



A Movement Moment

By Victoria Leistman

The rhythm was piercing and precise. It was tireless and it was resilient. It brought tears to my eyes and reassurance to my heart.

At the American Indian Lobby Day at the Washington State capitol in January, tribal members from Native nations across the state gathered to demand better from our elected leaders. The “thunda in the rotunda” drumming that day demonstrated their power and cried out for justice.

In the past few years, I have been honored to stand with a number of tribes and First Nations in the Pacific Northwest region against toxic fossil fuel infrastructure and the threat it poses to the health of our neighborhoods and waterways.

A too-common theme in the fight against dirty fuels is what communities big coal, oil, and gas are willing to sacrifice for profit. It is no coincidence that those frontline communities are time and again indigenous folks, people of color, and low-income families.

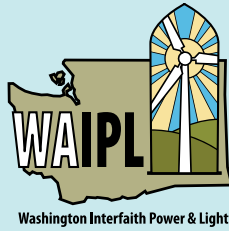
To organize meaningfully is to center these voices, to lift them up, and to listen. Indigenous activists, including groups such as the Water Warriors and Protectors of the Salish Sea, are spearheading the fight to honor this place, and to protect it for our grandchildren's grandchildren.

I think often about doing this outward-facing work, and I know it starts internally. Big environmental groups need to take a close

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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

Water plays an essential role in the faith of Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Throughout the Torah, Bible, and Qur'an, water is seen as a scarce and treasured substance for both secular and religious purposes. As a central foundation in all three Abrahamic traditions, the sacredness of water provides common ground for a shared ethic of protection.

Water is also sacred to Northwest Native tribes, many of whom see water as a central component of their identity. In the words of the Puyallup Tribe, "For thousands of years, the Puyallup River and coasts of the Puget Sound have sustained our way of life by giving to us the salmon, shellfish, wild game, roots, berries, and cedar trees that are the foundation of our culture, traditions, and heritage."

However, proposed fossil fuel projects in the Salish Sea are putting water quality and the health of our communities at risk. The Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline terminating in Vancouver, British Columbia, would drastically increase oil tanker traffic in inland waters. Puget Sound Energy's proposed liquefied natural gas project (LNG) on Tacoma's Tideflats poses a serious threat to Puget Sound and city residents. And a massive methanol plant on the banks of the Columbia River in Kalama, Washington, would use five million gallons of water per day and emit five times more toxic air pollution than state guidelines.

Faith communities are partnering with Native nations, environmental activists, and local citizens to stop these fossil fuel projects and protect our sacred waters. Earth Ministry invites you to respond to God's generous gift of life-giving waters by joining us in the fight.

Blessings,



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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
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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.

GOINGS-ON at Earth Ministry

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!

Colleagues and Congregations

In the past few months Earth Ministry has taught adult education classes at St. Augustine's-in-the-Woods in Freeland, St. Mark's Lutheran in Spokane, Christ Lutheran Church in Federal Way, First Congregational Church in Bellevue, St. Mark's Lutheran by the Narrows in Tacoma, and at University Temple UMC, Phinney Ridge Lutheran, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Seattle. Our staff also presented at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, Interfaith Advocacy Day in Olympia, and the Seattle-Tacoma District Gathering for the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church. If you would like to schedule an Earth Ministry visit to your community, please email Jessica Zimmerle at jessica@earthministry.org.

Acknowledging that 2017 was a challenging year for environmental protection, we focused much of our energy on supporting and uplifting the Earth Ministry community. Nearly 80 Earth Ministry Colleagues are now connected with others in their region through our new Colleague Connection program. These vibrant connections are encouraging ecumenical partnerships and strategic action aligned with Earth Ministry campaigns. We also brought Colleagues together for our semi-annual Colleague Gathering, which was a potluck conversation about tools for resilience. We truly believe that we are stronger together, and we are grateful that you are on the journey with us!

Victories over Fossil Fuels

The power of people of faith prevailed in two major fossil fuel fights in Washington State. First, the Tacoma City Council passed a resolution to pause new fossil fuel development on the Tacoma Tideflats. This decision is similar to the moratorium that was recently extended in Whatcom County. Both follow the wise reasoning that there should not be new development of fossil fuel projects while a more long-term conversation is happening around the region's land use. Earth Ministry represented you by turning out faithful activists and testifying at hearings for both of these resolutions.

The other cause for celebration is that Governor Inslee denied what would have been North America's largest crude oil terminal, which was proposed for Vancouver, Washington. As part of the Stand Up to Oil Coalition, Earth Ministry has been involved in the efforts to stop the Tesoro oil project since its inception. Members like you participated in multiple rounds of hearings and public comment about why Vancouver deserves better than dirty and dangerous oil. Earlier this year we helped organize a press conference calling on the governor to deny Tesoro once and for all. Less than a week later he officially rejected the application for this facility. We applaud Governor Inslee for making the right choice and thank our activists for your relentless advocacy that ultimately stopped this ill-conceived project.



Earth Ministry board member Rev. Marilyn Cornwell (L) spoke at the Tesoro press conference in January, joined by Earth Ministry staff and Colleagues.

Faithful Advocacy in the Legislative Session

Each year, Earth Ministry and Washington Interfaith Power & Light brings the faith voice and power of the religious community to our work with the Environmental Priorities Coalition, which identifies key environmental bills to support. The four priorities for the 2018 session were to act on climate, implement sustainable water management, phase toxic chemicals out of food packaging, and ensure funding for oil spill prevention. We also worked on a clean fuels bill and several bills pertaining to clean energy.

At session's end, we celebrated passing the Oil Spill Prevention Act (E2SSB 6269) and Healthy Food Packaging Act (ESHB 2658). Faith leaders directly contributed to these victories!

Earth Ministry staff worked hard during the legislative session to empower members and supporters to speak up on key issues. Highlights include Colleagues helping us deliver handmade valentines to every legislator urging support for a strong oil bill, sharing stories from Earth Ministry congregations at committee hearings, and coordinating a visit for faith leaders from Whidbey Island to meet with



Jessica Zimmerle (L) and other faith leaders meeting with Governor Jay Inslee.

their legislators. Program & Outreach Director Jessica Zimmerle also discussed Earth Ministry's priority environmental bills in a meeting with Governor Inslee alongside other interfaith leaders from across the region.

We know that faithful advocacy is how we work together to solve problems, protect our families, plan for the future, and invest in a high quality of life for all of God's creation. Thanks to everyone who spoke truth to power in this year's legislative session!

Earth Ministry's Mardi Gras Brunch BINGO

Earth Ministry's Mardi Gras Brunch BINGO was a joyous success! Over 150 people attended and enjoyed brunch, bubbly, and bingo all in support of Earth Ministry's mission to care for creation. One of our founders, The Rev. Carla Pryne, spoke in celebration of the organization's 25th anniversary, lifting up how we have brought people from different faith traditions together to form a vibrant community protecting our common home.

Each dollar of the nearly \$22,000 raised at this event translates into resources, education, and opportunities for the faith communities we serve. The financial support of our donors makes our work possible! Thank you to all who attended and, for those who could not make it, we appreciate your support from afar. Save the date for next year's fun – Mardi Gras Brunch BINGO 2019 will take place on Saturday, March 2, 2019.



A happy crowd of winners at Mardi Gras Brunch BINGO!

Clean Air, Clean Energy

Earth Ministry is a member of the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy, which has crafted a policy to equitably address climate change in Washington State. Proposed as an initiative on the November 2018 ballot, the policy directs the state to invest in clean energy infrastructure, protect forests and waterways from the effects of climate change, and put a price on carbon pollution. The initiative honors tribal treaty rights, addresses the needs of workers transitioning out of energy-intensive jobs, and protects low-income communities with priority cleanup of high-pollution areas and local investments in transit. Stay tuned for opportunities to engage on I-1631, the Clean Air, Clean Energy Initiative!



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Earth Ministry Values, Vision and Mission

The Earth Ministry board and staff have been hard at work planning for the future. We've launched a strategic planning process, and as a first step we have adopted a set of organizational values, as well as a new overarching vision statement and an updated mission statement. We are excited to share them and look forward to living them out with you!

VALUES

Faith-based: We are grounded in faith. We call upon the rich history of religious traditions in caring for creation and offer a vision of hope for the future.

Stewardship: We believe that Earth is sacred and that we have a responsibility to protect and restore it.

Community: We forge authentic relationships, foster strong communities, and are welcoming of all. We respect theological and social diversity and are inclusive of people of any religion, age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic class.

Collaboration: We are intentional in our outreach and build bridges between non-traditional allies. We work in coalition with religious, tribal, environmental, communities of color, labor, business, and health partners and understand the intersectionality of our shared efforts.

Justice: We seek justice for all creation by changing political and social systems that perpetuate pollution, racism, poverty, and injustice.

VISION

Earth Ministry envisions a just and sustainable future in which people of all spiritual traditions fully embrace their faith's call to environmental stewardship.

MISSION

Earth Ministry transforms faith into action for the well-being of communities and the environment. We organize people of faith to advocate for strong environmental priorities and provide strategic guidance to religious communities working toward environmental justice.

GROUNDED IN FAITH

Water Is Life By Leda Zakarison

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.... And God said, ‘Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so.”
– Genesis 1:1-2, 6-7

I’ve always been fascinated by the water cycle. I remember learning that the snow falling in Pullman could be made up of the same water in Lake Coeur d’Alene I swam in over the summer. My dad could have swum in that water at Cape Cod when he was young. Camels might have drunk it at an oasis in the Sahara. Prehistoric birds may have bathed in it. It’s all the same stuff.

“We made from water every living thing.” – Qur’an 21:30

In the Qur’an, God reminds us of our essential interconnectedness through water. Human beings are, fundamentally, made of water. Just as God separated the heavens and earth, earth and water, God saved some of that water to create us. The holy water John the Baptist used to baptize Jesus, the water the Prophet Mohammed used to perform ablutions before he prayed, the water that parted for the Israelites fleeing from Egypt – this water courses through our veins. We are blessed by our very makeup.

“Our Mother Earth is sacred. All things evolve and work together. To poison the water, is to poison the substance of life. Everything that moves must have water. How can we talk about and knowingly poison water?”
– Dave Archambault II, Former Chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

But just as blessing some water blesses all of us, harming some water harms all of us. The Standing Rock Sioux reminded us of this when they warned us of the dangers of building the Dakota Access Pipeline so close to the Missouri River. If oil were to leak from the pipeline into the river, it could spread throughout the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers and their tributaries, potentially making sick the 17 million people who rely on these rivers for their drinking water.

In their fight against the pipeline, the Standing Rock Sioux shared one of their deepest values with the world: *Mni Wiconi*. In the words of Bobbi Jean Three Legs, one of the Standing Rock water protectors, *“Mni Wiconi means ‘Water is life. Water is sacred.’ Water is our first medicine for many tribes.”*

Water is truly the first and best gift from our Creator. No matter who we are or what faith tradition we follow, when we remember what a magnificent gift we have been given, how could we treat water with anything but love?

*Leda Zakarison is Eath
Ministry’s Outreach
Coordinator.*



For the Sake of the Snake By Rev. Liv Larson Andrews

“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God.”

Columbia, Clark Fork, Snake, Spokane – rivers gladden the cities and communities of the Inland Northwest. As a lifelong Lutheran, I’ve sung or prayed that line about glad rivers from Psalm 46 – a favorite of Martin Luther’s – many times. I serve as the pastor of Salem Lutheran Church in Eastern Washington, just blocks from the Spokane River. On Mondays, I walk the neighborhood in prayer with a friend. Sometimes we end up along the banks of the Spokane, pausing near the falls to let the mist spray our faces. We are standing in holy water.

From the rivers in Genesis that flow out of Eden, to the Nile which carried Moses, to the Jordan that cleansed Naaman and baptized Jesus, all the way to the end of Revelation where the promised river of life flows “bright as crystal,” rivers run through the whole biblical story of salvation. For people of the Christian faith, water matters. Rivers matter.

For people of faith throughout the Northwest, the salmon matter, too. Salmon are already in steep decline and threatened with extinction on the Snake and Columbia Rivers. This should trouble Christians since extinction is terrible stewardship. Yet we learn from an example like the Elwha River on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State, where a 100-year-old dam was removed a few years ago and salmon returned. Life can thrive when rivers are rightly managed for people, for salmon, for the glory of their Creator. How can we sing Psalm 46 while many of our rivers groan under the weight of misuse?

Some argue that helping return salmon to the Snake River preferences one group over another. We hear stories of enmity – farmers vs.

tribal leaders,
environmentalists
vs. sportsmen.

In fact, a diverse community of people from all of these groups has already begun working together for a healthy, thriving, free-flowing Snake River, useful to humans and full of salmon. People of faith are

committed to working with our neighbors to build a better world for our whole community.

Martin Luther was no environmentalist. Yet, by faith, perhaps by praying Psalm 46, he knew that rivers matter. In a blessing for a newly baptized child, Luther prays to God: “through the Baptism in the Jordan of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, you sanctified and instituted all waters to be a blessed flood, and a lavish washing away of sin.” God has blessed this region with beautiful, life-giving rivers. They bear the presence of Jesus to us.

On my first Christmas Eve as a pastor in Spokane, a church member greeted me by saying, “There’s fresh steelhead for you in the refrigerator, Pastor. Caught it last week on the Snake. Filleted and deboned. Merry Christmas.” Such gifts of the Creator are meant for all of us to continue to enjoy. For that to be true, we need to act. Join me in standing up for our planet’s health, especially for the sacred waters, creatures, and people of our region.

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Rev. Liv Larson Andrews is pastor of Salem Lutheran Church in Spokane, Washington.



By the Waters – Protecting and Restoring God’s Gift of Water

Scripture writers used water hundreds of times in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament to provide powerful images of God, as well as to enhance our understanding of how God acts in the world. Water is used both literally and metaphorically, often in the same passage.

It is not surprising that water is such an important image in the Bible. The terrain the writers experienced was for the most part rugged and arid, with prolonged droughts common. Water was scarce; its sources were inconsistent. At the same time, water was the life-blood of the ancient Mideast. It was necessary for drinking, bathing, growing crops, and feeding livestock. Water was treasured, never wasted, and never taken for granted. Accordingly, water was understood as a gift from God, for which continual thanks and praise were due.

Perhaps nowhere in the Bible are there more vivid water images than in the Psalms. Uplifting, poignant, sometimes tragic, always provocative, the Psalms record the raw and gritty experiences of human beings trying to understand God and God’s provision for them in a very real world.

In particular, Psalm 65 beautifully expresses a community’s thankfulness to God for bringing much-needed rain. Using expansive images, the psalmist describes God’s “awesome deeds” and the hope that God gives to “all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas” (65:5). This God, who quells “the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples,” is powerful and praiseworthy (65:7).

The psalmist then turns to gentler water images to describe a more personal, relational God, a reliable, sustaining presence who provides for their needs: “You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it” (65:9). One might imagine God as a

gentle farmer with a large watering can, sprinkling the earth: “You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth” (65:10).

Psalm 104 also details the many wondrous acts of God’s provision using water images, harkening back to the creation of the earth when it was set on its foundations and covered “with the deep as with a garment” (104:6). Life itself came from water! Throughout this Psalm, God sustains not only human life but non-human creatures as well.

What do these ancient Psalms teach us about how to live in today’s world? How can those of us who simply turn on a tap to receive clean, fresh water respond to the billion people who are denied access to clean water altogether? How do we understand this promise of God’s provision of water, not just to us, but to all the creatures of the earth when 20 percent of fish species are extinct or at imminent risk of becoming so?

As we look to the health of the earth’s waters, we are right to be concerned. Our waters are in serious trouble. Considering that in many places, people and wildlife alike do not enjoy easy access to the gift of God’s water as we do, it is sometimes tempting to ask whether God really does provide. The better question, however, is to ask ourselves – do our lives and lifestyles get in the way of God’s provision? If so, how might we make the fundamental changes necessary so that we participate in God’s provision rather than obstructing it?

First, we can thank God for life-giving water, which we neither work for nor earn. If we truly accept the magnitude of this gift, we, like the psalmists, will be overwhelmed and awestruck by God’s



generosity. We will sing out with praise and thanksgiving for this enormous and miraculous gift. We praise not because God needs to be praised, but because we need to praise. We need to be modest and humble in recognition of that which gives us substance and being.

And what happens when we praise and are thankful? Psalm 65 gives a clue. Verse 4 tells us: "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house." Consider how we would react individually, communally, nationally, and globally if we could only be satisfied with the enormous blessings God bestows on us.

If we were satisfied, we would no longer be ungracious receivers, grabbing far more than our share of the earth's resources, including fossil fuels and precious waters. If we were satisfied, we would live modestly and simply. If we were satisfied, we would be content to be small, allowing room for all of God's creatures to share in the abundance of God's watery blessings.

If we are to respond to God's generous gift of life-giving waters by praising and thanking and being satisfied, the natural next step is to join God in the provision and sustenance of all God's creatures. As Genesis calls us to be God's image in the world, we need to ask: What are the ways in which we can each participate in the provision of God's beloved creation, which sprang from the waters and is still sustained by them? In what specific ways might we better represent the Creator's vision by taking care of God's Puget Sound and other beloved bodies of water?

Can we use less water and safely return it back to the earth, untainted by oil, pesticides, and chemicals? Can we live smaller and require less energy from our once-mighty rivers? Can we

hold our public officials accountable to implement policies that ensure clean water to all of God's people and creatures?

More important than any specific action, however, is our need to develop a new posture, a new position, a different view toward God's sacred waters. We need to make fundamental change, to see the waters as a gift from God for the provision of all of God's beloved creation rather than resources given for our benefit. We need to heed the advice of the psalmist who in Psalm 22 reminds us to "turn to the LORD," for "dominion belongs to the LORD," not to us (22:27, 28).

If and when we are able to turn to God and look beyond ourselves, the way we relate to the waters on a day-to-day basis will be fundamentally transformed. It is in that transformed relationship that God can work through us to heal and renew the waters.

This article is adapted from Earth Ministry's resource, *By the Waters: Communities of Faith Uniting to Protect and Restore God's Gift of Water* by LeeAnne Beres, Beth Norcross, and Jenny Gilbert. More information at www.earthministry.org/caring-for-all-creation; to order call (206) 632-2426.



Paddle Pilgrim: An Adventure of Spirit and Discovery

Kayaking the Mississippi River By Rev. David Ellingson

From the earliest of ages I have been fascinated by the Mississippi River – while fishing with my uncle or being out and about in a boat plying the waters. So, in many ways my kayaking down the Mississippi was my Huck Finn adventure. It was getting on a raft and floating blissfully down the river. It was the boy in me on a voyage of discovery.

An adventure can turn into a pilgrimage. When you go on a journey you don't always know what is going to happen. My belief was that I was going to encounter myself, what I call my "interior landscapes," and I was going to encounter God. Along the way I encountered God in all sorts of amazing ways: in the wildlife and exterior landscapes of creation itself, in the history and culture of the river towns, and especially in the people along the river. I call them "river angels."

I needed a lot of help at different times and whenever I was exhausted, or thirsty, or when I was lonely, I would come around a bend and I would meet somebody new. We often think about angels from the images of Renaissance art: cherubic figures with rosy cheeks and small wings. But the true meaning of angel from the Greek word, *angelos*, is messenger. Over and over again these messengers – often in unlikely guises of lock tenders, bar-keepers, and fishing folk – brought hope, relief, and companionship when I needed it most.

Sometimes we think of God as being off in the distance. In my theology, God is very involved and active in everything. The problem is we become so busy we don't pay attention. I think the river forced me to focus and gave me the solitude to notice what was going on inside me as well as around me, and I began to realize, "Oh, oh, that's what's happening, that's where you are..."

Mary Oliver says it well in her poem *Sometimes*. She writes,

*Instructions for living a life:
Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.*

As I paddled I became increasingly disturbed by the pollution in the Mississippi River. The Clean Water Act has made significant reductions in industrial pollution, but increasingly agricultural pollution has added fertilizer run-off to the waterway.

I experienced this several times personally when I bathed in the river and found my skin itching and burning afterward. Ultimately these chemicals (nitrogen and phosphorus) reach the Gulf of Mexico and a "dead zone" the size of Massachusetts has been created where no life exists. I felt guilty as I paddled and grieved for the fish and fowl who call the river their home. So, I began composing in my mind a letter of apology for what humans have done to this amazing body of water.

Over time, however, I began to realize that the Mississippi River had become my teacher. My spirit, while disturbed by

human-caused issues, began to overflow with praise and thanksgiving for the river and what I was learning along the way. Here is my "letter to the river":





Dear Miss,

I hope you are not offended by my familiar or even intimate form of address, but after nearly a month together I feel we have grown quite close. Each day as I begin my paddle you greet me, and I discover something new about your personality.

While I am only a beginner, you have been greeting others for thousands of years. You have become my teacher. I have learned many lessons. Some I have welcomed, others have been hard and painful. You have taught me with the rich diversity of your path from marshes to pine forests, across large lakes, through farmland, along majestic bluffs, through maze-like bayous, by small towns, suburbs, and cities, over wing dams, and through locks and dams.

I have studied with eagles, trumpeter swans, geese, ducks, deer, otters, beavers, pelicans, and, yes, mosquitoes. You have blessed me with companions who have fed me, provided shelter, and quenched my thirst ... strangers who have become friends, a cloud of witnesses, river angels.

I have been humbled by your twists and turns, eddies, sweepers, and whirlpools and exhilarated by your rapids, tailwinds, and strong flows after a rain. My sore hands, aching back, stiff knees, flagging frame, and frequently struggling spirit all remind me of my limits, my age, and my mortality.

But that is good, because you teach with a clarity and truth that I need to hear and embrace. And while I may curse you with some regularity, I praise you for the "wisdom" you invite me into each morning as I set out from your shores.

Roll on, mighty waters!

Your humble "Paddle Pilgrim"

A few months after I wrote this letter as part of my book, *Paddle Pilgrim: An Adventure of Learning and Spirit, Kayaking the Mississippi River*, I received a reply. And even better, it came from another "river angel."

I got a phone call from Susan who had read my book and wanted to know if I wanted to be a "river citizen" with a group called 1 Mississippi. 1 Mississippi is a coalition of environmental, civic, community, and business organizations with the goal of protecting and enhancing the Mississippi River.

Susan invited me to speak at a 1 Mississippi conference in Rock Island, Illinois about what the river had taught me. At the conference I met mayors, barge company execs, riverboat cruise captains, field biologists, magazine editors, and farmers who are all committed to working together to improve the quality of life in and along the Mississippi River.

In addition to hosting conferences, 1 Mississippi works as a coalition to develop public policy to address agricultural pollution, invasive species, plastic pollution, wildlife and wetlands restoration, and the dead zone. It is precisely this kind of coalition, and groups like Earth Ministry, that will develop creative solutions to the environmental challenges along the Mighty Mississippi as well as in other parts of our country.

I will let Huckleberry Finn have the last word: "It's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them."

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*Rev. David Ellingson is a Lutheran pastor who has taught on college campuses and served congregations and in regional denominational leadership. His book, *Paddle Pilgrim: An Adventure of Learning and Spirit, Kayaking the Mississippi River*, is available on Amazon and his website is www.dellingson.com.*

The Salish Sea Is a Gift from a Generous Creator By Jessie Dye

How is it that we label God's blessings as natural resources? It's infuriating to think that the great abundance of forests and fields, rivers and seas are viewed as simply naturally occurring sources of wealth, such as land or water. The implication of the term "natural resources" is that the gifts of creation have value only as far as they can be used by humans for our own ends.

Let's change that frame. The good news is that a more inclusive name for the shared estuary of Washington State and British Columbia is now widely used to honor the region's first people and common ecosystems. In 2009, the U.S. Board of Geographic Names officially labeled the great inland waterways of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the Georgia Strait, and Puget Sound as the Salish Sea. This name change recognizes the obvious interconnectedness of these waterways and invites us to view them as a whole. This gorgeous sea is in fact one marine body with shared life, risks, and communities. Changing the name changes the frame.

Native tribes have lived along the coast

of the Salish Sea for millennia and have grounded their identity in the salmon, herring, crab, oysters, and clams that find life here. Orca whales thrived as relatives to indigenous peoples. For those of us who ply its waters on sailboats, fishing rigs, or state ferries, for kids who wade in its chilly waters, or simply for those of us who embrace beauty, the Salish Sea calls us all home. Renaming our shared waters implies giving honor to the inherent value and beauty of the place and respect for Native people.

Of course, our human communities and our own bodies are not detached from the place in which we live. In Pope Francis's beautiful encyclical *Laudato Si'*, he says:

When we speak of the "environment" what we really mean is the relationship existing between nature and the society that lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or a mere setting in which we live.... Recognizing why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of that society, its economy, its behavior patterns, and the way it grasps reality. (§139)

The Salish Sea is now at great peril from a world view that sees only profit in the inherent dignity of the natural world. Puget Sound, the southern branch of the Salish Sea, is no longer healthy. Salmon runs are severely endangered, and as a result there are only 76 remaining Southern Resident Orcas – starvation has taken its toll. Chief among the threats to this watershed are fossil fuel use and transport. Ports of the Pacific Northwest are



the thin green line between huge fossil fuel deposits of North America and Asia's fast-growing energy markets.

If we frame these waters as "our common home" or "gift from a generous Creator," then requiring a thorough evaluation of any fossil fuel proposal that might damage them is an obvious choice. As the faithful advocates for creation at Earth Ministry step up in defense of Puget Sound from Bellingham to Olympia, these are exactly the values we articulate.

Harm to Puget Sound and all of our shared waters is a multi-factorial problem and requires many approaches to bring healing and restoration to our shores. Some recent local victories are inspiring.

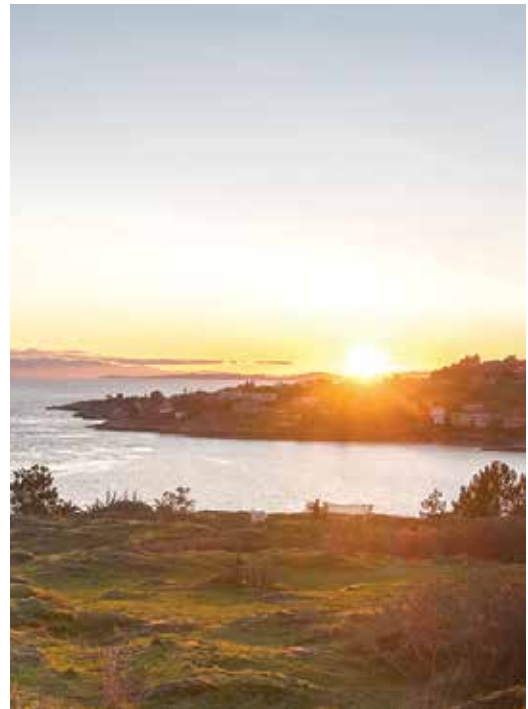
Just a few weeks ago, the Washington State Legislature passed an excellent oil-spill prevention bill that Earth Ministry actively supported. This bill puts a barrel tax on the 40% of oil that arrives in our state via pipeline (which had a free ride previously!), providing a secure source of funding to pay for marine protections such as inspections of tankers shipping oil through our straits.

This legislation also secures funding for research into managing the toxic tar sands oil that has found its way into the Salish Sea and is so heavy as to be almost impossible to clean up. Washington can now address new oil transport issues as they emerge and support a trans-boundary summit with British Columbia authorities to stand together in protection of our common waters.

Earth Ministry organized numerous meetings between religious leaders and elected officials on this bill. In the words of Jessica Zimmerle, Program and Outreach Director, "By speaking from religious and values-based beliefs, people of faith bring a new depth to conversations with decision-makers. We encourage our legislators to look beyond fossil fuel transport as an issue of resource management and consider their decisions as moral choices for the long-term good of the people and the region they represent."

In January 2018, an overwhelmingly successful citizen-led campaign stopped the biggest rail-to-marine oil export terminal in the country planned for Vancouver, Washington, on the shores of the Columbia River. These folks – including many from the faith community – chose to view their home as a place to be cherished, not exploited. They flung themselves into a long, grueling, and sometimes expensive fight to protect their beloved river and the life it gives. And we won, victory after victory, for a town that now defines itself by a lovely quality of life and not as a fossil fuel gateway to Asia.

But the threat is ongoing. Background pollution in the Salish Sea is killing herring and pink salmon. A 2015 research study showed that fossil fuels have significantly impacted water quality in Puget Sound, which has the highest level of chronic oil pollution of any estuary. Current levels of oil toxicity are not far below those found in the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez, at a



level that causes genetic heart damage to embryonic fish such that the populations struggle to recover.

This is all the more concerning given that Puget Sound Energy (PSE) is building, without all the necessary permits, an eight-million-gallon liquefied fracked gas facility on unstable soil in the Tideflats area of Tacoma. Safety experts recommend facilities like this be built at least three miles from population centers, but this flammable facility is in the heart of Tacoma and abuts the Puyallup Tribe's reservation. In a beautiful area already bearing a toxic chemical legacy, PSE would charge local ratepayers to build this plant, and PSE would keep all but 7% of the profits.

This is what happens when you think of waterways as resources and not as precious gifts from our Creator. Earth Ministry will stand with the people of Tacoma, honor Puyallup treaty rights, and work to protect God's gift of the Salish Sea. Our commitment is to care for our common home, now and for those who come after us.

Jessie Dye is Earth Ministry's Senior Campaign Strategist.

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look, make changes, ask the hard questions. How can we speak for ourselves and not for other communities? How can we shift our resources to support local fights? I think about how we can step back from directing the message or leading the charge, and how we can instead plug in where we are invited.

Over the last seven years Earth Ministry and Sierra Club have built a strong relationship with the Lummi Nation in our efforts to stop the proposed Cherry Point coal export terminal. In 2016, the Lummi Nation prevailed in its fight to block the largest coal port ever proposed in North America. This coal terminal would have been on the ancestral lands of the Lummi Nation known as *Xwe'chi'eXen*. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ruled that the project would cause irreparable harm to nearshore water quality and habitat, and would be an unacceptable infringement on Lummi treaty fishing rights.

The Salish Sea has been bombarded with coal and oil export proposals, like the one proposed at Cherry Point. Thanks to organizing work around the state, most of those proposals have been stopped. But more dirty proposals have emerged: fracked gas and petrochemicals, which deepen our dependence on fossil fuels.

To highlight those fights, we partnered once again with the Lummi on the 2017 Totem Pole Journey, the fifth in a powerful series. The journey stopped in Vancouver, BC to draw attention to the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline that the Tsleil-Waututh and many other nations oppose. A stop in Tacoma focused on solidarity with the Puyallup Tribe in its fight against Puget Sound Energy's liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility.

In 2016, the Canadian government approved Kinder Morgan's pipeline expansion from the Alberta tar sands to a port in Vancouver, BC. If built, the project would increase tanker traffic in shared British Columbia/Washington waters by 700 percent. At

890,000 barrels a day, it would be bigger than both the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines.

After the Canadian government's approval, the Tsleil-Waututh, Coldwater, Squamish, and Stk'émłúpsəmc te Secwépemc First Nations challenged both the National Energy Board report and the decision of the government through judicial reviews.

The Nations are arguing that the decision infringes on their aboriginal title and rights, and that Canada breached its duty to consult and accommodate. They make a strong case that the Crown failed to uphold its legal and constitutional duty to consult with First Nations.

Sierra Club and Earth Ministry partnered with First Nations who need help with the legal actions they've filed in federal court to stop Kinder Morgan. Together with groups in British Columbia and Washington, we organized events and brought communities together to raise over \$625,000 for legal fees via the Pull Together campaign.

The First Nations' court cases were heard in October, and they are awaiting decisions this spring. On March 10, Tsleil-Waututh led a mass "Protect the Inlet" action in Vancouver, B.C., and the fight continues to heat up. They're standing up for indigenous rights, for the water, for whales, for the land, and for the climate. In short, they went to court on behalf of all of us.

Meanwhile, in Tacoma, Washington, Puget Sound Energy (PSE) has been rapidly building an eight million gallon LNG storage facility, with neither proper environmental review nor an air permit. This proposed LNG plant is not only a danger to our lands, water, air, and community health, it's also immediately adjacent to the Puyallup reservation in Tacoma.





Stop Work Order request enforced. In early February, 14 tribes sent a letter to Washington's Governor Jay Inslee requesting that he take a stand:

We are asking for your leadership and support to join us in demanding that the City of Tacoma, Department of Ecology, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the PSCAA require PSE to cease all construction until the full environmental review of the project is completed and all permit requirements are satisfied. We join the Puyallup Tribe in calling on the Army Corps of Engineers to step in as the federal trustee responsible for protecting the Puyallup Tribe's trust and treaty protected resources. The tribes of Washington have a long history of standing together to defend our lands and waters. We have sent a powerful message to state and federal governments, and industry, that we will not tolerate corporate development at any cost.

This fight is being led by Puyallup Tribal members identified as Water Warriors, with staunch support from the Puyallup Tribal Council and community groups such as Redefine Tacoma. The good news is that PSE still needs the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (PSCAA) to approve its permit application to move forward. In January, the PSCAA announced that it will require a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that includes greenhouse gas emissions and a life cycle analysis of fracked gas in order to properly evaluate for an air permit.

Two-thirds of "natural" gas is fracked, and when we consider how dirty that process is, gas is often as bad as coal. Therefore, this is a great decision and a reminder that there are agencies that strive to honor a proper process and look at these projects for what they are in their entirety.

Some bad news: it's still being built. We still need to get the Puyallup Tribe's

Stay tuned for more on this dirty and dangerous project, and also for the release of the draft of the Supplemental EIS on which the public will have the opportunity to comment.

The fights outlined here are just some of what we're up against in the Salish Sea/Puget Sound region. This inundation of fossil fuel projects in the Northwest has sparked land use code efforts at the county level in Whatcom County and at the city level in Tacoma. These efforts are crucial in flipping our position from defensive to offensive, stopping fossil fuel companies from being able to propose dirty projects in the first place.

We are truly in a movement moment. A moment where people are seeing the connections between our colonialist roots and the extractive industries that still bring harm to the same communities. A moment where the work we do to protect the environment aligns more clearly than ever with anti-racism efforts. A moment where we cannot sacrifice any one of our values to create the world we want to see. A moment where the people who have been here since time immemorial are heard and are leading the way. Join us in standing with them.

Victoria Leistman is an Associate Organizer for Sierra Club's Our Wild America campaign, working to protect wild spaces and stop fossil fuel infrastructure in Washington State.

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*Water comes from high mountain sources.
Water runs deep in the Earth.
Miraculously, water comes to us and sustains all life.
My gratitude is filled to the brim....
Water flows over these hands.
May I use them skillfully
to preserve our precious planet.
– Thich Nhat Hanh*

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