The Work of the Kingdom

By Rev. Kathleen Patton

Not that long ago, a reporter asked me what I’d do if a proposed coal terminal goes through here in my town of Longview, WA.

Millennium Bulk Terminals proposes to build one of the largest coal export facilities in North America here on the banks of the Columbia River. Eight daily mile-and-a-half long trains of uncovered coal would spill toxins throughout the Columbia watershed and poison the air in neighborhoods where children and the elderly already experience the highest asthma levels in the state. These toxins would ultimately contribute disastrously to climate change. We’ve been fighting hard for four years to prevent that nightmare from coming true.

So the question of “what if we lose?” caught me off guard. It’s not that I assume the project will be blocked, though I am optimistic that it will. It’s just that I had never tried to imagine what was on the other side of this particular fight.

The answer that came to me was, apart from being gravely disappointed, I’d keep doing what I’m already doing. This is just one battle of one campaign in a very long war, to use a military metaphor. Or

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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

How do we as people of faith find hope in the face of despair? How do we acknowledge the brokenness of God’s creation yet continue to work for its protection? And how do we continue to fight for environmental justice when we are weary and the road seems long indeed?

As we head toward the darkest night of the year, it brings us joy to remember that this season also signifies the return of the light. With light, there is hope. Hope is not mindless optimism, assuming everything will turn out all right. Hope takes hard work, grounded by belief in something bigger than ourselves.

Hope is built on a framework of what I like to call the Three C’s: Covenant, Commitment, and Community. God’s covenant with all of creation calls us into right relationship with God, the earth, and with each other. Together, we commit to working for the common good, to speaking truth to power even when the odds are stacked against us. And all of us, joining hearts, minds, and hands, form a community of caring that has the power to truly transform the world.

This issue of Earth Letter offers a variety of perspectives on how we can manifest hope in the world. Whether we are telling our stories, marching in the street, or even allowing ourselves the time to grieve before taking up the struggle again, we are buoyed by the deep connections we have with each other and with God. Working together, we can live into the Prayer of St. Francis to sow love, pardon, faith, hope, light, and joy.

Blessings,

[Signature]
Earth Ministry relies on donations from individuals like you to make this important work possible. Join or renew your membership in Earth Ministry, sign up for monthly giving, or make a special gift at www.earthministry.org or by calling (206) 632-2426. Thank you for your support!

**GOINGS-ON at Earth Ministry**

**Totem Pole Journey**

Each year for the past three years, Lummi tribal members have carved and transported totem poles thousands of miles to raise public awareness of and strengthen opposition to the export of coal and oil from the west coast of the United States and Canada.

The 2015 Totem Pole Journey focused on religious and tribal communities, and included stops at Grandview Calvary Baptist Church in Vancouver, BC; St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Longview, WA; St. Philip Neri Catholic Church in Portland, OR; Riverside Community Church in Hood River, OR; Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane, WA; and Har Shalom Synagogue in Missoula, MT.

The journey played an important role in uniting opposition to fossil fuel export projects, sending a strong message to agencies and elected officials, and strengthening alliances.

**Interfaith Statement on Washington’s Clean Air Rule**

On September 17, Earth Ministry/WAIPL Executive Director LeeAnne Beres and ten other religious leaders met with Governor Jay Inslee to discuss how we can combat climate change in Washington State.

These faith leaders, representing Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Sikh traditions, have since released a short statement in support for government action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (read it at http://bit.ly/1VSLUL). Governor Inslee recently directed the Washington State Department of Ecology to implement statewide carbon limits set in law in 2008. This Clean Air Rule will gradually reduce the amount of carbon pollution produced in Washington over time by targeting the state’s 30 largest carbon emitters.

As faith leaders, we support the Clean Air Rule and are committed to ensuring that Washington has an effective, equitable climate policy that reduces carbon pollution; protects low-income communities and communities of color most impacted by pollution and climate change; and invests in clean, renewable energy and good jobs.
Committed to Our Common Home

Earth Ministry/WAIPL partnered with Seattle University’s Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture for an evening of ritual, word, and song on September 24 in an interfaith celebration of Laudato Si’: On care for our common home, Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environment.

The pope’s letter was addressed not just to Catholics but to “every person living on this planet,” and called all people of good will to care for creation. At the Seattle event, religious leaders from Christian, Jewish, Sufi, and Buddhist traditions shared reflections on how the papal encyclical can be a moral guide for people of all faiths, as well as for policymakers as they make decisions about our air, water, and climate.

Dr. Eddie Daichi Salazar, Eco-Sangha Seattle; Rev. Cherag Halima Thea Levkovitz, Sufi Order International; Sr. Clare Josef-Maier, Deaconess in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Rabbi Zari Weiss, Kol HaNeshamah synagogue; Dr. Catherine Punsalan-Manlimos, Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture, and Jessie Dye of Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light all discussed how we can live into the pope’s invitation to put our faith into action for the earth.

Standing Up to Oil

Rapid and dramatic changes to oil transportation pose serious new threats to Northwest communities, economies, and waterways – and Earth Ministry/WAIPL is working hard to protect our environment and way of life. We lead faith community opposition to three proposed oil holding facilities in Grays Harbor County, which would mean an increase in the number of dangerous oil trains rolling through communities across the state.

Jessie Dye and Jessica Zimmerle led a testimony-preparation workshop in late September, and turned out the faith community at two public hearings in October. Nearly 150 people attended the hearing in the rural town of Elma, and a record-setting 400 attended the hearing in Aberdeen. Almost every person who testified did so in opposition to oil.

Rev. Kathryn Garnett of Hoquiam United Methodist spoke at the Aberdeen rally, and numerous clergy and religious leaders made formal comments. For more information, see the Stand Up to Oil section of Earth Ministry/WAIPL’s website.
Parliament of World Religions

Earth Ministry/WAIPL’s LeeAnne Beres and Jessie Dye joined with Yaira Robinson of Texas Interfaith Power & Light to lead a “Faithful Advocacy 101” workshop at the Parliament of World Religions in Salt Lake City, UT.

Founded in 1893, the Parliament is a prestigious international interfaith gathering which works to cultivate harmony among the world’s religious and spiritual communities to achieve a just, peaceful, and sustainable world. The Parliament was last held in the U.S. in 1993.

Our workshop was the only offering on faith-based environmental advocacy, and gave participants an overview of values-based advocacy with tools and tips for identifying decision makers, selecting issues, engaging clergy and lay leaders, using social media to influence policy, overcoming obstacles, and magnifying the faith voice.

Churches, Clergy, & Congregations

Earth Ministry’s recent outreach included events with St. James Cathedral, Bet Alef Meditative Synagogue, Pinney Ridge Lutheran, Trinity United Methodist, Ballard First Lutheran, St. Mark’s Cathedral, and Magnolia United Church of Christ in Seattle; Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship and the combined Catholic parishes in Bellingham; St. Andrew’s Episcopal in Port Angeles; and St. Paul Lutheran Church in Lodi, CA.

Earth Ministry staff also made presentations at the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church’s Spiritual Activism conference, Church Council of Greater Seattle’s annual conference, Seattle University, Seattle Pacific University, Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, and JustFaith in Seattle; Trinity Lutheran College in Everett; Interfaith Works in Olympia; and REACH (Renton Ecumenical Association of Churches) in Renton.

Farewell Clare, Hello Meighan!

With this issue we are bidding a fond farewell to Sr. Clare Josef-Maier, who has ably served as the editor of Earth Letter for the last two years. Sr. Clare has a long history with Earth Ministry, having previously served as Operations Manager and Outreach Coordinator as well as Earth Letter editor, and we look forward to her continued engagement in a volunteer capacity. Thank you for all your hard work, Clare!

We are excited to announce that Rev. Meighan Pritchard will be stepping into the role of editor. Meighan is pastor of Prospect United Church of Christ in Seattle, and until recently also served as Minister of Environmental Justice for the national United Church of Christ denomination. She has a background in writing and editing and we are incredibly glad to be welcoming her to the Earth Ministry team.

Earth Letter Winter 2015–2016 Photo Credits
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What gives me hope in the work for environmental justice and a sustainable planet? Covenant. Covenant between God and creation, and covenant between all peoples.

God is really good at showing up for us. And many of us are showing up in faithful ways to address climate change. If we let ourselves become overwhelmed by the enormity of the climate crisis, we will become mired in despair. If we actively engage to our utmost, and join with others who are doing the same, we can live in hope.

In September 2014, LeeAnne Beres, Jessica Zimmerle, and I joined 400,000 of our closest friends in New York City for the People's Climate March. We were young people, old, individuals of many ethnicities, cultures, and faith traditions, all united in our care for the planet and its inhabitants. Anyhow and everyhow, we shouted and danced through midtown Manhattan.

I marched with 10,000 people of faith: Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i, Hare Krishna, and more. A Noah’s ark float made the journey alongside an inflatable mosque. The message for our global leaders, who were meeting on climate change at the United Nations, was that we wanted real solutions. That day was full of joy.

I engage in environmental justice work for many reasons: because I take seriously God’s commandment in Deuteronomy 30 to “choose life”—to choose what is sustainable and life-giving for all. Because I find “dominion” the most abused word in the Bible, an excuse to dominate and destroy rather than steward and live in symbiosis with the rest of creation. Because God is about justice, and those most impacted by climate change and environmental destruction are often the poorest, the least able to adapt, and the least responsible for causing the problems. And because I believe that if we all bring our gifts to address our environmental challenges, they could be remedied.

We can do this. So I try to do my part. I find hope in celebrating what is going right. Shell just pulled the plug on its Arctic drilling project. Hurrah! Burning coal is on the wane. Yay! President Obama came out against the Keystone XL pipeline. All right!

These celebrations can only happen because people full of faith, hope, and determination refuse to give up fighting for a healthier planet. We understand that we are all in this together. That’s a form of covenant, of working together for the benefit of all.

As the former minister for environmental justice of the United Church of Christ and now the denomination’s environmental justice curriculum trainer, I have worked with many people of faith who take up the challenges of climate change with love and celebrate progress with joy. There are more and more of us out there, shining a light in the darkness. As we shine our lights together, we fill the world with hope.

Rev. Meighan Pritchard is the pastor of Prospect United Church of Christ in Seattle, WA, and will become the editor of Earth Letter with the Spring 2016 issue.
Making the World Anew  By Mikaila Barton-Gawryn

There are moments in which we see the world change dramatically right before our eyes. Moments when we are caught between disbelief that this new change could actually be taking place, and awe at how natural this new world looks.

I felt this way when we watched the Berlin Wall fall, and when Nelson Mandela rose to lead all citizens in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Suddenly the impossible became possible and intangible dreams were born into being. When we are in these moments we get the sense that the world is recreated anew each day and limited only by the boundaries of our own vision.

Moments of dramatic change are the bright lights we remember. But the truth is that millions of small steps were taken daily for decades, perhaps hundreds of years, to bring about the changes we see before us today.

It is when we are wrestling in the darkness that we must remember that it takes small steps, small actions to make the world anew.

My own life reflects these times of darkness and light. As a teenager, I was not encouraged or supported in my desire to connect scripture and care for the environment. It would be several years before I attended a Religion and Ecology class at Seattle University and learned that I was not the only one seeking that connection, and another six months after that before I began volunteering with Earth Ministry. Finally, I discovered that people of faith all over the world are passionate about caring for God’s creation! It took me many small steps before I saw firsthand the world changing before my eyes.

Another way in which I experienced this kind of awe at the changing world was the day that I met Karen Bowman, a powerful advocate for human and environmental health in her career as a nurse practitioner. Karen encouraged my interest in connecting environmental health with nursing. However, through two years of nursing school I met many health care professionals who simply couldn’t see why traditional "environmental issues" were truly human health issues.

It wasn’t until I was working as a nurse myself that I traveled to Washington D.C. and found myself sitting among 25 nurses from around the country preparing to speak to legislators about why the Clean Power Plan will tackle climate change and improve the health of children. Suddenly as I looked around the room, I felt again that the world had changed.

Hope, like a muscle, must be worked or it withers. Small acts of faith, small acts of courage are the tiny steps that we take daily to keep the muscle of hope alive in the darkness. I firmly believe that faith and courage will inch us closer to a day when we open our eyes and see dramatic, concise movement forward on climate change.

Let us take these small steps together. Let us talk to our legislators about the Clean Power Plan. Let us write letters to the editor of our local papers. Let us speak the lines we long to hear in the narratives of our lives.

All of a sudden the impossible will become real, and we will make the world anew.

Mikaila Gawryn is a nurse at National Jewish Health in Denver, CO. She is a former Earth Ministry board member.
In the first book of The Lord of the Rings trilogy, the wizard Gandalf explains to Frodo the dreadful history and strength of the One Ring and the threat it presents to the world they live in. The burden of destroying the One Ring falls to Frodo, a simple hobbit who must stand against the most terrible power Middle Earth had ever seen.

“I wish it need not have happened in my time,” said Frodo.

“So do I,” replies Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”

This year ends as the hottest on record. Earth is experiencing its sixth great extinction. We are living in a geological epoch known as the Anthropocene, in which human activity has created a significant impact on Earth’s ecosystems.

All the world is in trouble. Glaciers in the Himalayas in India, Nepal, and Tibet are retreating such that many could virtually disappear by 2035. The sea level is rising faster than scientists have predicted, putting some of the poorest people on Earth at risk of losing everything. Acid in the ocean from carbon dioxide and mercury in our atmosphere from coal plants threaten the very water and air of life.
sapiens’ brain that lengthened human life expectancy, created technology that allows us to travel between continents in a day, keeps our homes warm, and connects us globally through Facebook — that brain has created the means to permanently damage Earth’s climate and oceans.

This leaves us with Frodo’s dilemma: what to do with the time that is given us.

Gandalf, as readers of Lord of the Rings know, is a strategic genius. Beside having impressive wizarding powers, he can analyze the problem and know what is required for a successful outcome, tenuous and risky as it may be. Good strategic thinking is the center of any successful campaign, and in the climate movement there are many brilliant thinkers who are using the fine neocortex we’ve been given to plot a way forward.

For a global problem, strategies are diverse, regional, and built on the strengths of local people and the weaknesses of those who profit from pollution. In the campaigns Earth Ministry has championed in the Northwest, preventing coal and oil from accessing our coastal ports, our strategy has been to organize along the rail lines, and our tactics have been “death by a thousand cuts.” One OpEd here, a pastor’s testimony there, a letter-writing campaign to the governor – all add cumulatively to the strength of the campaign to keep fossil fuels in the ground. So far, so good.

In the successful campaign by Bold Nebraska to defeat the Keystone XL pipeline and defend the Ogallala Aquifer from toxic oil spills, the Cowboy and Indian Alliance made a powerful strategic and visual partnership in joint protection of a shared homeland.

There were lawyers evaluating legal tools, some winning and some not. There were lobbyists for clean energy in D.C., and the Sierra Club offered national leadership and technical advice. Most of all, there were average Nebraskans deciding what to do with the time they were given. And Frodo destroys the Ring in the cracks of Mount Doom.

Good strategic thinking, devious enemies, and surprising and heroic allies are all plentiful in Lord of the Rings. In our time, we also have heroic allies in the brilliance of the Beyond Coal Campaign, the diverse coalition defending the Thin Green Line in the Northwest, 350.org’s divestment campaigns, amazing and unprecedented Native American and First Nations political and spiritual leadership, and of course, the commitment and moral voice of faith communities across the country.

The ever-joyful and hope-inspiring Pope Francis stepped into the global fray in 2015 with his encyclical Laudato Si’, stating that caring for creation is not an add-on to the world’s largest Christian denomination, but central to our faith tradition. As a leader, the pope rivals Gandalf (you can tell him I said so) in his strategic planning, his outreach to diverse leaders around the world, and his relentless presence on behalf of the earth and the humblest of our communities. Plus, they both wear white.

There is essential pain in the year ahead, and great victories and losses behind us. Our allies are the most vibrant and wise we could hope for. So the question remains for each of us: what are we going to do with the time we’ve been given?

Jessie Dye is Program & Outreach Director of Earth Ministry.
to use a less violent metaphor: this is just one crop in a diverse farm that is part of a larger collective economic/ecological structure.

The clumsy agricultural metaphor may be more appropriate. For me this is not only a fight to prevent something (a coal terminal) from happening. It is a cultivation of collective will and spirit — raising consciousness, drawing us together, growing community and resilience for the larger work of turning the tide on fossil fuel and moving toward a harmonious relationship with the planet. I see it as a spiritual practice of planting seeds for our collective evolution. That work can be set back by a failure, but must carry on despite any number of losses.

In fact the work continues even in the face of complete disaster. Strategies may change, of course, but I can never see “giving up” on environmental work. That would be like giving up on my family or my faith. It would be to deny my deep identity as a child of God and a member of God’s creation. I hope that I will never be able to do that, or even imagine doing it.

For most of my life I skirted around engagement. My initial spiritual awakening was to Christ and to the creation at once. I remember, at age eleven, walking back to my teepee from the campfire while staring up between a canyon of tall pines to a sky crammed with stars and feeling a new and overwhelming sense of awe and connection. But my early faith community did not do much to help me connect those dots, and it was many years later that I began to reawaken to a hunger for a more integrated relationship with creation.

When I did come back to my senses, I was an adult Episcopal priest. I moved quickly from awareness to shame for my years of evasion, lack of commitment, neglect of the planet’s needs and middle-class consumption. I was afraid to express my restored passion. I feared offending people and alienating members of my congregation who would disagree with me. I felt powerless and I was ignorant about any possible course of action. I got stuck.

The threat of a coal terminal coming to my hometown shook me out of my dilemma. I remember a conversation with a friend in which the rage I felt toward the coal, rail, and export companies came roaring up. I was furious that they would exploit my community’s economic vulnerability, furious with their cynical greed and disregard for their polluting impact. The words started pouring out, and my voice started getting louder, and it was like floodgates opening.

Not long after that I was serendipitously invited to speak for at a Sierra Club gathering in a neighboring community. I went with great trepidation, expecting the secular crowd to be cool to my faith-based perspective. Instead I was welcomed enthusiastically, and I came to see that the voice of faith is essential to the work of environmental transformation. Since then I have hardly been able to shut up.

I was stunned to discover that despite a greater and growing awareness of climate change and the economic powers that oppress us, I was less depressed. Action, connection with others, and a sense of alignment with my own conscience set me free. I have been encouraged and touched over and over by new friendships, new heroes, and new communities both locally and now internationally.

Now, I only get depressed when I let my fears and anxieties slow me down and shut me up. As long as I let it flow, there

Rev. Kathleen Patton at the Longview coal export hearing
seems to be energy, and it seems to come from a source beyond myself.

Grief itself is a kind of energy. We fear that grief will overwhelm us. I attended The Work that Reconnects gathering with Joanna Macy in Philo, CA this summer, and I and the other participants did a lot of grieving together. We all identified as people of good will who seek to change the system by changing hearts, and we understood that we have a huge task in front of us.

There was no sunny optimism about where this path would lead us. There was frank acknowledgement that things are really a mess and will get much worse before they get better, and that they may not get better at all. We may yet fry every form of life on this planet. We may end in war and drought and chaos. It was surprising to me how good it felt to name this bald truth together.

In the midst of that excellent company of justice workers from all over the world, in the presence of their integrity and passion, I found a great deal of courage and trust in a larger reality. Together we experienced an alignment with the great power of the creation that evolves toward complexity and love. I can only describe it as being "in the right place.

We Christians call that experience the "Kingdom of God." It’s being in the right place, even when everything is a disaster around you. It’s knowing the peace and strength of hope in the midst of crucifixion. It’s a community of souls combining their gifts, and offering themselves in love and service. The Buddhist equivalent is the Shambhala warriors. We don’t know where it is all going, but we trust the Spirit, the life force that moves us forward together.

Recently I watched again the classic Ken Burns documentary, The Civil War. I keep hearing those gorgeous voices from the program singing "We are climbing Jacob’s ladder…" African Americans who have battled the scars of slavery and the scourge of racism know this journey of transformation more deeply and painfully than I can imagine as a white person of privilege — the conviction that things are not as they should be, the struggle to change them, the grave danger of action and the uncertainty of the outcome. They also know the power of community and riding the wave of Spirit so much larger than any individual or group.

The climb up Jacob’s ladder is at times exhilarating and at times devastating. Sometimes it’s just a slog. But it is the right place.

Rev. Kathleen Paton is rector of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Longview, WA.

"Hope" by Emily Dickinson
Stories. I’ve always loved stories.

In college, I majored in English not because I had a specific English Literature-related career in mind (I know, there aren’t many of those), but because I loved to read fiction and really delve into the characters. To me, books are windows into other people, other places, other times, and even other worlds; and the experiences I have in reading a good book can change — and has changed — the way I live my life.

Books I love. But video games?

I played some video games growing up — in the arcade, Pac Man, Donkey Kong, and Centipede; on Nintendo, Super Mario Brothers, The Legend of Zelda, and The Adventures of Lolo (that was a good game — really). Before that, there was Atari . . . don’t get me started.

I never played video games as much as my brothers did, though, and when games took a leap into 3D perspectives, I didn’t follow. To this day, I’ll play the old version of Super Mario, but the newer ones make me a little dizzy. One of my brothers, on the other hand, did more than follow; he’s made a career out of gaming, working as a video game designer in San Diego, CA.

One time at a family gathering, I got him talking about video games, and he said something that has me thinking. “Video games are about stories,” he said, “but they’re not like books or movies where you have no say in what happens. In video games, you help shape the story.”

Interactive, participatory stories with outcomes as-yet-unwritten is what working for climate justice is all about — and Marshall Ganz, Kennedy School of Government at Harvard professor, offers a framework for transforming our stories into effective, sustainable, and hopeful action.

In his work on Public Narrative, Ganz describes three interwoven components that together can form a compelling narrative for transformational social change: The Story of Self; The Story of Us; and The Story of Now.

The Story of Self is pretty self-explanatory, I think. We each come from a particular background and have our own life experience. It is when we speak from our experience — from our unique knowing — that we are sharing our Story of Self.

The Story of Us is the story of our community — our religious community, our local community, our state or national community. In each case, there is a story (or stories) that helps inform how we come together and participate in community life, shaping the Story of Us.

The Story of Now is the story of the challenges we face as a community right now. It is when we bring our individual stories and our collective stories to bear in addressing the “fierce urgency of now” that we can effectively mobilize to create change.

As Marshall Ganz says, “Our goal is to meet this challenge, to seize this hope, and turn it into concrete action. After developing our stories of self, then we work on building relationships, which forms the story of us. From there we turn to strategizing and
action, working together to achieve a common purpose, learning to experience hope — that’s the story of now.”

In order to take even the first step in working for change, though, we have to see the world and our systems as realities that can be changed and that we can work to change.

We are not characters in a book whose endings are already written. We are not actors in a movie whose scripts are firmly fixed. And no, we’re not exactly players in a video game, either; but as in video games, at every step along the way we can make choices — and the choices we make affect what happens next. This applies to our individual lives, our communal lives, and our systemic lives.

Maybe the first choice we have to make is whether or not to accept the story we’ve been told. Often when it comes to social, economic, and political systems and structures, the prevailing story is the unyielding myth of the status quo: “this is how it’s always been;” “someone tried that once, but it didn’t work;” or (my personal favorite), “one person can’t really make a difference.”

But you know what? Our structures and systems were constructed by people — and people really can work to change them. The story we’ve been told was written by someone, but it does not script who we are or what we do today — that is up to us. In our story, we can improve our characters, we can redirect the plotline; we can even change the theme. The only thing holding us back is an unquestioning belief in the rigidity of the script, and our mistaken sense of powerlessness.

Stories are essential. They spark our imagination and can make us laugh, cry, turn inward for reflection, or cause us to rise up and take action. They allow us to connect with others and find meaning in our own lives. As long as there have been people, there have been stories. No matter your religion, culture, or country, you have your own unique story to tell.

As people of faith, we have the information, tools, and community to tell the stories that are so necessary in the work for transformational social, environmental, and economic change. By connecting our individual stories (the Story of Self) with the story of our community (the Story of Us), we can work more effectively to bring positive change (the Story of Now). I hope you’ll join me in telling your story. Together we can change the world.

Yaira Robinson is Associate Director of the Texas Interfaith Center for Public Policy in Austin, TX, which also houses Texas Interfaith Power & Light.
All donations, large and small, are vital to Earth Ministry’s success!

Did you know that 40% of the donations Earth Ministry received last year were under $100? We want to make sure you know how much we appreciate every single gift, big and small. Added up, they make a huge difference in protecting our water, air, and all creation.

Just one example of how your support helped Earth Ministry undertake significant outreach is in Grays Harbor County in rural, coastal Washington. With your help, we educated and engaged the local faith community on three proposed oil holding facilities threatening their cities, towns, and beaches.

You helped generate strong turnout for public hearings on two of the oil facilities — 150 people attended the hearing in Elma and 400 in Aberdeen. One of our pastors headlined the pre-hearing rally in Aberdeen and both hearings featured powerful testimony by local clergy and other people of faith, many of whom were engaging in advocacy for the first time.

Continuing with our commitment to work side-by-side with the tribes of the Pacific Northwest opposed to coal export, we also forged a partnership with the Quinault Nation, which is defending their protected fishing waters from the new threats posed by these oil facilities and oil trains.

Your donations made this vital work possible and created new faith-based advocates for God’s creation, as well as a path for future action on fossil fuels and climate change. Thank you!
Gaining recent popularity from the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, coloring mandalas is a spiritual practice of restorative mediation. We invite you to color this mandala as a way to re-center your mind, body, spirit, and soul as you slow down and enjoy the holiday season.
Winter Solstice Dawn

*Without tantalizing smudges of light on the horizon, or the dramatic reach of rose-colored fingers, it suddenly appears over the edge of the hill slicing through steely, gray trees and frosted underbrush, a perfect star—blazing white.*

The fire of life shows its shining face, grants one, ephemeral glimpse of its ascendant glory, then recedes into shadow for the long, dark winter.

*Who else is awake to this revelation? See it as it is: spring’s promissory, proof God does not abandon us to darkness.*

– Bonnie Thurston