



Sowing the Seeds of Climate Justice

By Rev. Dallas Conyers

We are advocates. We are passionate. Educated. Well connected. Engaged. And as faithful advocates we are doing this sacred work from a love of the Creator and a respect for the created, but we are missing the mark.

In the Christian faith tradition missing the mark is called sin. And I found myself sinning every day I worked myself till exhaustion but wondered if any of it was making a difference. I sinned every day I made presentations but didn't expect people to change their habits. I sinned when I talked to elected officials but didn't expect them to vote against bad bills. I sinned each and every time I made donation requests and didn't expect anyone to give.

It wasn't my work that was sinful, it was my lack of faith. I had begun operating out of need and necessity instead of belief.

I started out doing the work because God's creation is to be respected. God took the time to create all that is natural therefore God values it, and so I must see the intrinsic value of all as well. Whether it be the beast of man or the beast of the

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\$1000+ Sacred Circle

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

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ABOUT US

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 policies and provide strategic guidance to religious communities working toward environmental justice.

Founded in 1992, Earth Ministry has a long 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 is also part of the Interfaith Power & Light coalition of faith-based organizations working together on a religious response to climate change in 40 states. We use the name Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light (WAIPL) to show our affiliation with this powerful national network. Learn more at www.earthministry.org.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This issue of Earth Letter is focused on faithful advocacy: putting faith into action in pursuit of justice. The issues of today require empathy, hope, courage, community, and commitment. The faith community is uniquely suited to speak out on the wide range of issues we care about, grounded in our traditions' teachings and these shared values.

Yet taking action can be frightening. We tell ourselves that we don't know enough about the topic, that someone else can speak better than we can, or that our voice doesn't matter.

The truth is that people just like you and me — with jobs, families, congregational obligations, and (hopefully to resume someday soon) evening soccer practices — can make a big difference simply by sharing our values and personal stories with elected officials. People of faith in particular can articulate the moral voice for the health of creation and our neighbors, which encourages legislators to vote for the common good.

In these pages you'll find inspiration, resources, and concrete tips on how to lend your voice to the growing choir of individuals and religious communities speaking up to protect communities and the environment. It's an incredibly empowering experience to exercise your rights and responsibilities as an engaged citizen, and it's easier than you might think.

All we are asked to do in striving for justice is to leave our comfort zones — leave behind our reluctance to speak up, to take action. As we open our hearts and accept our faiths' call to advocate for a better world, we can help shape the future we want to see, today.

Blessings,



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!

Washington State Legislative Session

The virtual Washington State Legislative Session began on January 11 and is completely online, so our advocacy looks very different this year. Remote sign-ins for committee hearings are an important way to engage online, and are an easy way to register your support for a bill. Check out Earth Ministry's legislative webpage for a step-by-step guide to signing in, and to follow our entire slate of bills: bit.ly/EMleg2021.

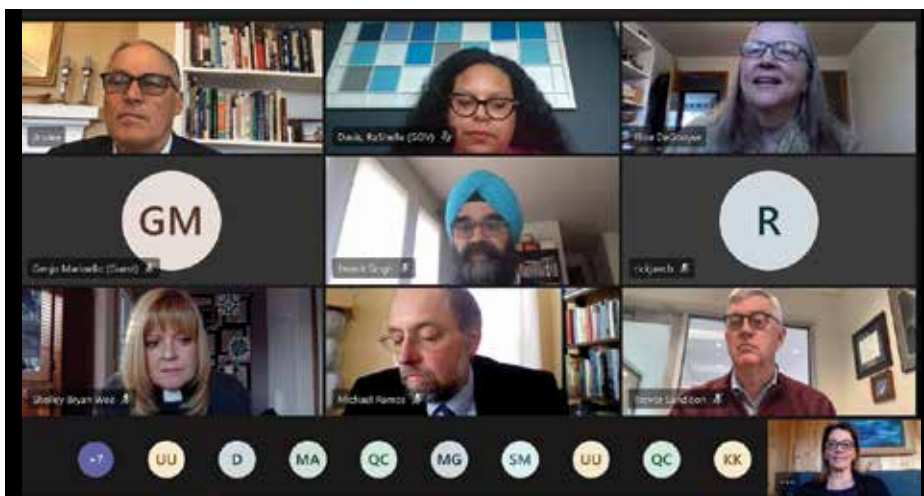
Our top two priorities are codifying environmental justice in state law with the HEAL Act (SB 5141) and addressing climate pollution from the transportation sector with a clean fuel standard (HB 1091). Earth Ministry has been leading workshops on these bills and more, and taught at Interfaith Advocacy Day, the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, Central Washington Advocacy Day, and Catholic Advocacy Day. Our Executive Director also presented our legislative priorities in an interfaith leaders meeting with Governor Inslee. We provide regular opportunities for making your voice heard – if you're not on our email action alert list, sign up at bit.ly/EMalerts.



Kalama Methanol Permits Denied

We are happy to share that Washington's Department of Ecology has denied the shorelines permits for what could have been the world's largest fracked-gas-to-methanol plant proposed in Kalama, WA!

Leading up to the decision, over 150 members of the Earth Ministry community submitted comments and attended online hearings for the project's second supplemental environmental review (SEIS) in the fall. With a strong moral message, we told the Department of Ecology that this project is not consistent with faith values, and they heard our voice. The project's federal permits were also rejected in the fall, sending it back to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a full and transparent environmental review. Many thanks all of you who have spoken up to share that fracked gas is not faithful!



Interfaith leaders meet with Governor Inslee (top left)

Act Now for Salmon

Last fall, Earth Ministry/WAIPL delivered our faith community letter to Washington's Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, asking them to show collaborative leadership on restoring Lower Snake River salmon. Many thanks to the over 450 people who added their name – now we have another chance to make our voices heard!

Building on a growing consensus for action, Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson recently released a historic proposal that seeks to bring people together for the biggest salmon and river restoration project in history. Rep. Simpson's proposal will save salmon and steelhead from extinction, which will honor tribal treaty rights for NW Native nations. The plan will also invest in a vibrant economy for tribes, farmers, fishermen, and local businesses; ensure plentiful, clean electric power; and recover endangered orcas dependent on healthy salmon runs.

Restoration of a free-flowing Lower Snake River offers an opportunity to develop win-win solutions and invest in infrastructure upgrades that will benefit

the entire region. It also allows us to live into our religious values of stewardship and justice while ensuring the health and wellbeing of communities and the environment. Ask your members of Congress to work with Rep. Simpson to ensure an abundant future for everyone: bit.ly/EMsalmonaction.

Columbia River Conference

The faith community was well represented in the Columbia River "One River, Ethics Matter" Conference held online in December. The conference, co-hosted by the Cowlitz Tribe and Washington State University Vancouver, focused on the Columbia River Treaty, using the Pacific Northwest Catholic Bishops Columbia River Pastoral Letter as a guide.

Featured speakers included Cowlitz Tribal elders, including Tanna Engdahl, a Cowlitz spiritual leader, who joined former Earth Ministry board member Rev. John Rosenberg in a discussion of indigenous worldviews and the Judeo-Christian tradition as a framework for restoring the river and recovering endangered salmon runs. Former Lutheran Bishop Martin Wells moderated another panel, and Earth Ministry Executive Director LeeAnne Beres served on the Advisory Committee for the conference.



Speaking Up for a Strong PFAS Chemical Action Plan

The Earth Ministry/WAIPL community has been speaking up for protections like phasing PFAS out of home products, setting a strong drinking water standard for PFAS, and cleaning up contaminated areas. We're grateful that Washington is a leader in PFAS reform, and we still need to remind policy makers of the real impact their decisions have on families and the more-than-human world.

This winter, Earth Ministry helped to ensure that our state implements a comprehensive Chemical Action Plan (CAP) for PFAS chemicals. Our community sent comments on the draft CAP to Washington's Department of Ecology and participated in each of the three public hearings. We also hosted a webinar explaining the topic, which can be viewed at www.earthministry.org/pfas.

Jewish Climate Festival

In January, Earth Ministry/WAIPL was honored to be a partner in the Big Bold Jewish Climate Fest, held in conjunction with the Tu BiShvat holiday. Known as the "New Year of the Trees," Tu BiShvat is celebrated as a day for ecological awareness in the Jewish tradition.

The Big Bold Jewish Climate Fest seeks to make climate change a central moral issue of the Jewish community. Earth Ministry hosted two events on interfaith advocacy and partnered with local Jewish

partners on three more offerings, all recorded and available on our website: bit.ly/EMJewishClimateFest. We were glad to join leaders from many different faith communities, Indigenous activists, youth organizers, and more for inspiration and action.

Fossil Fuels in Tacoma

We're excited to report two recent victories in the fight against fossil fuels in Tacoma!

In late January, Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson weighed in to support the Puyallup Tribe and environmental advocates' challenge of PSE's Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility, agreeing that the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (PSCAA) failed in its responsibility to evaluate the true climate impacts of the project. We expect the legal appeal to be heard in court later this spring.

The amicus brief submitted to the Pollution Control Hearing Board of Washington called out issues with evaluation of greenhouse gas emissions, specifically PSCAA's failure to adequately consider upstream emissions from methane leakage and its inappropriate reliance on speculative assumptions about displacement of dirtier fuel types.

The City of Tacoma also took a significant step in improving oversight of fossil fuels on the Tideflats. Responding to widespread community outcry, the city rescinded preliminary approval for an expansion of the SeaPort Sound bulk oil terminal and will be requiring an additional comprehensive evaluation of the impacts through an Environmental Impact Statement.

Earth Ministry's Executive Director, LeeAnne Beres, shared this statement in a press release: "Given that the climate crisis is a moral crisis, it is crucial to evaluate the environmental justice impacts of every polluting project. The faith community thanks the City of Tacoma for reflecting the community's values by thoroughly reviewing SeaPort Sound's proposed expansion, and calls on the City to implement strong, permanent protections from new and expanded fossil fuel projects."



Jessica Zimmerle honored as one of the NW Energy Coalition's 4 Under 40

Earth Ministry Program & Outreach Director Jessica Zimmerle was recently honored as one of the NW Energy Coalition's "4 under 40" award recipients. Jessica was recognized for her impressive work engaging the faith community in campaigns to stop fossil fuel mega projects as well as passing strong climate and energy bills in the Washington State legislature.

This is the third NW Energy Coalition award to be received by Earth Ministry staff. LeeAnne Beres was honored with the Headwaters Award in 2011 and Jessie Dye received the Doug Still Memorial Community Organizing Award in 2018.



NWECA Executive Director Nancy Hirsh presents the 4 under 40 Award to Jessica

Earth Ministry's 2020 Year-End Gathering

Thank you to everyone who attended Earth Ministry's Year-End Gathering last December! Nearly 50 members of our community came together to reflect on 2020 and look toward to the year ahead. If you couldn't join us, you can access a written version of Earth Ministry's year-in-review on our website: bit.ly/EM2020recap.



SAVE THE DATE

**Tuesday, May 11
7–8:30pm PT**

Trivia on Zoom with Earth Ministry

Register for Earth Ministry's spring trivia fundraiser today! You can either form your own team (up to 6 people) or we can add you to a team with other members of the Earth Ministry community – a great way to meet someone new. Tickets are \$20 for each participant. For more information and to register go to bit.ly/EMtrivia2021.

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Take Action with Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light!

Earth Ministry provides numerous opportunities in the state legislature and Congress for members of the faith community to put our faith into action on issues we all care about. We also engage people of faith in statewide regulatory advocacy. We help faithful advocates understand and engage in our State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process, which ensures that proposed

projects, public facilities, and policies don't have negative environmental impacts.

Here are some of the campaigns you can engage in with Earth Ministry/WAIP. Stay up to date by signing up for our email list at bit.ly/EMalerts and regularly checking the Faithful Advocacy page on Earth Ministry's website: bit.ly/EMadvocacy.

Fossil Fuels

Basing an economy on petrochemicals is not good stewardship nor good for long-term prosperity. We work to stop new and expanded coal, oil, and fracked gas projects and to keep fossil fuels in the ground, while seeking to lessen the impacts of pollution on frontline communities.



Climate Justice

The climate crisis is the central moral and spiritual challenge of our time, and our energy choices directly affect the health of our climate and communities. Earth Ministry supports a Green New Deal for Seattle and climate justice legislation in the Washington State Legislature and Congress.



WA State Legislation

Each year, Earth Ministry selects bills that most strongly reflect our values of stewardship and justice, and advocates for them through the legislative process. Current priorities include the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act focused on environmental justice, and a Clean Fuels Standard.



Rivers, Salmon, & Orcas

We have a moral obligation to restore endangered salmon and orca populations and honor treaty commitments to NW Native tribes. Earth Ministry follows the leadership of the Lummi Nation in saving Southern Resident Orcas and the Nimiipuu (Nez Perce Tribe) in advocating for a free-flowing Lower Snake River to recover salmon.



Toxic Chemicals

Earth Ministry advocates for state and national chemical policies that will keep our communities and environment healthy. We're working to phase out toxic PFAS nonstick chemicals in consumer products and urge manufacturers to disclose and eliminate harmful chemicals in their products and packaging.



National Legislation

We partner with interfaith leaders to advocate for federal policies that protect the environment and our communities. Earth Ministry supports a national Green New Deal, equitable COVID relief, a price on carbon grounded in faith principles, and a diversity of environmental and climate bills in Congress.



GROUNDED IN FAITH

Guardians of the Earth (*Shomrei Adamah*) By Rabbi Rachel Nussbaum

In the movie *The Graduate*, recent college grad Benjamin Braddock finds himself at a backyard party where a neighbor gives him career advice in a single word: *plastics*.

Even when the film came out in 1967, “plastics” already connoted so much: bourgeois consumer culture, cheapness, and inauthenticity. More than half a century later, our society-at-large is just beginning to wake up to the lasting damage we are doing whenever we treat our planet’s resources as though they are expendable; we can feel the impact our human behavior has on our environment and our climate.

How can we best shift our own behavior and our overall culture? What advice would we give today, to a young person interested in building a future?

As a rabbi, it’s probably no surprise to hear me suggest that we ought to draw more heavily upon the wisdom of our ancient religious traditions. Two key Jewish values animate this work:

In the creation story of Genesis, God sets the first human beings in the Garden of Eden and says that they are to be guardians of the earth (Hebrew: *shomrei adamah*). One famous commentary on this passage reads: “When God created Adam, God led him around the Garden of Eden and said to him: ‘Behold My works. See how wonderful and beautiful they are. All that I have created, for your sake did I create it. Now, see to it that you do not spoil and destroy my world, for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you.’” (Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:13). This is a warning we desperately need to hear and heed today.

A second relevant Jewish value, not wasting (Hebrew: *bal tashchit*), stems from Deuteronomy 20:19-20, where the Israelites are commanded that when they go to war and lay siege to an area, they should not cut down fruit trees. The implication is clear: it’s inappropriate to trade away the resources of the

future for short-term gain. The rabbis of the Talmud expanded the category, applying *bal tashchit* to the unnecessary destruction of additional resources, from animals and clothing to furniture and lamp oil. They (and later rabbinic commentators) understand wanton destruction as an affront to the Creator.

Today, it’s time for us to renew our commitment to the role of human beings as *shomrei adamah*, guardians of the earth. We must expand the category of *bal tashchit* once again, this time to include the millions of single-use plastic items that we Americans dispose of every hour, as well as the non-renewable energy sources that are depleting our planet and contributing to climate change.

While it is crucial that we change the hearts and minds of individuals, the most efficient path towards the kind of cultural and behavioral change that’s required in this moment is through advocacy.

As *The Graduate* suggested, plastics weren’t ever really the future at all, but rather a stunted path, a dead-end. If we continue to participate in disposable consumer culture unchecked – leaving heaps of trash for future generations and depleting the resources of our planet – we are, in effect, throwing away our future.

Judaism and other faith traditions all demand that we do better, and work together to advocate for responsibility and sustainability. Rather than “plastics,” our best advice for the future – and the watchword for this issue – is *faithful advocacy*.

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Rabbi Rachel Nussbaum is the cofounder and rabbi of Kavana Cooperative, an independent Jewish community in Seattle, WA.

Rabbi Rachel Nussbaum (center), Seattle City Council members, and other speakers and organizers of Seattle’s inaugural Jewish Climate Festival in February 2020



Speaking Up for Environmental Justice By Maddie Smith

There’s something sacred and powerful about walking into a government building with a group of faithful folks from different traditions. Our federal, state, and local government officials are used to seeing constituents wandering through the halls (or requesting meetings on Zoom), seeking to engage their representatives in the civic process and to make their voices heard.

However, these same representatives are often pleasantly surprised to find themselves listening to faithful advocates – clergy and lay leaders who speak from or for their wider faith communities, weaving in a moral perspective on issues of concern. When a group of faith leaders come together from different houses of worship, our elected representatives listen.

In my experience lobbying my representatives on environmental justice issues, meetings organized by secular environmental partners don’t always center the moral authority or shared sense of community that a group of people of faith bring to advocacy. Too often, the religious community is underestimated in these situations by those who don’t recognize or understand the long history of our organizing in social justice movements. And sometimes, people of faith don’t share that part of themselves in a lobby meeting when the meeting isn’t set up to be that kind of space.

Yet things feel different when people of faith are involved. Rallies are energized when a rabbi calls for climate justice. Elected officials take notice when a pastor testifies at a public hearing, or average citizens share that they are a part of a local house of worship. Faithful advocacy is speaking up for justice based on our religious values and traditions, which is an effective way to change the hearts and minds of decision makers.

One of my favorite experiences as a faithful climate activist was organizing a “Faith Lobby Day” in Washington, DC with IPL-DMV, Earth Ministry/WAIPL’s partner in the national Interfaith Power & Light network. We gathered a multifaith group in the lobby of DC’s Wilson Building (city hall) to orient activists for the day’s events and began with prayers and reflections from different faith traditions.

Regular lobbyist and government types walked past us, looking slightly confused as a young Muslim attendee recited a blessing from the Qur’an in Arabic while ministers, rabbis, and lay people from the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, and Unitarian Universalist traditions listened respectfully and attentively. It was a powerful moment to be among such a multifaith and multigenerational group.

Some councilmembers we met with that day were people of faith. Some weren’t. But all of them were impressed by the diversity of faith-based constituents that came together to speak up for environmental justice and clean energy.

I was caught up in organizing the complex logistics of the lobby day and wasn’t fully able to appreciate what we accomplished together until much later. While this was but one advocacy day in a multiple year coalition effort to pass one of the strongest clean energy laws in the country, it was an important and unique effort.

Now, I’m grateful to be able to continue this vital work with Earth Ministry/WAIPL, joining with all of you to raise the faith voice for environmental justice in the state legislature and beyond. Together, we’re making a real difference for both people and the planet.

Maddie Smith is Earth Ministry/WAIPL’s Operations Manager. They also provide support for our faithful advocacy program.



Interfaith advocates sharing prayers before meeting with councilmembers in Washington, DC

Putting Your Faith Into Action Through Advocacy

By LeeAnne Beres

As people of faith, our values shape how we feel and act at our most fundamental level. They impact how we make decisions, respond to particular situations, and interact with other people.

Since faith and values are central to who we are, they also inform how we view public issues and interpret what is happening in political life. Decisions made by elected officials have an enormous impact on climate change and environmental justice as well as civil rights, immigration, housing, hunger, peace, and more. If we care about the well-being of communities and the environment, we must bring our values to bear in the process that determines how those decisions are made.

The faith community can play a unique role in our democracy by offering a hope-filled vision of the future. That vision starts to become a reality when we share our values as advocates.

Faithful advocacy gives us the opportunity to express our opinions on the issues that matter most to us. Making our voice heard helps shape the future we want to see and is a commitment we make to each other and the common good.

It's true that for every group of citizens speaking from their deepest values, there are plenty of industry lobbyists wearing expensive suits rather than clergy robes. In this polarized time, it is also tempting to withdraw from the public square out of a growing sense of cynicism and mistrust. I urge you not to do so, as our presence is needed now more than ever.

If we abstain from the political arena, we tacitly approve and perpetuate current systems of injustice. Our faith calls us to action, to not turn a blind eye to the workings of the world. And as religious advocates, we have the long arc of history bending toward justice on our side, and we faithfully persevere.

Engaging in policy advocacy is surprisingly energizing and is a necessary next step in our commitment to achieving a just and loving society. It helps to build our faith through the practical application of spiritual discipline. Advocacy requires us to examine and recommit to our deepest values, which are at the core of our religious beliefs. In return, our faith provides us with the inspiration and energy to lead, and to ensure that those values are reflected in decisions made for the greater good of the community.

So, even when the work feels challenging, unrewarding, or controversial, we take up the spiritual mantles once worn by the prophets and we speak out. We celebrate our successes and the work of others in the faith community when legislators hear us and enact positive change. We also continue to serve in our houses of worship and in our local communities in ways that feed us and those around us.



Earth Ministry Executive Director LeeAnne Beres and Interfaith Power & Light colleagues from across the country at the 2014 Climate March in New York City

Earth Ministry is your partner in this sacred work. We organize people of faith to advocate for strong environmental policies and provide strategic guidance to religious communities working toward environmental justice. We host advocacy workshops and provide the training and opportunities for people just like you to take action by submitting written comments, attending lobby days, testifying at hearings, and meeting with legislators in their home district.

Faithful advocacy is easier than you might think. On the next page, we share a few of Earth Ministry's time-tested tips for sharing your views with elected officials, whether in person, over Zoom, or in an email. If you would like to learn more or to put your faith into action with us on any of the campaigns listed on page 7, please reach out to me or to Earth Ministry's Program & Outreach Director, Jessica Zimmerle. We look forward to making the world a better place with you!

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LeeAnne Beres is Earth Ministry's Executive Director and has been leading grassroots advocacy trainings for nearly 30 years.

How to Effectively Convey Your Message to Elected Officials

1. Introduce yourself

Emphasize your connection to the community that the elected official serves. As part of your personal introduction, make sure they know you are a person of faith: tell them the name of the house of worship you attend, or your spiritual tradition, or even simply that you're a member of Earth Ministry.

2. Start on a positive note

Thank the legislator for something such as sponsoring a bill or voting the right way on specific legislation. It's helpful if you can thank them for an action related to the environment, but thanking the official for any positive action is a good start – even thanking them for simply meeting with you or reading your email.

3. Pick only a few issues/bills to discuss

Too many topics can be confusing and may dilute the effectiveness of your comments. Pick 1-3 issues or bills to discuss and focus on those items.

4. Present your issues clearly and concisely

Don't assume the legislator knows everything about any one topic – they have many issues and bills to track! Legislative staff likely follow issues more in depth. It is important to hit the key points of your case without drowning them in detail.

5. Be ready with the basics

Mention a policy or piece of legislation by name and/or number. Name the lead sponsor and any relevant supporters who may influence your target.

6. Be clear about what you want

Do you want the elected official to support a particular bill, vote against a bad amendment, or deny a permit? State your ask at the beginning and again at the end of your meeting or correspondence.

7. Ask for a concrete commitment

Ask the decisionmaker to take action in response to the problem. Try to get a solid yes or no.

8. Speak from the heart

Nobody expects you to be a policy expert. Share your personal story and tell them why the faith community (their constituents) care about this issue. Use value-based language, not just facts. See pages 12-13 for more on telling your own story in an advocacy setting.

9. Be honest and straightforward

Don't be afraid to admit that you do not know an answer to a question. It's far better to offer to find out and get back to a legislator or their aide than it is to provide incorrect information.

10. Don't get sidetracked by rhetoric

You won't agree with your elected officials on every issue. Practice patience and be polite. By going too far with your point of view you can alienate people who share your values and would otherwise support your position on another topic.

11. End on a positive note and follow up

Thank the elected official or their aide for their time. After a meeting, make sure to send an email follow up to send them any information they may have asked for, answer questions or clarify anything you said in person, reiterate your ask, and say thank you again!



Good Stories Make Great Advocacy By Jessica Zimmerle

When your head hits the pillow at night, what do you recall most from your day? Odds are that what comes forward is not a specific fact or figure, but a good story or vivid experience.

Let's test it out with a few rounds of "this or that." Are you more likely to remember a number of tons of greenhouse gas emissions or recall a youth saying they thought asthma is something that everyone has? How about a level of water contamination or a grandmother sharing that her first grandchild was rushed into post-birth surgery for a condition tied to toxic chemicals? These are real stories shared by Earth Ministry faithful advocates.

Stories speak to our souls. Not only that, but they stick with us. And guess what? Decisionmakers feel this too.

As Earth Ministry's Program & Outreach Director, I have the joy of accompanying our community through the process of crafting stories and raising them up in the public sphere. People of faith from all walks of life participate in our advocacy actions, bringing strong moral messages into spaces that can often get mired in technical details.

Earth Ministry intentionally works with various kinds of organizations across many coalitions, which means that all our bases are covered. We can trust that our secular campaign partners will speak to the science, economics, and policy issues. As people of faith, we cover the home base of the heart. The gift we bring is our ability to ground an issue in shared values. Naming core principles like justice, stewardship, responsibility, inclusion, or safety adds moral weight to a conversation.

In advocacy trainings, I often say that I like it when a decisionmaker asks me a policy question that I can't answer. Why? Because it provides me with an opportunity to re-orient back to my values. I respond with something like "I can't speak to that but will get you in touch with someone who can. What I do know is that my faith calls me to love my neighbor and uphold my promises, which is why it's so important that we honor our treaty obligations with the Puyallup Tribe by stopping PSE's fracked gas plant from going online."

It can be hard to know where to start when crafting your story, so we simplify it down into three parts:

- 1. Who are you?** Share a piece of your identity that is relevant to the issue and say that you are a person of faith. You can also name communities of which you are a member, such as your congregation or Earth Ministry.
- 2. What do you value?** Clearly name a core faith value and an example of how it has shown up in your personal experience.
- 3. What do you want?** Close with your ask. Paint the big picture of the future you'd like to see, and then share the specific action the decisionmaker can take to help get us there.

I encourage you to use these three steps to share your own story as a faithful advocate. I promise it makes a difference – elected officials have directly told us so. Plus, you'll sleep soundly knowing you've done your part to participate in democracy and speak truth to power.

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Jessica Zimmerle is Earth Ministry's Program & Outreach Director and leads our faithful advocacy program.



Sharing Your Story – Example Testimony By Rev. Terry Teigen

Earth Ministry board member, Rev. Terry Teigen, gave the following testimony at an online hearing for the federal government's Columbia & Snake River Salmon Plan in March 2020. We thank him for speaking up and share it with you as a good example of story-based advocacy.

Good evening, my name is Rev. Terry Teigen. I have been a resident of the Puget Sound region for almost all my 66 years. I am a clergy person by profession, now retired.

Currently, I am active as a volunteer in the work of a faith-based organization, Earth Ministry. I have decided, that of all the things I might do in these last years, trying to bring health to our waters, preserve wildlife habitat, and strengthen healthy communities for our grandchildren, mine and yours, is my privilege and duty. I want to pass along a measure of the quality of life I have enjoyed.

I am not a scientist, but I am a keen observer of the beauty and diversity of this region. I grew up fishing on "The Sound" with my father. I can still remember the times when we would go out early on Saturday morning and catch our limit of silvers or kings before lunch. On a couple of occasions, I remember Dad saying, "Oh no. There are 'blackfish' out here, there go the salmon." But seeing orcas even from a distance was a thrill. I grew up aware of the need to balance sport for some, livelihood for others, and appreciating the intrinsic beauty and wonder of salmon runs and the sleek, swimming giants who feed on them.

And as the decades have passed, I have witnessed the incremental but rapid diminishment of this once vital natural community. With habitat destruction, chemical pollution, and pressure of all kinds, the ecosystems of Puget Sound, the Columbia River, and connecting rivers and streams have all suffered. And here we are today.

What will it take to wake us up? If it's clear that removal of the four dams on the Lower Snake River will give the salmon, the orcas, our Northwest environment the best chance at recovery, why would we hesitate? How do we put a price on that?

On the other hand, as the salmon increase, as orcas potentially recover, it

will be a boon and invaluable benefit to those who fish for sport or livelihood and the communities that enjoy the salmon as a food source. At the same time, we will continue to feed the souls of locals and visitors who come to our region to witness one of the most amazing wonders in this world of wonders, as salmon spawn, as life renews, and the web of the Divine gift of natural diversity is on full display.

All over the world people are mourning what has been lost in the places where they live – forests, wildlife, what humans need to sustain quality of life. If it is in our hands, right now, to defend and preserve this legacy, our legacy, right here, why would we hesitate?

Please work with each other as well as Northwest tribes, farmers, fishermen, community leaders, and all other river stakeholders to develop a salmon recovery plan that actually restores salmon and ensures a prosperous region for everyone. Thank you.



Earth Ministry board members Rev. Terry Teigen and Anna Dyer at the 2019 Seattle Climate March

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field, the plants, water, soil, or air; God created it and so I must respect it.

But as I worked to protect creation, I moved away from the imperative of the voice of God being shouted through the very thrum of nature attesting to the existence and sovereignty of God and began to focus more on the collective human biological clock that was silently booming with every acidified curl of an ocean wave, or the whoomph of tornado winds against my house as I huddled in bed praying while their ferocity took off pieces of my neighbors' roof and flew trees like toy planes.

But more than anywhere else, I heard clocks ticking and alarm bells ringing in meeting after meeting with clergy and elected officials who were not hearing the message of climate justice. I worked harder and longer, applied innovation and pizzazz, but ended each day later, tired; burdened with shame, worry, guilt, and doubt.

I was a *faithful* advocate, but I was not a *faith-filled* advocate. I was leaving meetings wanting the attendees to have been galvanized from a lack of understanding to total participation. I wanted elected officials to cut ties with toxic lobbyists and rewrite regulations and ordinances, school boards to re-envision curriculums, cities and peace

officers to value the health and lives of all of its citizens, even the Black, Brown, and Native citizens.

I wanted to have gone into a meeting and changed the hearts, minds, and core intentionality of the people there for positive change. And I was becoming increasingly frustrated and fearful when that was not the result of my presence.

And then I realized, people were not going to react that way to me because I am not God. I was operating in this whirl of activity because I was looking at the human reaction, but not what God could, and was, doing with my action. I was leaving no room in my plans to just allow God to be God. In all of the faith traditions that I know, belief and intention are key to manifestation. My growing belief that all of this wasn't working was probably building cosmic inertia. It's as if, with all of this work we never seem to get anywhere right? Well, what is your belief about the results of your work?

My job, our job, is to plant the seed, to tend it, and provide as much information, resources, and support as we can to help it grow. It is God's job to decide whether or not, or when, it will take root and flourish. What we get confused about is the fact that nature showed us long ago that not every seed is meant to produce life, but what does produce is more than enough.

The head space that I had to move back into is to trust that God knows which seeds are important and that God will ensure that those seeds reach fruition. I just have to continue to do the work while being *faith-filled*.

This mindset is especially important as I work with congregations.

There has been more than one church association or interfaith network meeting where I was tired and closed my eyes and just allowed their voices to wash over me through the computer speakers because they had politely let me speak while their eyes glazed over and they formulated what they were going to say next on matters they considered important. Matters I was bored with because they were talking about them and addressing them in the same way that they had been talking about them and addressing them for decades; without talking about the root causes.

I was frustrated when they talked about food shortages but not droughts, floods, and fires. The prevalence of illnesses but not the polluting industries operating in BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities. The behavioral problems and developmental delays, but not the old city pipe system making the drinking water toxic. The hormonal imbalances like diabetes, preterm labor, and infant mortality, but not the landfills. The malnutrition but not the depleted soils. The high rates of COVID, but not the dirty air or the temporary hire systems that force people to work in unsafe conditions because they do not have the security of being actual employees. The electric





bills breaking everyone's backs, but not the Public Service Commission and legislation for green energy and fair fees that could change things. The climate gentrification pushing out residents, and the house insurance rates going through the roof making every storm a new potential for total loss. You know, those meetings where they talked about everything but nothing, and I sighed and wondered why I bothered to show up.

But when I opened my eyes, tempted to hit that red "leave meeting" button, I would see the concerned faces on the screen. Not just the 17 to 35 people actually there, but the 15 to 45 thousand people they actually represented. The thousands of people whom they could mobilize with just one congregational phone blast, and the even greater numbers they influenced through family and work relationships.

I saw the relationships held with political leaders holding positions in local and state governments. I saw the land their congregations owned, and the proximity to, and trust of the people in those communities. I saw the proximity houses of worship have to polluting facilities and their ability to help us monitor the flow of pollution into our communities. I saw the countless fact sheets and tool kits being used in faith based educational forums. I saw again what important partners clergy and lay leaders are to the climate world; so I started listening again.

But it comes back to being more than congregations as people, money, and land; it's also about centuries of conditioning to listen to a faith leader for moral guidance even if you never step foot into a house of worship. If we get our faith-based institutions to talk about climate solutions, then whole communities would be talking about climate solutions. If we get congregations to model climate solutions, then homes would be implementing climate solutions.

More importantly, leaders developed from faith communities would be talking about solutions from the perspective of organizers who know the land, the climate impacts, the resources, the culture, and the needs of *that* community. We would not just be respecting leaders who are in place because they are there, but because they know what they are doing. And we would be able to give the support, resources, funding, and information that we are tasked to give to all of our seeds.

But most importantly of all, working with the faith community reminds the people of God to call out to God and have faith that the tasks given to us will result in our collective clock slowing down. We have the continual opportunity to become faith-filled faithful advocates.

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Rev. Dallas Conyers coordinates the Southeast Faith Leaders Network and is the Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion fellow for the Southeast Climate & Energy Network. She is also an associate at Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church in Spartanburg, SC.

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