Finding Hope Outside
By Dr. Kevin O’Brien

We are only beginning to understand all that Pope Francis was signaling when he chose to name himself after a medieval friar. This name, never used by a previous pope, suggests that he is pulling the church outside — outside of the merely-human world into God’s whole creation, outside of its gilded image to the poor within its midst, and outside of any barriers that separate human beings from one another.

St. Francis is most famous today because of his love for the natural world. One story tells of a cricket that kept him awake one night by singing outside his room. Francis opened his window and sang along rather than sleep that night. Another story tells us that when Francis took a 40-day retreat on Mount Alverno, a falcon came to visit him every morning at exactly the same time so he could maintain his rigorous monastic prayer schedule. Francis called every creature “sister” or “brother,” and had a deep sense of his connection to all: brother sun, sister moon, brother bear, sister wolf, sister ant, even brother mosquito. He prayed for and with every creature.

This love for nature changed the way the saint worshiped. As a teenager, while praying alone in a dilapidated Assisi church, he heard a voice say, “Go, Francis, and repair my house, which as you see is falling into ruin.” He immediately began to gather stones and

Continued on page 12
Earth Ministry/WAIPL Staff
LeeAnne Beres, Executive Director
Jessie Olson, Operations Manager
Jessica Zimmerle, Outreach Coordinator

Earth Ministry Co-founders
Rev. Jim & Ruth Mulligan
Rev. Carla Pryne

Earth Letter Staff
Sr. Clare Josef-Maier, Editor
LeeAnne Beres, Assistant Editor
Rev. Jim Mulligan, Editor Emeritus
Jean Miller, Graphic Design

Board of Directors
Nancy Berry
Rebecca Cate
Anna Dyer
Rev. Steve Grumm
Frederica Helmiere
Evita Krislock
Tim Nuse
Dr. Kevin O’Brien
Rev. Hunt Priest
Rev. John Rosenberg
Sr. Jo Ann Showalter, SP
Rev. Tom Soeldner
Sarah Sullivan

Membership
Join Earth Ministry/WAIPL and add your voice to the growing movement of people of faith caring for creation! Membership includes a subscription to Earth Letter.

Individual Membership Levels:
$35 Individual
$60 Family
$100 Advocate
$250 Steward
$500 Sustainer
$1000+ Sacred Circle

Join at www.earthministry.org or www.waipl.org, by phone at (206) 632-2426, or by sending in the enclosed envelope. Please contact us for congregational membership information.

ABOUT US

Earth Ministry engages the religious community in environmental stewardship. We work in partnership with individuals and congregations to respond to this great moral challenge through education, modeling sustainable lifestyle choices, and organizing for social change through environmental advocacy.

Founded in 1992, Earth Ministry has a history of leading the way in caring for the environment from a faith perspective. Our Greening Congregations Program was the first in the country to help houses of worship implement sustainable practices, and our faithful advocacy program is on the cutting edge of empowering clergy and lay leaders to speak out on public policy issues.

Earth Ministry supports a growing network of congregations and has a national membership. While Earth Ministry is rooted in the Christian tradition, we actively engage all religious communities on climate and energy issues through Washington Interfaith Power & Light. Our programs and resources are available to all. www.earthministry.org www.waipl.org

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sometime around the year 1181, the man who came to be known as St. Francis was born in Assisi. Over 830 years later in 2013, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina was elected pope and became the first to be called Pope Francis, in honor of the patron saint of the environment.

As Dr. Kevin O’Brien writes in our cover article, Finding Hope Outside, Pope Francis made a very powerful statement when choosing his papal name. Like his namesake, the pope has long been an advocate for the poor and marginalized. Now Pope Francis is also calling us to translate our love of God and our neighbors into love of all creation.

In June of this year, the pope released his long-awaited encyclical on the care of creation, entitled Laudato Si, or “Praised Be,” drawn from the refrain of Saint Francis’ Canticle of the Sun. In her article about the encyclical on page 8, Jessie Dye explains how Pope Francis pulls no punches in identifying the environmental ills facing the world today – and the role humans have played in causing them – but also reminds us that, first and foremost, the pope exhorts us to take action from a place of deep connection to God, to each other, and to the natural world.

Dr. Mallory McDuff reflects that joyful love of creation in Top 10 Religious Environmental Saints, as she identifies ten modern-day “saints” who she feels reflect hopeful environmental action. Some are well-known, others are not. But no matter who we are, what religion we practice, or where we live, we all have a stake in caring for our common home. How are you going to respond to the pope’s invitation to do your part?

Blessings,
Faith, Hope & Chocolate

Huge thanks to everyone who attended Earth Ministry/WAIPL’s fundraiser, Faith, Hope, and Chocolate! Alki Arts gallery in downtown Seattle was packed with our supporters this spring.

Our keynote speakers were Episcopal Bishop Greg Rickel and Sara Patton, who recently retired as Executive Director of the NW Energy Coalition. Bishop Rickel commended Earth Ministry for being a leader in supporting Greening Congregations around the state, and for our work educating and empowering religious leaders to speak out on environmental issues. He especially acknowledged Earth Ministry for serving as a liaison with Northwest Native nations in support of upholding tribal treaty rights and protecting sacred sites from destruction by fossil fuel projects.

Sara Patton gave Earth Ministry credit for being “serious energy nerds” and shared how we have helped pass strong legislation to protect the climate, invest in energy efficiency and clean fuels, and to safeguard the health of our families and communities.

Earth Ministry/WAIPL board chair Tim Nuse and Executive Director LeeAnne Beres rounded out our speakers, highlighting the vital role that our members play in our shared successes. Thank you to everyone who attended and to all who support Earth Ministry in so many ways!

Creation Care Resource Fair

In May, representatives from Earth Ministry/WAIPL’s large network of congregations came together for a Creation Care Resource Fair at Maple Leaf Lutheran in Seattle. Partner organizations such as InvestSolar, Seattle Tilth’s Food and Faith Initiative, and the Energy Star Congregational Certification Program were on hand to provide information on solar installations for houses of worship, organic gardening, energy audits, and more. Participants also shared best practices from their own congregations.
Taking It to Capitol Hill

LeeAnne Beres and Jessie Dye recently traveled to Washington, DC for the national Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) conference and lobby day. Religious leaders from 40 states around the country participated, showing the depth and breadth of faithful commitment to climate action.

While in our nation’s capital, we joined two other state leaders to lead a conference session on campaign planning, and met with members of the Washington State Congressional delegation on climate issues important to the Northwest: oil transport, coal export, carbon pricing, the Green Climate Fund, and implementing the EPA’s Clean Power Plan.

Standing Up to Oil

Earth Ministry/WAIPL is a key player in the Stand Up to Oil campaign to halt construction of three proposed oil holding facilities in Grays Harbor County, a rural county on the Washington coast. Stopping these facilities will prevent an increase in the number of dangerous oil trains rolling through communities across the state, since the oil would come from both the Bakken fields in North Dakota and the tar sands in Alberta — both over a thousand miles away.

On April 24, Earth Ministry/WAIPL invited Grays Harbor faith leaders for a luncheon and training on how to engage their congregations on this issue. Jessie Dye and a broad range of speakers representing labor, business, tourism, first responders, and the religious community spoke at a local forum on June 10, which informed over 175 community members about the economic, health, and moral implications of these projects.

There will be hearings on October 1 (Elma) and October 8 (Aberdeen), and a public comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statements for these proposed oil terminals. See the Earth Ministry/WAIPL website for more information and to make your voice heard!

Millennials Taking on Climate Change

Earth Ministry/WAIPL makes it a priority to conduct outreach to 18-30 year olds, encouraging the next generation of faith leaders to raise their voices for environmental justice.

On May 30, we hosted an action stop during the Lutheran Volunteer Corps’ citywide “Amazing gRace” challenge. Teams of young adults put their faith into action at our advocacy training, during which they practiced telling their climate stories on postcards to elected officials. This proved to be an influential experience as the winning team selected us to be the recipient of the first place prize.

Young adults writing “climate story” postcards to their legislators during Amazing gRace

Jessie Dye speaking at the Grays Harbor oil forum
**Indigenous Rights, Indignant Wrongs**

Earth Ministry/WAIPL partnered with the Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry for our annual Interfaith Earth Day celebration in April. This year’s theme was “Indigenous Rights, Indignant Wrongs,” highlighting our moral obligation to stand in solidarity with our Native neighbors whose culture, spirituality, and livelihoods are threatened by fossil fuel megaprojects. The gathering featured beautiful Aztec dance by Danza Quetzalcoatl de Olympia, and talks by Jewell James of the Lummi Nation House of Tears Carvers and Mennonite activists Meg and Peter Lumsdaine.

Building on this momentum, Earth Ministry also joined with the Lummi Nation and Sierra Club to host the “Celebrating and Protecting the Salish Sea” conference in May that brought together tribal representatives, faith leaders, environmental organizers, and grassroots activists from across Washington State to discuss collaboration on the Power Past Coal campaign.

The conference included a public event on the shores of Puget Sound attended by over 300 community members, during which Earth Ministry member Rev. Holly Hallman presented a letter of support to the Lummi signed by the head of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

**Earth Ministry in Eastern Washington**

Earth Ministry/WAIPL was invited to Walla Walla for a series of three Earth Day presentations at Whitman College in April. We joined an Environmental Humanities professor for a discussion of the difference between secular and religious climate advocacy and why both are important; led a session on working for environmental justice; and presented an advocacy workshop on climate action. We also connected with the College’s Coordinator of Religious and Spiritual Life and students involved in campus ministry.

While in Walla Walla, we met with the pastor and head of First Congregational United Church of Christ’s Social Concerns Committee, and are working with the three Catholic parishes — St. Patrick’s, Assumption, and St. Francis — on an ecumenical event in October to promote Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environment.

In June, Earth Ministry/WAIPL staff presented at the Pacific NW Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church in Pasco. Over 600 clergy and lay leaders attend this annual event, and Earth Ministry was a featured presenter during a 2-hour “Advocacy Central” training we led in collaboration with the UMC’s Minister for Environmental Stewardship and Advocacy. LeeAnne Beres led a plenary session on best practices for faith-based climate advocacy, and she and Jessica Zimmerle led two workshops on how to effectively tell your personal climate story to an elected official.
“Praised Be,” Indeed!  By Jessica Zimmerle

As a born and bred Lutheran, I never thought that I would be excited to read a 110-page document written by the pope. But after reading Pope Francis’s encyclical on the environment, I plan to sign up for the Vatican book club. After I share some excerpts, I expect you might join me.

*Laudato Si* (“Praised Be”) is the first encyclical addressed to all people about our common home, our one and only planet. In this letter, the pope creates a global dialogue, reasoning, “we need a conversation that includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all” (§14).

The pope states that “our goal is … to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it” (§19). The encyclical addresses the severity of this challenge but maintains optimism that together we “can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements, and talents” (§14).

We are called to consider the impacts of our lifestyles, and to advocate for sound policies for the earth. The pope affirms the national and international efforts to implement a price on carbon, saying, “there is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy” (§26).

Pope Francis emphasizes environmental justice, noting that the most vulnerable among us suffer the worst from environmental harm. “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social,” he reminds us, “but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature” (§139).

Importantly for me, it is clear that the pope understands my generation’s craving for faith-based environmental justice. He sees that young people are demanding change, that the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded are central in our minds as we strive for a better world.

I am especially grateful that the pope declares that “it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions.” At Earth Ministry, we agree that Native communities “… should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed” (§146), such as the coal export terminals threatening sacred tribal lands here in the Northwest.

The pope’s encyclical message resonates with my religious values and upholds the mission of Earth Ministry. *Laudato Si* confirmed my deepest beliefs and reminded me why I am dedicating my life’s work to creation care. It also renewed my spirit. So, “let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope” (§244).

Jessica Zimmerle is the Outreach Coordinator for Earth Ministry/WAIPL.
Spiritual Gifts are not Spiritual Limits

By Sr. Clare Josef-Maier

The concept of spiritual gifts is a familiar one to many people of faith. Humans have a variety of natural skills and abilities that differentiate us from one another in necessary and complementary ways. As a person with a conservative and introverted personality, it isn’t surprising to me that my spiritual gifts are mostly internal: I’m academically-inclined and a quick study; I am contemplative, compassionate, and often even-tempered.

Confident in these strengths, I was calm when I interviewed for the staff of Earth Ministry in 2009. However, that calm evaporated when I heard this question: “At Earth Ministry, much of our work involves advocating for legislation that protects human health and the environment. What has been the nature of your involvement with faithful environmental advocacy?”

Silence fell. The simple answer was, “I have no experience in advocacy whatsoever.” That sounded like a bad answer, and honestly, I don’t remember how I responded. But my answer is beside the point. It was Earth Ministry’s response to me that made the difference.

If I had known the organization better then, I would’ve known that Earth Ministry was not using that question to ascertain my God-given skills. Yes, the question was affirming of my sincere passion for environmental stewardship and my desire to work for justice. However, it was also assessing my willingness to extend past my comfort zone.

As a child, I received so much positive emphasis on recognizing and fostering whatever spiritual gifts we are given. I am grateful for that and recognize its importance! It is a much newer concept to me that justice sometimes requires us to step outside of our strengths to serve. But in realizing our spiritual gifts as a foundation for growth, rather than limits on what we offer the world, we discover new avenues of response to our commitment to justice.

Six years later, neither my personality nor my spiritual gifts have changed. But due to Earth Ministry’s effectiveness in engaging people across the span of their abilities, I have changed. The staff never once diminished the valuable and necessary skills I offer, but they also firmly held that all citizens in a democracy must learn to speak in the halls of power on issues that matter for the health of our communities and all of creation. I watched LeeAnne and Jessie warmly and ably train those for whom comfort with advocacy may not have been granted by the Spirit, recognizing this aptitude can be fostered by human hearts and hands.

It’s true that many members and friends of Earth Ministry already possess spiritual gifts of prophecy, advocacy, and community organizing — these inclinations are part of what draws them to this work. Others more like me will nod empathetically as they read this, sharing spiritual gifts better geared toward more intimate and more subtle work than advocacy. Yet it will take all of us, raising our voices together, to effect the kind of systemic change possible through legislation.

Sr. Clare Josef-Maier is the Editor of Earth Letter.
On June 18 you received a letter from Pope Francis, postmarked 11am, Vatican City time. The pope’s encyclical, Laudato Si, was addressed to “every person living on the planet” — you and the whole human family have been contacted with love and urgency about the peril facing our common home.

The Original Gift of All That Is By Jessie Dye

Pope Francis writes us that “climate change is a global problem . . . one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day” (§25). The Holy Father tells us that climate change is a scientific fact, is caused by us, is serious and immediate, and that it is solvable.

*Laudato Si* is not only about climate change and environmental ruin. It also calls forth the majority of the human family who lives are thrown away, an unavoidable side-effect of our current production and consumption choices. The pope teaches that grinding global poverty and ecosystem destruction are two sides of the same coin. He labels the relationship between human systems and natural systems “integral ecology.”

Through his encyclical, Pope Francis illustrates how the well-being of the human family depends on the well-being of the natural community that supports it. If one is damaged, so is the other. If one is healthy, it can repair and heal the other. Our human lives cannot be separated from the natural world that sustains us.

Pope Francis reminds us that faith and reason (science) both reveal to us the face of the Divine. The facts of climate change are indisputable, as is the pollution of Earth’s waters and extinction of its species. Science can learn from faith as well: “We are conceived in the heart of God, and for this reason each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary” (§65).

*Laudato Si* is a moving meditation, a purely-burning statement of Christian mysticism. Like the famous Prayer of St. Francis, this document reveals a sweet and joyful love of creation and the human psyche. Unlike the many grim tomes reporting the threats we are facing as a species that hit a note of fear and despair (I’m looking at you, Bill McKibben), this encyclical exhorts us to make choices from a place of love — from our deep connection to God to each other and the natural world.

In the origin story of Genesis, the Creator gives us the original gift of all that is, says “Behold, it is very good,” and forms each of us in the image of God. Pope Francis repeatedly rejects the false meaning of the word *dominion*, an oft-cited phrase in Genesis used to justify destructive practices. He writes, “. . . we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures. . . . Clearly the Bible has no place for tyrannical anthropocentrism” (§67, 68).
We are not the boss of nature. The stories of Cain and Abel, Noah and the great flood, and many others paint a portrait of God who requires us to stand for justice and peace. The earth and all God’s creatures have intrinsic value and reflect the Divine. Everything is interconnected.

That’s it, then. Pope Francis rejects as sin the “dominion over nature” model of the role of homo sapiens on Planet Earth. And while he upholds good stewardship of God’s creation as the responsibility of humanity, it is not because humanity owns nature.

The Holy Father has articulated a “web of life” model of the human place on earth interconnected with all God’s creatures and God’s planet. This is both a scientific and a spiritual fact of our existence. And this is good! With the joy of a mystic in love with the world, he quotes Psalms, “Praise him (sic), sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!” (Psalms 148:3-4). God is with us in the web of life: “We do not only exist by God’s mighty power, we also live with him (sic) and beside him.” (§67)

Pope Francis is extremely aware of the damage done to nature and to each other by the human ego. He is critical of a dominant belief that technology is intrinsically good and can solve all problems, and that our human power is limitless. Lambasting the golden calf of consumerism that relegates more than half of humanity to excruciating poverty, he calls for new economic systems that do not worship growth for its own sake. That is the ideology of the cancer cell.

There are no finer words than the pope’s own describing the way forward: “Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack the awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. . . . A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal” (§202).

The final message of the papal encyclical is to take action: Live more simply so as not to be caught up in a whirlwind of needless buying and spending; give thanks for what we have in joyful gratitude; say grace before meals!

Pope Francis calls for political action too, from sustainable models of global development to putting a price on carbon pollution. “Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress” (§194). His ideas seem radical to the typical American public discourse, but it is at its very heart the most Christian of messages.

The letter you received from Pope Francis on June 18 is utterly consistent with the ones you have received from Earth Ministry over the years. We are delighted to have such a wise, powerful, and compassionate ally at the highest level of religious leadership. All that Pope Francis writes, we have shared in almost thirty years of faith formation with our beloved community.

The pope’s message to you is: “God loves you, created the world for you, and you are a beloved part of the web of life. Love God, love each other, love our common home, the planet Earth. Stand in protection of what you love and you will find joy.”
What do Saint Francis of Assisi and the New Orleans Saints have in common? Saint Francis, the patron saint of animals and the environment, and the New Orleans Saints share a strong connection to place.

Today, stewardship of place has brought together diverse religious leaders — Muslims, Jews, Christians — who are playing on the same team to protect the earth, despite their differing religious beliefs. These faith leaders are standing in solidarity, united by a moral imperative to care for God's creation.

In his book Making Saints, Kenneth Woodward defines a saint as “someone through whom we catch a glimpse of what God is like — and what we are called to be.” From mosques to monasteries, these saints are revealing a new world where hopeful environmental action happens on an individual, congregational, and community level.

In that spirit of hope, I present a roster of 10 religious-environmental saints. The first five have gained national and even international recognition, while the second list features spiritual leaders encountered in my own daily life. All 10 saints offer lessons for a new world, where congregations model the principles and practices of sustainable communities.

**Five Saints of the World**

The familiar tune “When the Saints Go Marching In” calls for a new day: “Oh, when the new world is revealed, Lord, I want to be in that number.” These five saints have influenced my own belief that we must respond through faith to environmental degradation here on Earth, rather than wait for heaven at St. Peter’s gates.

**Rev. Sally Bingham**

As a stay-at-home mom, the Rev. Sally Bingham questioned why clergy in her Episcopal church were not talking about faith and the environment. As an ordained priest, she now serves as the founder and director of the Regeneration Project and Interfaith Power and Light (IPL) Campaign, which provides a religious response to global warming. With IPL affiliates in 40 states, this campaign has become a powerful interfaith force to address climate change.

**Wangari Maathí**

Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, Wangari Maathí’s work resulted in 20 million trees planted on farms, church compounds, and gardens in Kenya. The founder of the Green Belt Movement, Maathí began planting trees as a grassroots initiative to improve the lives of women and conserve the environment. She was the first woman in East and Central Africa to earn her doctorate degree and credits the Benedictine sisters with promoting her love of science.

**The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew**

The leader of the Orthodox Church, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has earned the title of “the Green Patriarch.” He brought together scientists, religious leaders, and government officials for visits to major bodies of water in the world, including the Danube, the Amazon, and the Arctic, to integrate scientific and spiritual understandings of water.

**Wendell Berry**

From his farm near Port Royal, KY, Wendell Berry writes as a farmer and activist, challenging people of faith to practice their convictions. Berry, who attends a local Baptist church, has criticized Christians as complacent about an economy that destroys the environment. His writings urge a “home economy” of raising food and animals through a life rooted in one place.
Rev. Mitch Hescox
When oil poured in the Gulf of Mexico this summer, the Rev. Mitch Hescox decided to walk from Waveland, Miss. to Venice, La. and pray with Gulf Coast residents affected by the spill. In 2009, he became president/CEO of the Evangelical Environmental Network. He also organized an 18-day walk from West Virginia to Washington, DC to bear witness to mountaintop removal sites and pray for victims of climate change.

Five Saints in my Life
“I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” was one of my grandmother’s favorite hymns: “And one was a doctor and one was a queen, and one was a shepherdess on the green. They were all of them saints of God and I mean, God helping, to be one too.”

Religious-environmental saints are acting with conviction to conserve the places I love. One is a writer, and one is a priest, and one is a mother, just like me. If I can find these saints in my small circles, these natural saints are among us all.

LeeAnne Beres
“A thousand individual acts of caring for the earth can be either amplified or wiped away by a single act of Congress,” says LeeAnne Beres, executive director of Earth Ministry in Washington State. Among its many programs, Earth Ministry provides training in environmental advocacy skills for congregations. This organization brought together interfaith religious leaders and legislators in a campaign to transition the state from coal to clean energy by 2025.

Rev. John Rausch
In his work with the Catholic Committee on Appalachia, Father John Rausch has led countless tours of mountaintop removal sites for seminarians, community members, and interfaith groups. On Sept. 11, Rev. Rausch led an interfaith prayer service facing a mountaintop removal site to pray for jobs that build a just society and steward creation. He often ends these services by giving wildflower seeds to participants to scatter amid the rubble as a sign of hopeful action.

Jill Rios
Jill Rios and her daughter Aja worship at La Capilla de Santa Maria, where her husband is the priest for this Episcopal parish that ministers to Latino immigrants. With her leadership, La Capilla has weatherized the sanctuary, planted a garden, and built a cob oven as a microenterprise for parishioners. As the former director of North Carolina Interfaith Power and Light, she also created a program to weatherize 300 low-income homes and provide climate justice tours for congregations.

Rabbi Larry Troster
Rabbi Larry Troster fosters the next generation of religious-environmental saints through his leadership with the GreenFaith Fellowship program. This training builds the skills of interfaith leaders to care for creation using a framework of justice, spirituality, and stewardship. Based in New Jersey, GreenFaith also promotes initiatives such as solar panels on sanctuaries and an environmental certification program for congregations.

Will Harlan
A practicing Buddhist and environmental writer, Will Harlan lives off the grid with his wife and son on their farm in Western North Carolina. His spirituality connects him to the earth and to his avocation as an elite ultramarathoner in places like the Appalachian Mountains and Cooper Canyon, Mexico. Harlan recently completed a 72-mile run in the Smoky Mountains to raise awareness about mountaintop removal.

Believers are creating collective momentum from individual acts: one cob oven built, one interfaith service organized, one church garden tilled, one piece of legislation passed. Together, these people of faith represent a communion of saints rooted in God’s earth, but moving forward, one step at a time.

And I mean to be one too.

This article is reprinted with permission from the HuffPost Blog. Mallory McDuff, PhD, is faculty at Warren Wilson College and author of Sacred Acts: How Churches are Working to Protect Earth’s Climate.
build up the church around him, and that church still stands in Assisi today.

But, as time went by, St. Francis began to wonder if the “ruined” house of God was not a physical structure, but the Christian community itself: a community that focused more on itself than service to others, more on ornate structures than feeding the poor or praising God with all creatures. He spent his life not constructing church buildings but going outside them with a wandering religious community. They lived outside, along with God’s sun and moon and ants and mosquitoes. Francis synthesized the spiritual and the natural; his love of nature and his love of God were two notes in perfect harmony.

Many of us draw hope from St. Francis for our world: if a holy man one thousand years ago could learn to love God’s world so deeply, then perhaps more of us can learn to love it, too. Perhaps we can use that love to save it from the ravages of climate change, of extinction, of pollution. If he could build a new kind of faith outside the walls of churches, perhaps we can build a new kind of life that celebrates God’s creation rather than degrading it.

We live in troubled times, and it often seems like human beings are waging war on the rest of the planet. Francis offers the hope that we can step outside of that conflict by meeting God’s other creatures and recognizing our kinship with them.

The hope Francis found outside church walls was not just about the natural world, though. By bringing his friars outside the walls of traditional monastic life, he brought them into conversation with the people who were living there without choosing it: the homeless, the sick, the marginalized. Francis’ connection to nature was inherently also a connection to the poor. And, just as he did with the natural world, he found hope and love in his connection to them.

This may be the deepest lesson that Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si* asks us to learn from St. Francis: to love the earth is to love the poor, and to love the poor is to love the earth. As the encyclical puts it, “a true ecological approach **always** becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment” (§49).

It can be easy to live our lives within our own social class. Those of us who are economically comfortable all too often create enclaves where we never encounter the less fortunate. The saint and the pope both remind us that if we love God and love God’s earth, we must move outside, encountering God’s people who are poor, learning from them, and empowering them.

We must also learn to overcome other boundaries we put up between one another, the other walls that separate humanity. St. Francis modeled this during the 5th Crusade, deciding he was needed when he heard that Christians were battling Muslims in Egypt. He walked across enemy lines and requested a meeting with Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil, and spoke honestly with the sultan about his faith. This is the first time we know of in the history of the crusades that a Christian and a Muslim leader sat down together to talk about their faith in God. Francis was allowed to go in peace and given an escort to visit Jerusalem as a Christian pilgrim. While other forces kept the war raging, Francis offered a model of stepping outside one’s narrow allegiances to recognize common ground.

Earth Ministry offered another example of stepping outside narrow
allegiances during the effort to move Washington State beyond coal a few years ago. By working not only with environmentalists but also with workers and management at the state’s only coal plant, Earth Ministry helped to shepherd a plan agreed to by both the industry and the environmental community in 2011, a plan that will end the industrial burning of coal in our state by 2025. Because Earth Ministry talked to all sides and kept communication open, this deal serves as another model for people coming together and talking rather than fighting across familiar battle lines.

Pope Francis also crosses boundaries in *Laudato Si*, insisting that he writes not only for Catholics but for all people of good will. The encyclical tells us that the only way to solve the problems of war, poverty, and climate change are for human beings to come together in universal solidarity, to understand that all people — and all creatures — are sisters and brothers in God’s family, sharing one world and one future.

The assertion that moved me more than any other comes near the encyclical’s conclusion: “The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face” (§233). Here Pope Francis expresses his faith — the universe is unfolding in God and calls people to make faith real by finding beauty and meaning in the creation ... a leaf, a trail, a dewdrop — in our neighbors — in the faces of the poor.

The pope’s message resonates with the saint’s, and both promise that we will find hope for our world when we move outside the structures we have built into the natural world. We will find hope when we move outside the limits we have placed on ourselves and into the full family of humanity.

Hope is right outside.

*Dr. Kevin J. O’Brien is the treasurer of Earth Ministry’s Board of Directors and the co-author of* An Introduction to Christian Environmentalism: Ecology, Virtue, and Ethics.
Praised Be: Pope Francis calls us to care for creation
Earth Ministry/WAIPL was the lead organizer for Seattle’s release of *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environment, which included a celebration held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish on June 18. The event featured a tour of Our Lady of Guadalupe’s green buildings, grounds, and solar panels as well as an inspirational worship service. Over 400 people attended, of which 150 came early for the parish tour.

The event speakers made a strong connection between the pope’s message of climate action in his encyclical and our call as people of faith to take action at the individual, congregational, and systemic levels. Dr. Catherine Punsalan-Manlimos, Director of the Institute of Catholic Thought and Culture at Seattle University, reaffirmed that the pope’s call to action for the earth is deeply rooted in Catholic theology and Biblical teachings, and is a fundamental touchstone of our faith.

Dan and Robyn Campbell, a couple from Our Lady of Guadalupe, spoke to how they are taking steps to reduce their carbon footprints and leave a better world for their toddler. Fr. Jack Walmesley, Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, highlighted how the parish is doing its part by installing solar panels, constructing green buildings, putting in rain gardens, and serving as a beacon in the community.

Jessie Dye of Earth Ministry/WAIPL brought the message home by focusing on how we can put our faith into action through advocacy — by putting a price on carbon, standing with indigenous leaders against fossil fuel export, investing in a green economy, and assisting low-income and communities of color in adaptation to climate change.

The event included a very moving entrance of the encyclical carried by Emily Amesquita, a middle-school girl and member of the parish; a Native prayer by Sr. Pat Eley, a member of the Sisters of Providence and the Duwamish Tribe; and a closing commissioning by Fr. Jack to go out into the world renewed to take action for the climate.

The celebration generated local, regional, and national media coverage which can be found in Earth Ministry’s press room: earthministry.org/about/press-room.
Leaving a Faithful Legacy Through Estate Planning

As dear friends and valued members of Earth Ministry, you know the incredible importance of faithful environmental stewardship. For nearly 25 years, Earth Ministry has led the way in caring for the environment from a faith perspective.

We know – thanks in large part to your financial support and partnership – that Earth Ministry’s programs and advocacy make a real difference. Together we can continue to invest in opportunities for our children, grandchildren, and communities so the next generation does better than the last.

If you want to make a lasting gift that reflects your deeply-felt values while making a real difference for the Earth, please consider including Earth Ministry in your estate planning.

Estate planning isn’t just for the rich or people who have retired. It’s for everyone. A planned gift is a financial donation after your lifetime that shares your dedication to Earth Ministry and its vital mission with future generations. It can begin by simply writing a will, but it can also include gifts of stock or other securities, involve changing beneficiaries of life insurance policies and retirement accounts, or providing for your charitable interests through a direct bequest. To ensure that your estate plans meet your long-term income and family needs, be sure to consult with your attorney or financial advisor.

A bequest in 2014 was vital to helping Earth Ministry continue our work battling coal and oil companies searching for a fossil fuel foothold in the Pacific Northwest. Another bequest helped Earth Ministry weather the recent recession, and your thoughtful gift will help ensure the organization’s important work will continue well into the future.

To discuss making a planned gift to Earth Ministry, please contact Executive Director LeeAnne Beres at (206) 632-2426 or LeeAnne@earthministry.org. She will be happy to talk with you about planned gifts to consider or to schedule a time to meet with you in person.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment Earth Ministry and our shared mission, and for your consideration of this profound form of stewardship.

I have watched (and sometimes participated in) the development of Earth Ministry and felt proud of the accomplishments and outreach. I am impressed by LeeAnne Beres and Jessie Dye, their work, their leadership, and their fierce dedication. I know that every organization depends on small donations like mine and other larger contributions. I also know you build a budget based on membership renewals.

You should know that Earth Ministry is mentioned in my will as a recipient of a percentage of my charitable donations.

With my donation goes my heart and mind and energy to support what you are doing in my behalf. You have opened my eyes over the years to the harm being done and the advocacy needed to correct it. I can’t thank you enough for what you are doing to educate people about the environment, to help churches and synagogues understand our Biblical mandate to care for creation, and to provide actions for us to undertake.
Glance at the sun. See the moon and the stars.

Gaze at the beauty of earth’s greenings.

Now, think.

What delight God gives to humankind with all these things . . . .

All nature is at the disposal of humankind.

We are to work with it. For without we cannot survive.

-Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)