

Foothills Presbytery Church Highlights:

Are you interested in working together as a Foothills Presbytery EMAN Taskforce to help our churches become more knowledgeable and active in saving money and resources? The Taskforce's first task will be to finalize a Guide to assist Foothills Presbytery Churches' Facility, Buildings and Grounds Committees with energy and water conservation.

With prior arrangements, I am available to lead Wednesday night programs or other opportunities to learn more about environmental concerns we all share. Program topics include "Sustainable Agriculture, and the step to Agroecology", "Made in the Image of God: A Campaign for Safe Cosmetics" and "Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining – Dirty Business: Why the Faith Community Believes it must end."

Contact Manella at 864-224-0677 or email id mhc@clemson.edu.

Updates from Rebecca Barnes-Davies, Associate for Environmental Ministries (PCUSA)

* Mercury Just this week President Obama set new national standards for mercury and other toxic pollution from power plants. We celebrate this vital step towards reducing air pollution and protecting human health. Consider sending a thank you to the President and the EPA. (I was first notified through the League of Conservation Voters, <http://www.lcv.org>)

* Mountain Top Removal coal mining: Will Layton, from the NCC Eco-Justice Programs, blogs about recent updates regarding MTR (including the fact, thankfully, recent budget struggles did not include the feared anti-environmental riders, like the one on MTR): <http://ecojustice.wordpress.com/2011/12/15/and-the-riders-name-was-mountaintop-removal/>

* Climate negotiations in Durban The UN Climate Talks in South Africa earlier this month were far from the effective, binding, immediate global agreements we hoped for. Countries have been making pledges since Copenhagen, but there is still a huge gap between where we're going to be and where we need to be. There was agreement to negotiate a successor agreement to Kyoto by 2015 (taking effect by 2020) but this will not keep projected warming at 2 degrees Celsius. For more information, the Institute for Sustainable Development has a summary of the negotiations: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol12/enb12534e.html>.

* Eco-Palms <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/enough/eco-palms/>. As we near the end of this major liturgical season of Advent, it is not too early to plan for an eco-justice Lenten season. Consider ordering Eco-Palms for your congregation. Remember: Approximately 300 million palm fronds are consumed in the United States annually; a congregation of 1,250 members orders approximately 700 fronds for Palm Sunday services; eco-palms are purchased directly from harvesters at 5 to 6 times the normal payment per frond; your purchase of eco-palms helps improve standards of living and protect forests.

The [National Wildlife Federation](http://www.nwf.org/naturefind/) has a new sponsored tool. Explore the outdoors! Find parks, trails, and other nature sites and events. Easy to use, enter zip code and number of miles you wish to explore at the time. <http://www.nwf.org/naturefind/>

join [Interfaith Power and Light](http://www.theregenerationproject.org) for the National Preach-In on Global Warming — whether you're clergy, a lay leader, or a green team member. The weekend will feature sermons and other activities to express our love the earth and all of God's Creation. When you sign up, Interfaith Power & Light will send all sorts of useful resources to support your activities. See link to register and to learn more about the Preach-In on Global Warming being held February 10 - 12, 2012. www.theregenerationproject.org

Resources will be available by letting me know of your interest.

[NCC Eco-Justice's Environmental Program](#)

Last year, Montana pastors developed a new pastoral letter and [a prayer](#) (see below) on the importance of God's lands and Creation as witnessed in the land and open space that defines Montana, the Big Sky State.

Their appreciation for God's beautiful places and spaces is rooted in a belief that God has entrusted us all with stewardship of the land. In their letter they reference Leviticus 25, *The land shall not be sold in perpetuity for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.*

Through reflection, they noted that protection of God's lands as wilderness and access to the gifts of the land are needs that must be met in our use and care of God's earth.

The Eco-Justice program, [in keeping with the reflections of Montana's pastors](#), have developed a faith statement on public lands that reflects the importance of Creation and its bounty.

[Please sign the statement](#) (see below) and join Montana pastors in speaking out about the beauty and importance of the wondrous display that is God's Creation.

[Montana Association of Churches](#)
[Montana Wilderness Home](#)
[Public Lands and Wilderness Home](#)

Creator God,
You have blessed us with big skies, running rivers and endless beauty.
The gifts and abundance that surround us are your creation.
Instill in us the wisdom and desire to see you in all that surrounds us: in the seasons, the trees, the mountains, and the rivers. Guide our hearts and minds that we may connect and reconnect with your creation.
Show us the way to seek you in the wilderness as Christ has before us.
Amen

"Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord" ', as the prophet Isaiah said." (John 1:22-23, NRSV)

Dear President Obama, Secretary Salazar, Secretary Vilsack, and Senators,

As people of faith, we understand Creation as the opportunity to be surrounded by the work and being of God. The network of wild lands throughout the United States provides congregations and communities the opportunity to experience God, and to dwell in the beauty of all that God called "good." As people of faith, we seek to live out our call as stewards of Creation through efforts to protect and maintain God's great Creation. Through effective and collaborative work we can and must protect these places of intimate connection with God for all generations, and protect these vital pieces of God's Creation.

Lands, wilderness, and open spaces have played a vital role in the spiritual journeys of Biblical peoples from Moses to Jesus Christ. Lands are an essential part of God's Creation. Through them, God nourishes life; provides the foundation of terrestrial ecosystems and human communities; supplies blessings of sustenance like soil, water, timber, and minerals; and offers natural space for prayer and spiritual renewal. Stewardship of the lands and wild places God has entrusted to our care is a critical part of our call to protect Creation. In a world

broken by strife, public lands offer beautiful places to heal and invigorate the soul, which can be enjoyed by people for generations to come.

The public lands in the US embody the ideals of cooperation, community, equitable sharing of God's bounty for the common good, and preserving the whole of Creation entrusted to our care. Public lands, if cared for appropriately, help us answer God's call to equality among people by providing shared benefits that nurture our communities. But many of these lands – and the life that depends on them – are endangered by human negligence and abuse. As these threats to God's gifts become more pronounced, our need to become educated and involved becomes more immediate.

As part of our call to be stewards of Creation, we have a duty to recognize the importance of the lands that the Lord has provided and minimize our impact, manage it so that it serves the good of all, and protect it for future generations and for all life. It is in this spirit that we ask you to work for protection and upkeep of the Lord's lands and wild places. By protecting these places, we will ensure homes for many of God's creatures as well as the ability to immerse oneself in the glory and goodness of God's Creation.

Sincerely,

Your name

Last year, we heard some amazing stories, received a lot of questions, and did a lot of thinking and praying about energy. As people of faith, how do we use energy wisely, sustainably, and in keeping with our Biblical teachings? It's a challenging question with no easy answer.

We thought the best way to tackle this and other questions would be to devote this year to exploring the **Ethics of Energy**. This year we will:

- Dedicate our Earth Day Resource to energy ([click here to reserve](#) your copy of "The Ethics of Energy")
- Host 6 webinars exploring different energy challenges and opportunities being addressed around the country
- Feature congregations and communities undertaking creative responses to energy use and in turn helping us understand and answer some of these hard questions

Our first webinar will look at the **Smart Grid: Using Emerging Technologies for Energy Stewardship**. This will be held **Friday, Feb. 10 at 1:00pm EST**. Learn how emerging technologies such as smart grids can help save energy in our personal lives, work lives, and faith lives. This webinar will explore, from a faith perspective, issues related to smart grid technology. [Click here to register.](#)

We hope you can join us for this webinar and please let us know if you have questions, stories, or specific issues you would like us to address over the course of the year.

The Eco-Justice Team

Presbyterians for Earth Care (PEC)

We are blessed with excellent collaborators on our eco- and social justice journey

--Environmental Ministries

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/environment/>,

--Office of Public Witness

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/washington/about-us/>,

--Presbyterian Hunger Program

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/hunger/what-we-do/>,

--Eco-Stewards

<http://ecostewardsprogram.wordpress.com/>,

--Presbyterian Camps and Conference Centers

<http://www.pccca.net/>...

just to begin to name the Presbyterian groups who work toward sustainability.

We wish a very enthusiastic welcome to Rebecca Barnes-Davies, DMin, who is beginning as Associate for Environmental Ministries. Rebecca has an article in the next "Update." (Also, please check out PCUSA's new "Unbound: An interactive Journal of Christian Social Justice" [<http://justiceunbound.org/>]).

<http://simpleliving.startlogic.com/indexoth.php?place=exercise.php#gifts>

*** Easter is April 8 this year. Lent begins Feb. 22. For a selection of free, *daily Lenten calendars*, visit

<http://simpleliving.startlogic.com/indexoth.php?place=archives/Lent/LentCalIndex.php>

Although Alternatives no longer produces resources, most of the Lenten calendars support the three-year liturgical cycles. So 2012 (year B) is the same as 2000 and 1994. Some years are not cycle-oriented and can be used any year – 2003, 2004, 1997.

*** For a collection of free *resources for Lent & Easter*, visit "Who's Risen from the Dead, Anyway?" at

<http://simpleliving.startlogic.com/indexoth.php?place=archives/XRisen/index.php>

Working to Change Systems

1. Advocacy. Write letters to public officials – local, county, state, national, international. Get addresses from your local chapter of the League of Women Voters. Help: Bread for the World, www.bread.org; "Soul of a Citizen."
2. Write letters of protest to wasteful companies and send commendations to businesses working toward sustainability. Help: Business for Social Responsibility, www.bsr.org; "Natural Capitalism"
3. Protest and boycott. Help: "Boycott News," www.boycotts.org
4. Vote with your dollars. Buy from locally owned businesses.
5. Keep informed, share ideas, join a social justice listserve, such as Center for a New American Dream, www.newdream.org.
6. Contact the media. Pass releases on to local media from Alternatives and other organizations. Help: "Reaching Out Through the Media" on pp. 74-75.
7. "Close the loop" at home, work, school, church. Buy products made of recycled materials. Help: National Green Pages, www.greenpages.org
8. Attend meetings to oppose local sprawl.
9. Promote media literacy and oppose Channel One's mandatory TV commercials in schools. Help: www.medialit.org and "Culture Jam."
10. Practice Socially Responsible Investing–SRI. Help: www.socialfunds.org.

11. Pray for those who are in positions of power, who control systems, such as public and business officials.

12. My own way to work to change systems....

Simple Gifts

Simple Gifts was written by Shaker Elder Joseph Brackett, Jr. in 1848. It was first published in *The Gift to be Simple: Shaker Rituals and Songs*. Simple Gifts was a work song sung by the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing (more commonly called the Shakers, an offshoot of the Quakers).

'Tis the gift to be simple,
'tis the gift to be free,
'tis the gift to come down where you ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
It will be in the valley of love and delight.

Refrain:

When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed.
To turn, turn will be our delight,
'Til by turning, turning we come round right

'Tis the gift to be loved and that love to return,
'Tis the gift to be taught and a richer gift to learn,
And when we expect of others what we try to live each day,
Then we'll all live together and we'll all learn to say,

Refrain:

'Tis the gift to have friends and a true friend to be,
'Tis the gift to think of others not to only think of "me",
And when we hear what others really think and really feel,
Then we'll all live together with a love that is real.

OTHERS' VERSIONS

Tis a gift to use it up
Tis a gift to wear it out
Tis a gift to Make it up,
And even better, do without....

Greg Hanneman & Rose Ann Pridie

'Tis a gift to live simply
'Tis a gift to live free
'Tis a gift to live such that Christ is seen in me
When I'm free of clutter 'neath my roof and my feet
I'll be free in my spirit my Lord to greet.

'Tis a gift to serve others
Many blessings received
When I give of my talents so that others might believe
Follow Jesus' leading to find those in need
You will find my friend you are blessed, indeed.

Melinda Zobel

Resources and Opportunities

South Carolina Upstate Forever - <http://www.upstateforever.org/>