

The Episcopal Church and Climate Change: The First Twenty-Five Years

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The Episcopal Church passed some environmental resolutions forty years ago, but it was only twenty-five years ago that most Americans first heard about climate change. In 1988 the media broke the news that scientists were concerned about the effects on the planet's climate and ecosystems of burning fossil fuels. In 1989 Bill McKibben published *The End of Nature*, and the term "global warming" began to enter public consciousness. For the first time, ordinary citizens began to glimpse what would happen if global warming went unchecked. In the same year, Anne Rowthorn published her first book on the sacredness of the natural world, *Caring for Creation*, thereby helping to launch a quest in the Episcopal Church to reclaim the ancient understanding that God is intimately involved in the natural environment. As theologian Elizabeth A. Johnson has observed, creation basically "got lost" in the thinking of Western Christianity. "For the last five hundred years," she writes, "the religious value of the earth . . . [was not] a subject of theology, preaching, or religious education."¹

I am glad to say that the Episcopal Church's awareness of ecological issues, particularly the climate crisis, has sharpened considerably since the late 1980s. In September 2011, the bishops of the Episcopal

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¹ Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Losing and Finding Creation in the Christian Tradition," in Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether, eds., *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 4.

Church, meeting in Quito, Ecuador, issued a pastoral letter to Episcopalians worldwide that begins with a call to repentance “as we face the unfolding environmental crisis of the earth.” The letter affirms “God’s abiding and all-encompassing love for creation” and recognizes that “we cannot separate ourselves as humans from the rest of the created order.” Giving particular prominence to the mounting urgency of addressing climate change, and acknowledging that “it is the poor and the disadvantaged who suffer most from callous environmental irresponsibility,” the letter commits the bishops and urges every Episcopalian “to lift up prayers in personal and public worship for environmental justice, for sustainable development, and for help in restoring right relations both among humankind and between humankind and the rest of creation.” The letter further calls for commitment to energy conservation, to the use of clean, renewable sources of energy, and to efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle; it also challenges us “to seek to understand and uproot the political, social, and economic causes of environmental destruction and abuse.”²

This 2011 letter from the House of Bishops drew some of its language and ideas from a pastoral letter on the environment entitled “To Serve Christ in All Creation,” which was released in 2003 by the bishops of New England (Province I).³ As an Episcopal priest and climate activist I was asked to draft the text for that first Episcopal pastoral letter on the environment, and I also helped edit a pastoral letter released in 2009 by the Episcopal bishops of Province VIII, which focused on taking action “to avert catastrophic and irreversible changes to life on this planet” because of global warming.⁴ In 2010 an Episcopal-Anglican climate justice statement was issued after a gathering in the Dominican Republic, convened by Bishop Marc Andrus of the Episcopal Diocese of California and Bishop Naudal Gomes, Diocese of Curitiba, Brazil.⁵

Leaders in the Anglican Communion have taken a strong public stand on the spiritual, theological, and moral grounds for combating climate change. Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams

² “A Pastoral Teaching from the Bishops of the Episcopal Church,” meeting in Province IX, in Quito, Ecuador, September 2011; <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/notice/episcopal-church-house-bishops-issues-pastoral-teaching-0>.

³ <http://eenonline.org/download/p1-ltr-030227.htm>.

⁴ http://king.azdiocese.org/digital_faith/news/150573.

⁵ <http://episcopalclimatejustice.wordpress.com/2011/01/16/final-statement-and-commitments-from-december-meeting/>.

spoke frequently about global warming, in the strongest possible terms warning that the price of our continued failure to protect the earth would be violence and social collapse.⁶ The Bishop of London, Richard Chartres, fasted from flying for a year in order to reduce his carbon footprint.⁷ And the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Katharine Jefferts Schori, has repeatedly addressed climate change in sermons, speeches, and public testimony.

Jefferts Schori was an oceanographer before she was ordained, and when she speaks about the climate crisis, she respects both science and faith. At a U.S. Senate environment committee hearing in 2007, Jefferts Schori declared: “No life form can be studied in isolation from its surroundings or from other organisms. All living things are deeply interconnected, and all life depends on the life of others.” As a champion of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations, which include preserving the natural environment as an essential part of relieving human suffering around the world, her Senate testimony focused on the intimate relationship between poverty and climate change. On behalf of the Episcopal Church and the many denominations in the National Council of Churches of Christ, she expressed “a profound concern that climate change will most severely affect those living in poverty and the most vulnerable in our communities here in the United States and around the world” and went on to declare: “I want to be absolutely clear; inaction on our part is the most costly of all courses of action for those living in poverty.”⁸

Statements like these are the latest in a series of communications about climate change that have been consistently framed by the Episcopal Church as a matter of stewardship of creation, social justice, and loving service in response to human need, three of the “Five Marks

⁶ <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/2259/archbishops-video-message-for-climate-change-talks-in-durban> and <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/rowan-williams-a-planet-on-the-brink-489537.html>.

⁷ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jun/14/religion.leohickmanonethicalliving>.

⁸ http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/78703_86656_ENG_HTML.htm. Jefferts Schori has also served on the Environment and Climate Change Task Force of the President’s Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. In 2012 she gave a keynote address at an ecumenical conference in Salt Lake City on the intersection of poverty, justice, and climate change; <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2012/04/18/updates-on-the-the-intersection-of-poverty-and-the-environment-live-webcast-april-21/>.

of Mission” that guide Episcopalians and all members of the Anglican Communion.⁹

Over the years, General Convention has passed many resolutions on renewable energy, conservation, environmental sustainability, and environmental racism, resolutions directed both at our own institutional practices and at our nation’s public policies.¹⁰ The church is engaged in many other efforts relating to climate change, but perhaps its most significant project right now is the Genesis Covenant. Initiated by Episcopal Bishop Steven Charleston and memorialized by General Convention in 2009, the Genesis Covenant commits the church to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in all church facilities by 50 percent within ten years.

The Genesis Covenant has the potential to make a big difference across the Episcopal Church’s seven thousand parishes and to inspire and bring together people of many faiths. The vision of the Genesis Covenant is that people of all religious traditions can work together to save the earth; the initiative was named “Genesis Covenant” as a way “to honor the sacredness of creation as embraced by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike in the Genesis story. . . . The word ‘covenant’ is an ancient term used to signify a religious pledge made between God and humanity.”¹¹ Just as the Episcopal Church has made this commitment, so the national leadership of *every* U.S. religious community is invited to make its own public commitment to the Genesis Covenant.

I am an enthusiastic supporter of the Genesis Covenant and served for a time on its steering committee, but its weakness is that it is strictly voluntary and—as with most General Convention resolutions—its success depends on local leadership.¹² Moreover, the carbon reductions are almost impossible to track. Still, the Genesis Covenant holds great promise, and in 2012 (shortly before this office closed), the Episcopal Church’s Office of Environmental and

⁹ <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/five-marks-mission>, and <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm>.

¹⁰ http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_topic_search.pl?topic=Environment.

¹¹ <http://genesis.eds.edu/about.htm>.

¹² Several dioceses have started to implement the Genesis Covenant. According to Lisa Palmer, these include the Dioceses of Chicago, Olympia (Washington), and Arkansas. Other participating dioceses include the Dioceses of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, and Oregon. See Lisa Palmer, “Episcopalians Confronting Climate Change,” *Yale Forum on Climate Change and the Media* (March 6, 2012); <http://www.yaleclimatemediaforum.org/2012/03/episcopalians-confronting-climate-change/>.

Economic Affairs released a resource guide to make it easier for church communities to get started.¹³

Many organizations established and/or led by Episcopalians have sprung up over the years to empower households and faith communities to move toward energy efficiency and conservation. For instance, Earth Ministry, an ecumenical, nonprofit organization founded in Seattle in 1992 by two Episcopalians, Carla Berkedal Pryne and Ruth Mulligan, and by Presbyterian minister Jim Mulligan, has become a national leader in cultivating environmental awareness and ecological stewardship among Christians.¹⁴ Earth Ministry programs and resources are used across the U.S. and Canada, and are available to all.

Another Episcopal priest, Canon Sally Bingham, motivates and equips people to address climate change by helping churches around the country to lead by example. The environment minister at Grace Episcopal Cathedral in San Francisco, Bingham is the founder and president of The Regeneration Project, an ecology and faith group that oversees Interfaith Power & Light,¹⁵ a national nonprofit that helps congregations become better stewards of energy. Chapters of Interfaith Power and Light now operate in thirty-nine states and involve more than fourteen thousand congregations.

GreenFaith, one of the oldest religious-environmental organizations in the United States, is also currently led by an Episcopal priest, Fletcher Harper, who serves as the Executive Director.¹⁶ Over the years GreenFaith has organized many efforts to promote religiously based environmental leadership. The GreenFaith Fellowship program provides an eighteen-month interfaith environmental training program for clergy, laity, and seminarians. The two-year GreenFaith Certification Program enables houses of worship to integrate environmental themes into worship, religious education, facility management, and social outreach, and to become a GreenFaith Sanctuary. GreenFaith has also conducted education and advocacy to support action on climate change, held national trainings with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for religious leaders on energy conservation strategies for faith-based institutions, organized the Ground for

¹³ <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/eco-justice> and http://www.episcopalchurch.org/sites/default/files/genesis_convenant_final.pdf.

¹⁴ <http://earthministry.org/>.

¹⁵ <http://interfaithpowerandlight.org/>.

¹⁶ <http://greenfaith.org/>.

Hope series of religion-environmental training events in five locations around the United States, and participated in community organizing and litigation efforts to reduce pollution in poor communities.

Many other initiatives have taken root in the Episcopal Church. Episcopal Ecological Network, a grassroots online community, has potential to grow more effective as it carries out its mission to “educate, encourage, and facilitate” the Episcopal Church in stewardship of God’s creation.¹⁷ The Anglican Communion Environmental Network is a good source of environmental news and resources from the worldwide Anglican Communion, and a powerful voice for protesting systems and policies that spoil the earth.¹⁸ After its August 2011 meeting in Lima, Peru, the Anglican Communion Environmental Network published the manifesto *Crisis and Commitment*, “committing its members to taking concrete steps in support of Anglican efforts to achieve environmental justice.” Convinced that “creation is in crisis,” the group stated: “Among those systems most in need of transformation is an economic system that knows no alternative to continual growth. Rather than having an economy that serves the well-being of communities, our communities (human and other-than-human) serve the well-being of the economy.”¹⁹

A growing religious movement to divest from fossil fuel companies—modeled in part on the anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s to divest from South Africa—is taking shape within and beyond the Episcopal Church. The Church of England is considering fossil fuel divestment, as are several Episcopal dioceses. In January 2013, the Diocese of Newark passed resolution 2013–04, initiating a study of divestment; in May 2013, the Board of Trustees of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts announced a task force to make a recommendation on divestment; and in the Diocese of Massachusetts conversations are underway to bring a divestment resolution to the diocesan convention in November 2013. Supporters of divestment take heart from the leadership of the United Church of Christ, which in July 2013 became the first national religious body to divest.

¹⁷ <http://eenonline.org/>.

¹⁸ <http://acen.anglicancommunion.org>.

¹⁹ http://acen.anglicancommunion.org/resources/docs/Crisis_and_Commitment.pdf; see also <http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2012/04/anglicans-publish-their-manifesto-to-fight-for-environmental-justice.aspx>.

Meanwhile, Episcopal dioceses are taking other creative steps to address global warming. The Diocese of Chicago set up a Sustainability Task Force that seeks to integrate sustainable practices throughout the diocese.²⁰ In April 2012 the Diocese of Vermont celebrated the installation of a huge solar array at its diocesan retreat center with a keynote speech by Bill McKibben—now internationally known as the founder of 350.org, the online network leading the grassroots global effort to fight climate change.²¹ The Diocese of Olympia encourages energy efficiency and conservation, and established a carbon offset cooperative mission in partnership with the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Philippines to support reforestation.²² Thanks to the leadership of retired Bishop Bud Cederholm (affectionately called our “green” bishop), the Diocese of Massachusetts designated late Pentecost as a “Season of Creation,” with sermons and educational offerings focusing on restoring right relationship between human beings and the rest of the natural world. The diocese also encourages parishes in tangible ways through its Creation Care Initiative, providing grants and loans to help congregations fund their purchase of energy-saving equipment and supplies.²³ The bishops of Province I (New England) are funding, from their own resources, a part-time Energy Stewardship Missioner to assist the dioceses in reducing energy use, and have launched a campaign to “Turn Off the Lights for God’s Sake.”

As for the average Episcopalian in the average pew, if there is such a thing, I dare to hope that congregations are awakening to the call to love God, neighbor, and our dear, God-given earth, as our selves. I continue to be amazed by the creativity and persistence of so many people of faith. Across the country, Episcopal churches are conducting and implementing energy audits, installing solar panels, and investing in geo-thermal energy—one church in Maine even installed a wind turbine! Many congregations encourage walking, biking, or car-pooling to worship services; groups of parishioners are meeting with political leaders to advocate for climate justice; and one church held an outdoor, interfaith prayer vigil in response to a tragic oil spill. In a time of uncertainty and rapid change, when climate change threatens

²⁰ <http://www.episcopalchicago.org/at-work-in-the-world/sustainability/>.

²¹ http://www.diovermont.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=258:diocese-dedicates-35-panel-solar-installation&catid=36:episcopal-diocese-of-vermont-news&Itemid=219; <http://350.org/>

²² <http://www.ecww.org/carbon-offset-cooperative-mission>.

²³ <http://www.diomass.org/creation-care-initiative>.

to unravel life as we know it, people and communities are reaching out to each other in love and building new collaborations that are mutually life-giving. In order to build resilience in uncertain times, we need to connect churches and farms, and to connect people with each other, with the land, and with the God they love. A growing number of churches and dioceses (and even one province) also understand the need to prepare for withstanding the natural disasters associated with climate change.

What about the future? Who will help to teach and train the religious leaders we need in the years ahead so that churchgoers will be informed in both theology and science, and motivated to place care for creation at the center of their moral and spiritual concern? Of the eleven Episcopal seminaries nationwide, I will say a word about four. Church Divinity School of the Pacific, in Berkeley, California, is participating in the Green Seminary Initiative, which is “dedicated to building a nationwide coalition of theological schools that infuse care of the earth into all aspects of theological education.”²⁴ I hope that more Episcopal seminaries will join this initiative, though several seminaries have embarked on creative projects of their own.

Berkeley Divinity School at Yale has raised \$1.5 million toward a \$3 million campaign to endow the Porter Chair in Religion and Environmental Stewardship, and it offers a very unusual joint degree program with the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.²⁵ The University of the South (Sewanee) runs a Center for Religion and Environment that “seeks to transform individuals and society by integrating faith with care for the environment.”²⁶ Episcopal Divinity School has a long-standing commitment to social justice that is expanding to include environmental and climate justice. In addition to striving to reduce its carbon footprint, the seminary offers courses such as “God and Creation,” in which students study ecological theology not only in the classroom, but also by hands-on learning, as when they visit an organic farm and study the interconnectedness of soil, sun, water, and plants, and the kinship of human beings with the rest of the natural world.

As for theological resources, we can be grateful for the groundbreaking work of Sallie McFague, an Episcopalian and one of the

²⁴ <http://www.greenseminaries.org>.

²⁵ <http://berkeleydivinity.net/supporting-bds/capital-campaign/>.

²⁶ <http://cresewanee.wordpress.com/>.

leading figures in contemporary ecological theology. Her latest book, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming*, is a powerful and persuasive call to Christians to think, act, and pray in new ways as we face potentially catastrophic climate change. Other recent seminal books by Episcopalians include *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology* by Willis J. Jenkins, and *The Transfiguration of Christ and Creation* by John Gatta.

A brief survey of the Episcopal response to global warming would be incomplete unless it mentioned the many times that Episcopalians have taken their love of God and creation out of the sanctuary and into the streets. My own engagement in climate activism began in 2001, when I joined a newly formed interfaith network, Religious Witness for the Earth,²⁷ and was arrested outside the Department of Energy in Washington, D.C., during a peaceful vigil to protest our government's energy policy and its intention to drill for more oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Episcopal Church has long affirmed the sanctity of the Refuge and opposes drilling there for oil.²⁸ I have been an ally of Bill McKibben since 2001, when we marched outside car dealerships in Lynn, Massachusetts, to protest the auto industry's promotion of SUVs. Since 2001, Religious Witness for the Earth has organized several significant acts of public prayer and witness in which Episcopal bishops, priests, and lay people participated; in 2007 we organized a one-hundred mile Interfaith Walk for Climate Rescue that ended with an interfaith worship service and rally in downtown Boston, at that point the largest global warming protest in U.S. history.

Episcopalians were among the 1,253 people arrested in 2011 in Washington, D.C., at the Tar Sands protest against the Keystone XL pipeline, the largest act of civil disobedience in a generation. A few months later, Episcopalians were among the ten thousand people who formed a human chain around the White House in an effort to stop Keystone XL, meeting with at least short-term success. Episcopalians were also among the forty to fifty thousand people who gathered in February 2013 in Washington, D.C., at the largest climate rally in U.S. history. Nevertheless, the battle to stop the pipeline, to stabilize the climate, and to protect and heal God's creation has hardly begun, and I

²⁷ <http://rwearth.org/>.

²⁸ http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=1991-D125.

anticipate that public marches and non-violent civil disobedience will become an increasingly vital part of the religious environmental movement in the years ahead. Recycling, changing light bulbs, and other acts of personal piety—however important—do not address the scope and scale of the crisis, nor do they transform the structures of a social and economic system that depends on fossil fuels.

The Episcopal Church has come a long way since the days when most churchgoers saw no essential connection between religion and ecology, but we still have a long way to go. In a complex institution, it takes time to make decisions and to come to agreement—sometimes an achingly long time. We have some recent successes to celebrate. Meeting in Indianapolis in July 2012 during a summer of searing heat, delegates of the 77th General Convention passed a strong and comprehensive environmental justice resolution that expresses the Episcopal Church's "solidarity with those communities who bear the greatest burdens of global climate change"; issues a call "to work for the just transformation of the world's energy beyond and away from fossil fuels . . . and toward safe, sustainable, renewable, community controlled energy"; calls for support of "fossil fuel workers and their families . . . during the transition to a 'postcarbon' society"; and urges every part of the church "to support the self-determined aspirations of communities around the world, who, like the Iñupiaq Community of Kivalina, Alaska, having emitted minimal amounts of carbon and having received negligible material benefit from fossil fuel consumption, nevertheless bear the brunt of climate-change impacts."²⁹

What makes this resolution so powerful is that, like the 2011 Bishops' Pastoral Teaching on the Environment, it frames the climate crisis as a justice issue. The Explanation that accompanies the resolution links the Episcopal Church's repudiation in 2009 of the Doctrine of Discovery (the centuries' old claim that Christian sovereigns and their representative explorers have a right to claim non-Christian lands with the blessing of the church) with the resolution's call to resist "the development and expansion of ever more unconventional, dangerous, and environmentally destructive sources of fossil fuel." As the Explanation makes starkly clear, new and continued fossil fuel extraction is "a contemporary manifestation" of the Doctrine of Discovery, "abiding by the very same logic of 'manifest destiny.'"

²⁹ Resolution 2012-B023; <http://www.generalconvention.org/gc/resolutions?by=number&id=b023>.

A second strong resolution on climate change that passed at the 77th General Convention advocates a national public policy to reduce climate-changing emissions and encourages members of the Episcopal Church to urge Congress to enact legislation that places “stricter controls on the use of carbon-based fuels” and creates “incentives” for our nation to make the transition to safe, clean, renewable energy.³⁰

However, the resolution to authorize liturgical materials for honoring God in creation was deferred for another three years, being returned to the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music for further revision. I hope that the final form of these liturgical materials will be beautiful, bold, and faith-filled. Gathering for worship will become increasingly important in the days ahead, for as the reality of climate change and its devastating effects become more difficult to deny, it is likely that people will experience a spiritual crisis. It will be tempting to fall into despair. Individuals and communities will need spiritual guidance and support, including worship materials that lift up prayers for the natural world and that assure us of God’s ever-creative mercy and justice.

Unfortunately, soon after General Convention ended, the Episcopal Church announced that its Office of Economic and Environmental Affairs would be closed. Budgetary constraints probably led to this decision, but if the national church is going to become an effective advocate for humanity learning to live more lightly, justly, and sustainably on the earth, then Episcopalians need the guidance and oversight that is possible only when someone is paid to coordinate our environmental efforts.

The urgent need to tackle climate change has yet to be grasped by every church leader, every organization, every congregation, and every heart. To put it mildly, there is work to be done. Human beings are on a long journey back to understanding our connection with the earth. That’s the challenge before us: to find a path to union with God and to harmony with God’s creation. It is increasingly evident that to persist on our current course—devouring the planet’s resources faster than they can be replenished and producing a killing level of greenhouse gases—is to leave a ruined world to our children and grandchildren.

³⁰ Resolution 2012-D055; <http://www.generalconvention.org/gc/resolutions?by=topic&id=10>.

Despite well-funded voices to the contrary, the scientific consensus is clear: global warming is real, and is largely caused by human activity. Within a generation we have melted 30 percent of the summer sea ice in the Arctic, made the ocean 30 percent more acidic, and made the atmosphere 5 percent wetter. As McKibben succinctly puts it in his latest book, *Eaarth*: “Our old familiar globe is suddenly melting, drying, acidifying, flooding, and burning in ways that no human has ever seen.”³¹ In May 2013 the planet passed a “long-feared milestone,”³² when the average global concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere reached 400 parts per million, a level not seen on Earth for millions of years.

Nevertheless, the American public and our political system seem unable to take the swift, decisive, and effective action that the situation requires. This is where the church comes in, for religious leaders and communities have a crucial role to play in awakening Americans to the climate crisis and in providing moral leadership and spiritual support to help us move through our grief, helplessness, inertia, and fear. Thank God, Christian leaders have a long history of engagement in social movements. I think, for instance, of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church that opposed Nazi Germany, and of religious leaders like Archbishop Desmond Tutu who fought the tyranny of apartheid in South Africa. I think of the clergy and congregations in the United States who rose up against slavery, child labor, and unjust war, and who advocated for a woman’s right to vote, for civil rights, and for marriage equality.

I am encouraged by the fact that in spring 2013, the Episcopal Church participated in two significant ecumenical events—a Climate Revival in downtown Boston, and a climate summit in Washington, D.C.—that committed the church to leadership and advocacy in combating climate change.³³ Such spiritual and moral leadership is required as we face the reality of a rapidly changing global climate. Now is the time for people of faith to sink our roots deep into the love

³¹ Bill McKibben, *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2010), xiii.

³² Justin Gillis, “Heat-Trapping Gas Passes Milestone, Raising Fears,” *The New York Times*, May 10, 2013; http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/11/science/earth/carbon-dioxide-level-passes-long-feared-milestone.html?hp&_r=0.

³³ Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, “Rising with Christ: Confronting Climate Change,” Episcopal News Service, May 8, 2013; <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2013/05/08/rising-with-christ-confronting-climate-change/>.

of God, to lift up our hearts, to raise our voices, and to offer our lives in service to sustaining life on this planet. I am grateful for the many faithful actions already taken by the Episcopal Church, and I hope that there will be many more in the years ahead. I hope that we will participate, even take the lead, in the renewal of human societies and the transformation of consciousness that the world so badly needs. There is much that we can do, and much that we need to do.

May our efforts be infused with prayer! Prayer helps us to know that we are more than chaplains at the deathbed of the old order: we are also midwives of God's new creation. In prayer we drink from the wellspring of divine love that flows within us, and we ask the Spirit's guidance in our efforts to heal a broken world. In prayer we receive what we so deeply need: a daily dose of the sweet, surprising discovery that we and our fellow humans are intended to be more than a cancer on the earth. God's love empowers us to re-claim who we are: creatures made in the image of God, created to be a blessing to each other and our other-than-human kin.