
 - Admitting the creatureliness of human life. We are Earth creatures.
 - All life has value in itself without consideration for its monetary/service to humans.
- **Earth must become identified with Creator.**
 - Includes and acceptance that all individual life forms are interconnected and interdependent with all other life forms; therefore harm to one harms all.
 - Freedom is a gift for all living creatures and the Earth itself without domination and or exploitation.

Re-envisioning Continued

- **It is an interfaith work - drawn from the wisdom of a variety religious.**
 - Every religious tradition has something to offer to the discourse and is also responsible to make this work a priority.

- **It must be embedded in justice and equity.**
 - Recognizing that no nationality or cultural group is superior to any other, and therefore, a respect for and appreciation for the lives, beauty, intellect, creativity, cultural contributions of all peoples is a moral good.

Environmental Justice Defined

Environmental Justice upholds the moral right to preserve Earth's sacredness particularly the interconnectedness between people and nature. Environmental justice affirms that all communities value self-determination and deserve to enjoy fresh air, pure water, and unpolluted soils, the resources to thrive and to live life with dignity and peace, not diminished or degraded by religious, cultural, social, and economic injustices that have historically and disproportionately impacted Black, Brown, Indigenous and low-wealth communities.

EJ requires the dismantling of race based religious and economic values which fuel climate and environmental injustices around the world.



Our Hope

Community

Community sustainability is affirmed as a goal ... for environmental justice.

What they share...
memory and place are undergirding values for thriving communities.





Concert of Prayer Service



“Buna” Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony



Virginia Beach Climate Impacts Tour



Concert of Prayer Vigil 2018



No Atlantic Coast Pipeline March 2019



Environmental Justice Retreat 2023

What Should People of Faith & Good Conscience Do?

- Assess the global magnitude, interconnectedness, and scale of the issue
- Seek out information beyond what is presented by the media on the topics
- Elevate the suffering of poor communities, which can require addressing the negative consequences of capitalism
- Elevate the suffering of communities of color, which can require addressing the historical and religious roots of white supremacy
- Oppose respected, well-funded, and powerful fossil fuel interests and their political ties
- Be committed to truth telling
- Join movements that oppose polluting industries and governmental actions which harm our neighbors and the environment

Get Involved: With VA IPL

- ❑ Register for Climate in the Pulpits, on the Bimah and in the Minbar 2023
- ❑ Sign up for our Email List at <http://bit.ly/JOINUSVAIPL> (Use all caps)
- ❑ Volunteer
- ❑ Organize an Environmental Justice Town Hall
- ❑ Write Letters to the Editor
- ❑ Write and Contact Your Legislators

